Conformity and Contrast:

Religious Affiliation in a Finland-Swede Youth Context

Maria Klingenberg

Academic dissertation to be publicly discussed, by due permission of the Faculty of Theology at the University of Helsinki in Auditorium XII (Unioninkatu 34), on the 8th of February, 2014 at 10 o'clock.

Pre-examiners

Dr Nils G Holm
Professor emeritus of Comparative Religion
Åbo Akademi University

Dr Pål Repstad
Professor of Sociology of Religion
University of Agder

Opponent

Dr Pål Repstad
Professor of Sociology of Religion
University of Agder

Cover illustration: Malin Klingenberg

ISBN 978-952-10-9718-8 (paperback)
ISBN 978-952-10-9719-5 (PDF)

Unigrafia
Helsinki 2014

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements 6
Abstract 9
1. Religion and language in contemporary Finland 11
1.1 Young people in the intersection between the individual and the social 11
1.2 Religious patterns in Finland 13
1.3 An introduction to the Finland-Swedish context 16
1.4 Introduction to the research topic 20
2. Belonging in late modern society: theoretical perspectives and previous research 24
2.1 Belonging through learning, reflecting and interacting 24
2.1.1 The challenges of socialization theories 24
2.1.2 Role-identity theory: reflecting and negotiating social positions 28
2.1.3 Religious affiliation as a majority or minority marker 32
2.1.4 Young people in late modern society 35
2.1.5 Stability or change? 39
2.2 Religious affiliation in contemporary Nordic societies 42
2.2.1 Religious affiliation as a social category 42
2.2.2 Religious socialization in contemporary Finnish society 46
2.2.3 Religious affiliation and language – the Swedish-speaking group 50
2.3 Proposing a model for understanding religious belonging 52
3. Research problem and method 55
3.1 Specified research questions and limitation of study 55
3.2 Determining the questions 57
3.2.1 Methodological implications from previous research 57
3.2.2 The interview guide 62
3.3 The informants 65
3.3.1 Selecting the informants 65
3.3.2 Conducting the interview 69
3.3.3 Ethical considerations 72
3.3.4 Life phase: status and plans 74
3.4 Analyzing the data 77
3.4.1 The role of the researcher in interviews and analysis 77
3.4.2 Content analysis as a research tool 79
4. Religious belonging: majority patterns 83
4.1 Religious affiliation 83
4.2 Church membership – why? 85

4.2.1 “It is something you do” – Church member families 85
4.2.2 “I’m still here…” Members from families with mixed membership patterns 89
4.3 Religious socialization in the family 91
4.3.1 Parents from a religious perspective 91
4.3.2 Religious practice in the family 98
4.3.3 “A Christian home?” 101
5. School and the Church in the peer context 106
5.1 Religion and friends 106
5.2 School as a religious socialization agent 113
5.3 The Church as a socialization agent 121
5.3.1 Activities for children 121
5.3.2 Confirmation training and beyond 124
6. Religious role identities 132
6.1 Being Christian 132
6.2 Beliefs 138
6.3 The four ways of being a church member 147
7. Minority positions: religion and language 156
7.1 The experience of the minority member as a stark contrast 156
7.2 Language use and linguistic identity 160
7.2.1 Monolingual and bilingual life: language use in everyday life 160
7.2.2 Being a Finland-Swede – the value of linguistic identity 166
7.2.3 Religious affiliation – a marker of ethnic identity? 169
8. Discussion and conclusions 173
8.1 Empirical findings 173
8.1.1 Church membership 173
8.1.2 Religious socialization amongst church members 177
8.1.3 Religious affiliation in a minority context 182
8.2 Theoretical implications 184
8.2.1 Majority and minority 184
8.2.2 Institutional dimensions of vernacular religion: exploring religious conventions 186
8.2.3 Socialization theory and role-identity theory: what is so special about youth? 188
8.2.4 Religious socialization 190
8.2.5 What happened to individualization? 191
8.3 Methodological implications 193
8.4 Outlook and suggestions for further research 195
References 199

Appendix 1: Interview guide 213
Appendix 2: Value Circle 217

Tables

Table 1. Main themes of the interview 63
Table 2. The locations selected for the 2003 survey 67
Table 3. Background factors in the design of the study 68
Table 4. Example of a coding tree 82
Table 5. Patterns of religious affiliation in the data 84

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writing of this PhD thesis came to stretch over a rather long period of time. During this period, I moved from one country to another, I had three temporary employments and a few shorter job projects, and I gave birth to two children. Had I known how long it would take me to finish this book, I might have thought longer and harder about whether to pursue this project in the first place. However, in hindsight, I am glad I did.

My first thank you goes out to the 31 young people who agreed to be interviewed in 2006. I think it is safe to say that you have made a much larger impression on me than the other way around. Without you, this project would not have materialized at all. I would also like to thank those who helped me in practical ways before the interviews, for example by offering me relevant information on local specificities as well as helping me find places where I could meet with the informants. You know who you are.

The weaknesses of this text should not be attributed to bad supervision or lack of support. Professor Eila Helander has been my main supervisor from start to finish. Eila, your engagement in seminar discussions and the intrigued expression you get when I do not agree with you – as if you cannot wait to hear why! – captures why you are such a great academic role model. Your ability to pose relevant questions instead of providing correct answers has helped me move forward and shaped me as an academic. Professor Mia Lövheim stepped in at the later stages of this PhD project, but engaged herself much earlier in my rooting in the Uppsala context. Mia, the fact that you understood that I needed support before I did myself says everything about your observant and considerate nature. Your confidence in my abilities has truly made a difference to this project. Thank you for being so honest, straight-forward, and such excellent travel company. I am so glad that this thesis does not signify the end of our collaboration!

In addition, I have had the privilege of enjoying support from other senior scholars as well. I would especially like to thank Professor emerita Grace Davie. Over the years, you have become the godmother of this PhD project. For some reason, you have always managed to emerge at critical stages and offered reassurance and clarity when it was much needed – just like godmothers should. Thank you also for reading through and commenting on some of the chapters. I would also like to thank Professor Susan Sundback, who agreed to be my assistant supervisor at the beginning of this project. As I moved away from Finland as well as the original angle of the project, these plans never materialized fully, but I am grateful for the provided encouragement and input to my work over the years.

I am also indebted to Professors Nils G Holm and Pål Repstad, who agreed to be the pre-examinors of this thesis. I appreciated your helpful and insightful comments, which have contributed to the final version of this text.

After my move to Sweden, CRS (Centre for the Study of Religion and Society) in Uppsala, founded by Professor emeritus Anders Bäckström, became my second academic home. I would like to thank the people in charge during the years, Professor Ninna Edgardh, Professor Per Pettersson and Docent Anders Sjöborg. You have welcomed me into the CRS community as your academic foster-child and treated me as one of your own. A special thank you goes out to Anders S., not only for careful readings on sections of this text, but also for seeing to the arrangements of my "final seminar" in April 2013. Here, I would also like to express my gratitude to Professor Kerstin von Brömssen, for being the first reader at this seminar and for all the constructive comments.

The support I have had in my fellow PhD colleagues has also been essential. I am so glad that the research seminar for Church and Social Studies in Helsinki was the context in which I spent my first years as a doctoral student. The generous and constructive atmosphere found there has truly had an impact. Here, I would especially like to mention Dr. Henrietta Grönlund and Dr. Jenni Spännäri – I wish we had been part of each other's professional lives for much longer! During more recent years, the higher seminar in the Sociology of Religion at Uppsala University has been my home base. Thank you so much, fellow PhD students, for providing such great peer support during these years. Last but not least, a special and heart-felt thank you goes out to three of my room-mates over the years: Dr. Paula Närhi, Dr. Marta Axner and Dr. Valérie Nicolet Anderson. We did not initially choose each other as roommates, but ended up sharing a lot more than work. Thank you for our friendship.

The other work commitments I have had while pursuing this project have been valuable experiences which have fed into this project in different ways. I would like to thank Docent Jonas Bromander (Church of Sweden, Uppsala), Dr. Kimmo Ketola (Church Research Institute, Tampere) and Docent Cecilia Wejryd (Uppsala University) for being such good employers and colleagues.

I would also like to mention a few people who have offered material and practical assistance when I needed it the most. At the final stages, Martha Middlemiss Lé Mon, Brent Anderson and Anna-Karin Jansson read through parts of the text – thank you for stepping in when I had troubles putting two words together. A great big thank you also goes out to my sister Malin Klingenberg who did the cover illustration. My heartfelt thanks also go out to my mother-in-law Karin Kjellgren, who offered (!) me the most valuable help I could ever ask for – baby-sitting – when I needed it the most. You have truly been indispensable for us.

I am also indebted to Victoriastiftelsen, the Church Research Institute, Svenska kulturfonden and the University of Helsinki for their financial support. Furthermore, the Finnish Graduate School of Theology and Religionssociologiska föreningen have enabled me to attend conferences and present my results.

There are also a number of people who have not played a major part in this project, and exactly for that reason, I would like to thank you. This goes out to all my friends and my extended family members, both in Finland and Sweden, who cares for me regardless of what I choose to pursue. I would also like to express my gratitude to my Finnish family. First of all, my dear, dear parents: you have always stressed the importance of me striving to become a good person rather than a successful one, and for that I am grateful. Thank you Mom for being so incredibly patient and providing such great emotional support when I do not have the energy to be composed and rational. Thank you Dad for being such a great conversational partner and for being so convinced of my abilities to work things out. My siblings Malin, Jonas and Jakob: there are no people in this world I rather spend time with, and no-one makes me laugh harder than you do. Caj and Saija: you have become so dear to me – thank you for being family, too. My nieces: you are such delightful additions. I am so grateful for having you all as my family, and I miss you constantly.

Mira and Emmi, my talkative, energetic and strong-willed daughters: you have not exactly contributed to the completion of this thesis, but who cares? I am so proud of you and I am looking forward to seeing what our future holds – it will be an adventure, for sure! Ni är det finaste jag har.

Last but not least, I want to thank my husband Erik for your loyalty and patience. This work has undoubtedly made its presence known in our life for a long time. I am forever grateful for the way in which your love has materialized in practical ways. Especially during the past year, you have proven time and again that the idea of us being equal life partners is not just a nice thought to you, even when it has meant you taking a heavier load at home. You have stood by me when I have doubted myself and questioned whether this project would ever be finished. Well, now it is. From this perspective, a “thank you” comes across as an understatement. As a small gesture, I therefore dedicate this PhD thesis to you.

ABSTRACT

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the interplay between individual and collective dimensions in personal understandings of religious affiliation. Thirty-one interviews with Swedish-speaking nineteen year olds from three localities in Finland provide the raw material for the study. The data is analyzed through an abductive qualitative content analysis. The theoretical lenses employed are socialization theory and role-identity theory. Membership patterns are also analyzed as reflections of societal majority or minority positions.

Most of the young people interviewed were members of the Lutheran Church along with their families, and found it challenging to discuss their religious affiliation: they referred to it as *"something you do."* Church membership implies complex patterns of collective belonging and individual interpretation. The religious majority related its membership to family tradition and cultural convention, and described religious practice as being social in character. The way in which church membership was anchored in significant relationships made it personally meaningful. In addition, church membership was explained as connected to personal beliefs and values. However, regardless of personal religiousness, most young people expressed reluctance towards being categorized socially as a "Christian" or a "believer". There were also a few members of Christian minority communities and non-affiliated young people in the data. In contrast, these minority members shared a more distinct understanding of their religious affiliation status and its meaning and described it as part of their personal identity. While majority membership entailed social conformity, the accounts of minority members testified to a different experience. It is argued that these findings reflect Finnish religious affiliation patterns at large rather than the specific Finland-Swede setting of this study.

Regardless of religious affiliation status, patterns of religious socialization were subtle, yet evident. Religious transmission in Finnish homes had seldom taken explicit and verbal forms; yet it was influential for the informants' negotiations between personal and social identity markers. Here, minority members differed because of their more precise descriptions of their parents' religious attitudes. Furthermore, peers exerted significant influence by constituting the social context in which institutional contexts for religious matters were encountered.

Theoretically, this study addresses and challenges the diverse understandings of religious affiliation presented in previous research and theory. The findings point to the influence of majority and minority positions and common understandings of socially desired and undesired social categories in how personal religious identities are negotiated. Furthermore, the study suggests that these notions are not found only in the youth population, but amongst adults as well. Furthermore, this study directs attention to the poor fit between academic understandings of religious socialization as a verbal, active process, and cultural settings where religious matters are understood as private and are seldom verbalized, and also direct attention to the influence of peers on how religious matters are discussed and negotiated.

Key words: youth, religious affiliation, Lutheran Church, Swedish-speaking Finns, socialization, peers

1. RELIGION AND LANGUAGE IN CONTEMPORARY FINLAND

1.1 Young people in the intersection between the individual and the social

> *Freedom to me – I think that if someone impinges upon my freedom and tells me what to do, how I should live, then I get really upset, freedom is really important for me and the feeling of me being (...) able to make my own choices… (...) If I feel like someone impinges upon my freedom and upon my rights… then I get (...) very upset.*[1]

When this Finland-Swedish 19-year-old describes why freedom is an important value to her, she refers to her strong negative emotional reactions to "being told what to do." For her, freedom means making choices without others interfering. Born in 1987, she is part of an age cohort that Lindgren et al have named "the MeWe generation." MeWes are characterized by their growing up with high standards of material comfort and with a variety of cultural and material goods. Unlike the previous generations who gradually had a multiplicity of options on an everyday basis, variety and choice have characterized their childhood and adolescence years. They are described as a generation of "individualists who also greatly treasure their friends and family."[2] From this perspective, the referrals to freedom, individuality and choice in CF1's comments describe central features of a whole generation.

The emphasis on individuality and choice is not solely found in sociological thought about young people. The cultural shift in Western values has been described as a shift from survival values, which are related to basic needs, to self-expression values (relating to more individual notions of self-fulfillment). This value shift, which is partly due to economic development, is most prevalent in the Protestant areas of Europe.[3] According to the Finnish results from the 2005 World Values Survey, Pertti Suhonen identified a sharp rise in egocentric values and a decline in global values during the past two decades.[4] In her study of the value orientations in Finland, Teija Mikkola both confirmed and contested these results when she determined that the forerunners of value change in Finnish society could not be identified by a specific value orientation. Mikkola argued that the pursuit of authenticity was the underlying driving force behind value orientations and lifestyle choices. The main characteristics of a "contemporary" value profile was identified as the reflexive way in which value-decisions were made and the aspiration of expressing one's true self.[5] These results therefore seem to support the arena of primary concern shifting from the collective to the personal sphere.

Contemporary studies on religion and spirituality have also identified similar shifts from collective to individual expression. According to Adam Possamai, the contemporary understanding of religion is affected by inherent characteristics of consumer culture, such as

[1] This citation is from CF1; cf. Section 3.3.1.
[2] Lindgren et al. (2005), 11-20, see also Possamai (2009).
[3] Inglehart (2006).
[4] Suhonen (2007).
[5] Mikkola 2003, 303-305.

freedom from pre-established patterns and an emphasis on individual choice. In other words, consumer culture establishes the individual as the ultimate authority instead of "building a sense of belonging for groups."[6] Linda Woodhead and Paul Heelas describe this "subjective turn" as "a major cultural shift (…) away from life lived in terms of external or "objective" roles, duties and obligations, and a turn towards life lived by reference to one's own subjective experiences."[7] Grace Davie has also described how religious patterns are characterized by a shift "from obligation to consumption", from being something that has been imposed and inherited, to religion becoming a matter of personal choice.[8]

In 2003, I conducted a quantitative study on the beliefs and life-values in a Finland-Swedish youth context in order to discern to what extent young peoples' beliefs about God, Jesus and the after-life indicated religious pluralism.[9] The high rate of Lutheran Church membership in the data, 91%, was expected, especially because Church membership is most common among the youth aged 15-20.[10] By combining the response patterns regarding Christian self-identification on the one hand, and beliefs about Jesus on the other, the respondents were divided into five groups: alternative Christians (35%), agnostics (30%), non-Christians (14%), traditional Christians (13%) and progressive Christians (8%). These groups were characterized by distinct patterns regarding their beliefs in God, life after death, their tendency to pray and their socialization patterns at home.[11] These findings demonstrated that religious affiliation had little explanatory value for the content and centrality of religious belief and for how beliefs were expressed, but they nevertheless constituted a collective frame for how beliefs and religion were generally understood. Viewed from the discussions that occur within studies of values and religion in contemporary society, the diversity found in the religious beliefs among the Swedish-speaking youth in Finland is far from unexpected. Instead, the patterns of persistent religious affiliation are difficult to grasp. The latter will be the focus for the present study, where I will further explore how young Finland-Swedish people understand the role and function of their religious affiliation.

This chapter will provide a general outline of the two main features regarding the research context and research aim. Section 1.2 offers information on the religious Finnish landscape and the patterns of religious affiliation that occur there. Section 1.3 subsequently addresses the research context by presenting an introduction to the Swedish-speaking group living in Finland. The last section of the chapter introduces the present study and provides an outline of the book.

---

[6] Possamai 2009, 77.
[7] Heelas & Woodhead et al. 2005, 2.
[8] Davie 2004, 79.
[9] The study was distributed to 16-year-old pupils in 11 comprehensive schools (N=754; response rate: 84%). The schools that were selected were evenly distributed over the four main Swedish-speaking areas in Finland, and the research design also accounted for the differences within each region in terms of language relations and population environments (Klingenberg 2005).
[10] Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 55-56.
[11] Klingenberg (2005).

1.2 Religious patterns in Finland

In terms of religion, Finland is a homogeneous country and it is characterized by high degree of religious affiliation in the population. In 2007, 82% of the Finns belonged to the Lutheran Church, which is recognized as a folk church along with the Orthodox Church. The Orthodox Church attracts 1% of the Finns and the other registered religious groups account for little more than 2% of the total population. Out of these groups, most members are associated with the Pentecostal movements, the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Finnish Free Church. The strong emphasis on Christianity is primarily explained by the modest influx of new Finns into the country through immigration. Even though the recent decades have brought about a more diversified Finnish population, Finland is still characterized by its extreme ethnic and religious homogeneity: in 2007, only 203 000 out of a population of 5.3 million Finnish inhabitants were born in another country.[12] Three-quarters of the Finnish immigrants have a Christian background, which further contributes to the lack of religious diversity.[13]

Finns have a positive view of the Lutheran Church, as more than 60 % think that the Church could be described as reliable, useful and honest, and six out of ten express trust in the Lutheran Church.[14] During recent decades, attitudes towards the Church[15] have shifted in a positive direction. The severe economic recession in the early 1990s had a clear impact on the societal role of the Church. When the higher demand for material help put pressure on the welfare system to an extent that the system was unable to cope, the Church stepped in and provided material help, for example through debt counseling and food banks, and the Church also took a clearer stand in public debate. As a result, the Lutheran Church became a critical voice, defending the existence of a strong welfare state and criticizing irresponsible financial behavior and economic policies that have increased social divisions. As a consequence, the confidence in the Church, which had declined during the 1980s, rose from 32% to 57% in the last decade of the twentieth century.[16]

Kimmo Ketola has described Finnish religiosity as moderate in character. Two-thirds of Finns describe themselves as "somewhat religious" or "neither religious nor non-religious" with each group accounting for one-third of the population respectively.[17] Moreover, the vernacular religion has strong ties to the Lutheran Church context. An example of how the Lutheran Church has managed to contain folk religiosity within an institutional frame is through ceremonies for life rites. These religious practices are not driven by solely religious motives, and as a result, the institutional context is held in high esteem by Finns and remains part of their personal life patterns.[18] These findings depict Finns as being committed to the

[12] Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 26-30.
[13] Martikainen (2006).
[14] Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 49; Borg 2007, 11.
[15] In this study, "the Church" refers to the Lutheran Church in Finland.
[16] Niemelä 2003b, 140-143; Helander 2005, 137-138, World Value Survey 2011.
[17] Ketola 2011, 23.
[18] Ketola 2011, 23.

Church for reasons primarily relating to the collective, yet also to some extent anchored in their more personal beliefs. Kimmo Kääriäinen et al conclude: "Institutional religiosity has been weakened, but vernacular religiosity, rising from people's own needs and life situations, has been preserved and partly also found its expression within institutional religiosity."[19]

Collective religious practice is infrequent in Finland. According to the data from 2007, 3% of the Church members attend a church service every week and 9% report attending once a month.[20] According to Ketola et al, assertive and public religiosity is frowned upon in Finland and is associated with a small group of revivalist and actively religious Christians. Indeed, the division between the mainstream church population and the small group of active revivalist Christians is one of the main features of Finnish religiosity.[21] The modest religious activity partly stems from Finns regarding religion to be a private matter.[22] In the mainstream, the most common reason given for religious inactivity is that one "rather takes care of the relationship with God in private without the Church."[23] These notions are confirmed in the data on private religious practice and religious belief. For example, two-thirds of the Finnish population pray at least once a week and 43% read the Bible at least once a year.[24] Likewise, religious belief is common: 64% of the Finns are characterized by a belief in God and 63% also believe that Jesus was the son of God. The majority of Finns also believe in an after-life.[25] Ketola et al have concluded that the image of Finnish religiosity is predominantly determined by which factors are taken into account. For instance, half the population harbor theistic beliefs, but public religious practice is infrequent and Finns will also distance themselves from the public expression of religious beliefs.[26]

Although the Lutheran Church has an established position in Finnish culture, the church membership rates are nevertheless characterized by a slow, yet steady decline. This decline has escalated during the last decade, particularly since 2003, when new legislation facilitated resignation from church membership. For example, between 2004 and 2007, membership dropped by 3%.[27] Some indicators also suggest that members of the Church are increasingly disengaged from church activity. According to the World Value Survey, the group of passive Church members who attend a church service occasionally or never has risen from 33% to 46% between 1981 and 2005.[28] In other words, attitudes towards the Church

[19] Kääriäinen et al. 2003, 253-261, the citation is found on page 261 (my translation).
[20] Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 77; 80.
[21] Ketola et al. 2011, 60.
[22] Ketola et al. 2007, 60-61; Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 380-381.
[23] This was the decisive factor for 39% of the Finns and a somewhat important factor for 30%. (Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 40.)
[24] Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 35.
[25] Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 43-47.
[26] Ketola et al. 2007, 60.
[27] Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 26; 62.
[28] Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 33. However, these numbers do not include the attendance of Church funerals and weddings.

have also become increasingly polarized.[29] Even though theistic belief remains stable in the population, beliefs are increasingly privatized and pluralized.[30]

Considering the low levels of religious practice, the religious education at school is a central arena for Finns to encounter religious issues during childhood and adolescence. Religious education is mandatory in Finland and is organized according to religious affiliation. Pupils who do not belong to any religious group attend a secular alternative that is called "Ethics". Since the Lutheran Church religious education is open to all pupils, members and non-members alike,[31] the religious education in Finnish schools is predominantly a Lutheran affair. In 2005, 94% of the pupils in comprehensive school attended Lutheran RE, 3% attended Ethics, 1% Orthodox religion and the remaining attended the RE of other religions.[32] Previous studies have demonstrated that young people acknowledge the impact of school on their religious reasoning. However, this education seems to address matters of worldview and religious knowledge rather than address concerns that are more personal religious and spiritual.[33]

For most young Finns, adolescence entails intensified contact with the Lutheran Church context due to their confirmation training. In 2007, 89% of all Finnish fifteen-year-olds participated in confirmation training. Since baptism is a prerequisite for being confirmed, a number of young people are also baptized during confirmation training. As a result, church membership is the highest amongst young people in Finland.[34] At the same time, young people also display more distant attitudes towards the Lutheran Church than older age groups. Young people are also less prone to believe in God, have a Lutheran identity and to label themselves as believers or religious. Furthermore, young Finns also express less confidence in the Church being capable of providing relevant answers to different types of problems. The thought of leaving the Church is also more plausible for younger Finns. While the young people's demand for answers to existential questions remains high, they are also more prone to explore different religious traditions to find answers.[35] Young members of the Church also ascribe less value to spiritual reasons for their church membership than older age groups. Whereas 32% of young Finns considered it at least "somewhat important" to belong to the Church because it strengthens personal belief in God, the corresponding rate for Finns more than 65 years old is 72%.[36] Especially young Finnish men seem unconcerned with public and

[29] Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 49.
[30] Kääriäinen, Niemelä & Ketola 2005, 113.
[31] When the parents of three pupils or more request RE in accordance with their own religious affiliation on behalf of their children, the municipality is responsible for these arrangements. At the upper secondary school level, the pupil decides which religious education alternative to attend with the consent of his/her parents. (Finlands författningssamling 2003, 2091-2093.)
[32] Kumpulainen & Saari et al. 2006, 32; Statistisk årsbok för kyrkan 2005, 14.
[33] Niemelä (2006a); Niemelä & Koivula (2006).
[34] Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 55, 136, 138-139.
[35] Niemelä 2003a, 193-198; Niemelä (2010).
[36] Niemelä 2006b, 55, 58-59.

private practice as well as with faith, and those who most actively leave the Church are young men between the ages of 18 and 39.[37]

The study of young Swedish-speaking Finns that I conducted in 2003 confirms the notions on Finnish religiosity that have been reported in previous studies. Their results reveal high levels of Lutheran Church membership were paired with a diversity of beliefs and views on religion. As I worked with the time-consuming but rather automatic coding of questionnaires, and witnessed how the questionnaires that were filled in by hand with different colored pens were gradually coded into numbers, my thoughts often turned to the young people who had filled in the forms. Given the opportunity, how would they have explained their underlying reasoning for the response patterns on the forms? For example, how would those who referred to themselves as "Christian in their own, personal way," explain why they chose this response alternative? Were the alternative beliefs of the progressive Christians a reflection of their conscious religious identity or was it rather a reflection of a spiritual interest in alternative traditions. If that was the case, why would these respondents still identify themselves as being "Christian?" The occasionally rather complex response patterns evoked an interest in how young people would describe their relationship between their religious affiliation and their personal religious identity, if they would be given an opportunity to express this in their own words. This question is addressed here.

1.3 An introduction to the Finland-Swedish context

The reason I have chosen to undertake this study on Swedish-speaking Finns[38] relates to the previous study I conducted, but also stems from the fact that I belong to this group. However, this minority context also makes an interesting case for a study on religious affiliation in a Western context characterized by a religious majority tradition, and at the end of this section, I will explain why. Before that, I will present a short introduction to the research context by providing an account of why there is a Swedish-speaking group in Finland and what Finland-Swedish identity entails in contemporary Finnish society.

The Swedish language has a long history in Finnish society. Documentation attests to Swedish presence in Finland since the Middle Ages, and for six centuries until 1809, Finland was a part of the Swedish kingdom.[39] Throughout this era, Swedish was spoken by a number of different groups in Finland from different social strata that existed alongside each other without contact.[40] However, the growing nationalistic awareness during the latter part of the nineteenth century under Russian rule brought language issues to the fore and resulted in linguistic group awareness in the Finnish population. As the movement became more politicized, the initial calls for a more official role of the Finnish language gradually turned

[37] Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 63-67. With referral to Finnish research from 1962, Niemelä (2003a, 193) states that the indifference observed among young Finnish males does not seem to imply a change.
[38] I will use the labels "Swedish-speaking Finn" and "Finland-Swede" interchangeably.
[39] For a more comprehensive account, see McRae (1999; 9-27).
[40] Allardt & Starck 1981, 107-108; 167-168.

more anti-Swedish. The demands for monolingual Finnish-speaking solutions resulted in the rise of a corresponding Svecoman movement, mobilizing Swedish-speaking masses from all the social strata in Finland.[41]

From the nineteenth century onward, Finnish society has been characterized by the recognition of two languages, Finnish and Swedish. In the new Republic of Finland, the 1919 Language Act granted equal rights for both language groups. The Language Act and the equal rights on behalf of speakers of Finnish and Swedish established at that time has remained in force ever since.[42] On a structural level, Swedish is therefore institutionalized both in terms of the Swedish-speaking branches of all official sectors and the Swedish-speaking media producers. At a meso-level, voluntary Swedish-speaking interest organizations and associations play a significant part in contributing to the maintenance of the Swedish-speaking group in Finland.[43]

Considering the long presence of Swedish-speakers in Finland, the historical development is central to the understanding of the identity of the Swedish-speaking Finns. The historical account reveals that despite the tense situation in which language group awareness arose, and despite the occurrence of occasional, yet intense language conflicts, the language group relations in Finland have predominately been characterized by peaceful coexistence. Furthermore, the history of Swedish in Finland also reveals that Swedish-speaking Finns do not share an ethnic background that distinguishes them from Finnish-speakers, which explains why the primary loyalty of Swedish-speakers is directed towards Finland as a nation rather than the Swedish language group. Swedish-speakers therefore understand themselves as being part of two cultures. They are similar to the Finnish population and fully integrated in it, yet the Swedish-speakers constitute a distinct group with a high level of engagement regarding Swedish-speaking rights.[44] This historical background also offers an explanation for the scattered distribution of Swedish-speakers in Finland. Swedish-speakers are found in four geographically disparate regions: Ostrobothnia (in Swedish: Österbotten), Uusimaa (Nyland), Turunmaa (Åboland) and the Åland islands. The gradual composition of the Swedish-speaking population has also resulted in the heterogeneity of the contemporary Swedish-speaking group, which reflects rather typical differences between town and countryside. The urban areas are characterized by higher educational levels and a higher presence of Finnish language in domestic settings.[45]

In 2007, there were approximately 290 000 registered Swedish-speakers in Finland, which was 5.5% of the population.[46] The decades after the Second World War have been a

[41] For a more comprehensive account, see McRae 1999, 28-43.
[42] Beijar et al. 1997, 38-42; McRae 1999, 55-67.
[43] Cf Liebkind et al. (2007), Kreander & Sandlund (2006).
[44] Herberts 2008, 21.
[45] Allardt & Starck 1981, 113-119;166-199; Liebkind et al. (2007); Beijar et al. 1997, 56.
[46] Finnäs (2010). Studies have established a general correspondence between the official language registration and the self-understood linguistic affiliation (Visapää, 1996).

story of decline in the Swedish-speaking population, due to parallel developments that have resulted in societal Fennicization.[47] This change has had dramatic implications for the self-understanding of the Swedish-speaking population. For example, Allardt & Starck argue that the combination of linguistic behavior, the strategies employed in order to maintain linguistic rights and concerns regarding demographic decline all contribute to the Swedish-speakers in Finland being a minority group rather than a national group, despite the national language status and the integrated position of Swedish-speakers. Allardt & Starck also point out that the weak Swedish skills of the majority population make Swedish a minority language in practice.[48] An example of the salient collective identity of this group is found in a study from 2005, where 96% of the Swedish-speaking group regarded the Swedish language as personally significant and 99% regarded Finland's official bilingualism as being significant.[49]

However, during the recent decades, the dramatic decrease in the Swedish-speaking group has come to a halt. Such change can be attributed to the changed patterns of language use in exogamous families.[50] Contemporary Finnish families with a bilingual composition tend to use both languages at home.[51] Furthermore, as a result of successful campaigns driven by Swedish-speaking interest organizations, an increasing degree of children raised in bilingual homes attend Swedish-speaking schools.[52] As a result, the proportion of children from bilingual families who attend a Swedish-speaking school has increased dramatically and is currently about 80%.[53] Selecting a Swedish-speaking school rather than one that is Finnish-speaking is motivated by the general dominance of the Finnish language in society.[54] The rise in bilingualism has resulted in increasing differences between Swedish-speaking regions. Whereas a quarter of the Swedish-speaking children live in a monolingual family setting and an almost monolingual area, one-third of the children live in Finnish-dominated areas and a majority comes from bilingual families.[55] From this follows that being Swedish-speaking will have different everyday implications, depending both on one's family background and on the surrounding language environment. The question is how these differences will be reflected in the understanding of linguistic identity.

Traditionally, language proficiency has been the decisive factor for Swedish-speaking in-group categorization,[56] but it has been suggested that the increasing degree of bilingual Finland-Swedes may challenge this self-image and result in generational differences in the

[47] Henning-Lindblom & Liebkind (2007). In 1950, the proportion of Swedish-speakers was 8.6%.
[48] Allardt & Starck 1981, 87, 107-111; 119-123.
[49] Svenska Finlands Folkting 2006, 19.
[50] Tove Skutnabb-Kangas' (1975) research on the positive effects of natural bilingualism (see Sundman 1999, 42-46) challenged the prevalent monolingual Finnish language patterns in exogamous families.
[51] Tandefelt & Finnäs 2007, 51.
[52] Lojander-Visapää 2001, 15-16.
[53] Slotte-Lüttge 2005, 17; Lojander-Visapää 2001, 104.
[54] Sundman 1999, 82-84; 137-140.
[55] Tandefelt & Finnäs 2007, 50-52.
[56] Allardt & Starck 1981, 115.

Swedish-speaking group.[57] Such a conclusion is supported by recent research on the language identity of young Finland-Swedes. Anna Henning-Lindblom and Karmela Liebkind found that young Swedish-speakers are characterized by multiple identification patterns in terms of language. Their results therefore suggest that in the current Swedish-speaking minority situation, Finnish- and Swedish-speaking identifications are not mutually exclusive. However, the multiple identification patterns found were varyingly prevalent in different regions and also depended on local language structures.[58] Pia Nyman-Kurkiala's analysis of essays written by Finland-Swede 15-16-year-olds also demonstrated how local contexts resulted in different types of individual minority experiences, depending on the proportion of Swedish-speakers in the local setting.[59] Furthermore, Catharina Lojander-Visapää's research in the Helsinki area depicted different patterns of language identity of the young people from Swedish-speaking and bilingual families respectively. Her findings also illustrated that the Swedish-speaking school context played a central role in how young bilingual people had become aware of their particular language identity as bilinguals.[60] These studies depict young Swedish-speakers as being aware of their linguistic minority position, and that they value it, but that minority experiences will vary, depending on the language structure found in the local context as well as individual factors such as family background and language skills.

Furthermore, the increasing proportion of bilinguals may also imply changes in how language identity is enacted through private and public use. On the other hand, young people report using Finnish in public settings to a higher extent than adults.[61] On the other hand, Lojander-Visapää found that bilingual identity entailed pride in language proficiency, which resulted in boldness to speak both languages in public, which was a contrast to young people from Swedish-speaking homes, who regarded Swedish as their private language and seldom used Swedish in public settings out of fear of being bullied.[62] These findings point to the complexity in how language identities are discussed depending on language proficiency, home environment and regional background in the Swedish-speaking population.

Another prevalent theme in the contemporary research on the Swedish-speaking group concerns social capital. Previous research has identified a number of lifestyle factors that positively differentiates the Swedish-speaking group from the Finnish-speaking majority. These differences, which have been identified in the Swedish-speaking group in general as well as the youth population,[63] have been interpreted as being indicators of social capital,[64]

[57] Tandefelt & Finnäs 2007, 50-52.
[58] Henning-Lindblom & Liebkind 2007, 180. The study was conducted amongst 16 year olds enrolled in Swedish-speaking comprehensive schools at three locations.
[59] The data was collected on five locations with varied language structures. (Nyman-Kurkiala 1996, 6-10; 79-80.)
[60] Lojander-Visapää 2001, 162-182; 203-218. The study is based on theme interviews conducted both individually and in group settings. In total, 84 young people were interviewed (Lojander-Visapää 2001, 112-113).
[61] Herberts 2008, 30.
[62] Lojander-Visapää 2001, 133-135.
[63] See further Keskinen (2001) and Kestilä (2003).

which in turn has inspired further analysis of the social settings and the patterns in the Swedish-speaking community.[65] Based on the comparisons between the Swedish-speakers in Finland and Finnish-speakers in Sweden, Susan Sundback's conclusion is that social capital is not explained by a minority position alone. The social capital of the Swedish-speaking community in Finland is attributed to cultural factors, such as the long historical presence in Finland and a strong cultural capital.[66] Furthermore, Fjalar Finnäs has reported that patterns of mobility also contribute to the stronger social capital of Swedish-speakers, since they tend to be more rooted in their regions than Finnish-speakers, who move around more.[67]

To summarize thus far, the Swedish-speaking group is characterized by a strong sense of community and interpersonal bonds and by a linguistic minority position and these contribute to Finland-Swede group identification. However, Finland-Swedes constitute a heterogeneous group,[68] where home language and local language structure result in different understandings of in-group and out-group identifications as well as what such belonging entails. These differences reflect their historical background as well as contemporary developments and seem to increase as a growing number of Swedish-speakers are raised in bilingual homes. Studying the collective identities amongst young people who are aware of their Swedish-speaking identity and value it is interesting because it indicates collective identity awareness, which may serve as a fundamental in exploring religious affiliation. In addition, the rich organizational network that characterizes the Finland-Swede setting also extends into the religious domain, most saliently through the parallel organization of the Lutheran Church into a Swedish-speaking branch. For Swedish-speaking members of the Lutheran Church, religious affiliation could therefore have ethnic connotations. The Swedish-speaking group in Finland makes an especially interesting case in studying religious affiliation, especially because Swedish speakers are more loyal Church members than Finnish speakers.[69] This is an issue I will discuss in more detail in Section 2.2.3. Here, I will continue by describing and analyzing the general features of the Finnish religious landscape.

1.4 Introduction to the research topic

Religious affiliation in Finland points to a structural presence in individual choice, especially regarding how it develops. Four out of five newborn Finns are baptized shortly after birth and

[64] In a series of comparisons between language groups in Ostrobothnia, Markku Hyyppä and Juhani Mäki detected differences regarding factors such as working life expectancy (1997a, 1997b, 2001) and self-rated health (2000). Even though Hyyppä's findings have been criticized on methodological grounds, the differences between the language groups have also been observed elsewhere, for example, in terms of divorce patterns (Finnäs, 1997), unemployment (Saarela & Finnäs, 2003), and life expectancy (Saarela & Finnäs 2005; Koskinen & Martelin 2003).
[65] The initial studies that analyzed the differences based on language in a certain area have also been subject to criticism (Cf. Finnäs), but subsequent studies (Cf. Sundback & Nyqvist (red.) 2010, 20) have analyzed social capital within the Swedish-speaking group more generally.
[66] Sundback 2005, 47-50.
[67] Finnäs 2010, 36-39.
[68] Cf. Sundback 2010b, 55-61.
[69] Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 77.

become Church members. This early introduction and traditional element of this practice are likely to result in understandings of Church membership as a given, ascribed identity marker. During childhood and adolescence, religious affiliation also has practical implications as an organizing principle underlying religious education at school and most young Church members also participate in confirmation training at the age of 15. These indicators all point to a fair degree of structural influence on religious affiliation patterns, which suggests that religious affiliation is a matter of socialization. However, religious affiliation is less likely to result in a defined set of personal beliefs, and even less, regular religious practice. The increasing number of Finns leaving the Lutheran Church suggests that the patterns relating to tradition and cultural heritage are increasingly challenged in Finnish contemporary society. It could be suggested that this type of change results in a more actor-oriented and individualized stance to religious affiliation. Considering that young Finns are over-represented amongst those Finns who choose to detach themselves from their religious affiliation, it becomes increasingly important to analyze how young people understand their religious affiliation.

The minority patterns of religious affiliation and non-affiliation are more diverse, but are framed by similar frames: these frames are the impact of family on the one hand, and the societal trends of individualization and de-traditionalization on the other. The question is then how young people who do not share the religious affiliation patterns that occur in the mainstream express their affiliation status and whether these understandings differ from, or resemble, those found in the majority.

The aim of this interview study is therefore to explore how young Swedish speakers in Finland understand the meaning of their religious affiliation. A central question is how their understandings reflect their social surroundings on micro-, meso- and macro-levels, which in turn contributes to the supposed individualization patterns that have been described in previous theory and research.

This dissertation begins with theoretical issues and moves on to empirical findings. Chapter 2 presents the theory and previous research. Section 2.1 presents the three bodies of theory that are adopted in this study: socialization theory, role-identity theory and collective identities as reflections of minority and majority positions. These theories represent different scientific traditions, but they all approach social structures from an individual perspective. The latter parts of the section contextualize these theories in two ways. First, since the use of these theories in a study on youth requires reflection on how youth is understood as an age phase, I will present the consequences of understanding youth either in terms of stability, or in terms of change. Second, I will describe how these theories have been challenged and modified in the contemporary setting. Section 2.2 addresses religious affiliation in three ways. First, I will provide an overview of the recent research on religious affiliation in Finland, but I will also discuss the disparate ways in which religious affiliation has been understood in a contemporary Northern European perspective and how it is addressed more specifically through the recent research findings on religious socialization in the Finnish context. This

chapter concludes with a discussion on how the theory and research presented will be applied to the present study.

After establishing the theoretical fundament for this study, Chapter 3 begins with the specified research questions. After discussing how different conceptions of religious affiliation in part stem from methodological differences, I will provide an outline of how this enquiry was conducted. I will begin by describing the interview guide and the main concepts that contributed to the research design. I will then explain how the informants were recruited for the study, how the interviews were conducted and the main ethical questions that arose during the research process. I will also give a presentation of the informants. The last section of the chapter addresses the analysis of the data, both by discussing my own role in this process and, more specifically, by presenting how the qualitative analysis was conducted.

The next four chapters present the data. Since religious affiliation was an unknown factor amongst those interviewed at the outset, Chapter 4 introduces the religious affiliation patterns that were detected for those interviewed and how the remaining chapters on results were formed as a consequence. Chapters 4 through 6 therefore mainly concern the vast majority of Lutheran Church members who were interviewed. In Chapter 4, I will present the results by addressing one of the main questions, namely how young people explain their religious affiliation. Since these responses pointed to the role of the family, this chapter will also examine the situations in which church membership has been actualized at home, how it has been enacted, and how young church members understand their parents and their homes from a religious perspective.

Chapter 5 addresses how religious affiliation is actualized outside the family. I will begin these explorations by presenting how existential and religious matters are approached in the peer context. I will argue that the ways in which institutional contexts are approached are linked to the social setting of peers. This discussion will serve as a springboard to how religious matters have been encountered in two institutional contexts, school and church. I will begin by describing how religious education at school is experienced and discussed. Then I will turn to address the experience that the informants have had with activities for children and confirmation and how informants describe such experiences. Both sections will conclude with a discussion on these institutional contexts as religious socialization agents.

Chapter 6 examines the personal aspects of Church membership, namely Christian identity and belief. The first part explores the negotiations and positioning that are evoked by the question, “Would you call yourself Christian?”, and the tensions between personal and social identity markers revealed by these discussions. The second section offers an account of how informants described their theistic beliefs and their beliefs in an afterlife. The last section of the chapter summarizes the findings on the religious affiliation of the majority by presenting four different types of Church members. Each of these types is characterized by a certain way of describing Church membership both from the present and future perspective,

from the religious socialization patterns at home and from an understanding of Christian self-identification.

The last result chapter, Chapter 7, addresses minorities from two different perspectives. The first section of the chapter is devoted to the informants who were not church members in the data and their discussions on the role and function of religious affiliation. I will also describe how these discussions resulted in both explicit and implicit accounts of the religious affiliation of the majority. The second section analyzes the minority context in which this research is conducted by describing how the young people in this study describe their identities as Swedish speakers and the meaning of significance of their Swedish-speaking identity. In order to understand how the specific minority context has affected the results of this chapter, the chapter ends with an account of whether informants recognized the Church context as a Swedish-speaking arena.

Chapter 8 examines the results that were reported in the previous chapters and discusses them in relation to the theories developed in previous research.

2. BELONGING IN LATE MODERN SOCIETY: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH

2.1 Belonging through learning, reflecting and interacting

2.1.1 The challenges of socialization theories

In this chapter, I will look into some theoretical orientations and related literature that are relevant in understanding the role and function of religious affiliation. In the first section, I will address the issue of social relations and the impact of social belonging on an individual's life. The departure point for my explorations on belonging is socialization. Whereas socialization addresses how social belonging is learned, role-identity theory offers explanations as to how social belonging implicitly continues to affect behavior in adult life. Section 2.1.3 approaches belonging from a different perspective by addressing how an individual life is also affected by the larger societal groups he or she belongs to, more specifically, how majority and minority positions affect the salience of belonging on an individual level. The purpose of this section is therefore to provide frames for this enquiry.

Anthony Giddens defines socialization as "the process whereby the helpless infant gradually becomes a self-aware, knowledgeable person, skilled in the ways of the culture into which she or he was born."[70] Giddens describes how socialization enables social reproduction, which in turn is a condition for social stability over time. He continues: "During the course of socialization, children learn the ways of their elders, thereby perpetuating their values, norms, and social practices."[71] But Giddens concludes by pointing out the following:

> Socialization does not imply "cultural programming" in which the child passively absorbs the influences they are exposed to. Even a new-born child has needs which influence the behavior of (…) those taking care of the child. Right from the beginning, the child is an active being.[72]

Giddens' understanding of children as being active and reflexive is in line with his description of the late modern individual that was referred to in Chapter 1, although here, the child's activity is described as an inherent characteristic rather than as a change caused by societal factors. His description of socialization includes notions of social reproduction, social stability, and the gradual development of the child who is traditionally found within socialization research. According to Leena Alanen, the study of children's[73] development

[70] Giddens 2006, 163.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Giddens 2007, 162. Although Giddens (2007) is a translation of Giddens (2006), this citation cannot be found in the English edition, and the translation of this text is thus my own.
[73] Corsaro 2011, 7-8. Socialization is often understood as something primarily concerning children, and thus, this section is to a large extent based on theories on childhood, despite the focus of the present study. However, childhood research is also mainly relevant to youth studies, since there is little agreement on the "proper" age when childhood ends and adulthood begins in Western societies (Wyness, 2012, 5; 27). Furthermore, much of

within traditional sociological research has been underpinned by an interest in children as future adults and by concerns for future social stability. From this perspective, the interest in understanding children and their living conditions have been of secondary importance. According to Alanen, "the child remains *negatively defined* – defined only by what the child is *not* but is subsequently going to be, and not what the child presently is."[74] By being inherently forward-looking and conceiving of development as being essential for the children to become "*acceptable*"[75] members of society, the traditional understandings of socialization have consequently contributed to the maintenance of an understanding of children as not being worthy of study in their own right.[76]

The study of childhood as a social construct initiated by Philippe Ariès[77] has resulted in an increased interest in exploring not only the understanding of childhood in contemporary society, but also the assumptions underpinning traditional research on childhood. An analysis of the basic underlying presuppositions in research on children reveals that the major influence of developmental psychology is to differentiate childhood as "something other" than adulthood. Using David Archard's distinction between concept and conception, Michael Wyness argues that the assumed distinctions in research between children and adults have not only concerned obvious biological differences (concept), such as size and vulnerability, but also the cultural and social assumptions about children (conception) as being inferior to adults.[78] This means that children's marginalized position in sociological research has not only reflected children's subordinate position in society, but has also reflected assumptions that have been "accepted as biological givens or obvious social facts."[79] In this context, socialization theories have contributed to a view of the child, "as something apart from society that must be shaped and guided by external forces to become a fully functioning member."[80]

In Giddens' definition on socialization cited earlier, the additional sentence about a child's activity illustrates how the understanding of both children generally and socialization specifically has been challenged during the past decades. As Brian A. Roberts points out, even the short definitions of socialization that are found in encyclopedias have been affected by these discussions.[81] Recent developments in sociology have thus resulted in a growing interest in the child's perspective and an active role in developing and challenging the traditional view

---

what is stated about children here could without a doubt be applied to young people, who are also regarded as being "something else" than adults.

[74] Alanen 1988, 56, Alanen's italicizing.

[75] In Harris (1995, 461), socialization is described as: "the process by which an infant becomes an acceptable member of his or her society."

[76] James, Jenks & Prout 1998, 22-25.

[77] In Ariès' (1962) historical study, his exploration of childhood as a social construct revealed how the distinction between children and adults is not a historical constant throughout history. For a recount of Ariès' findings, see Wyness 2012, 14-16.

[78] Wyness 2012, 26-27. See also Archard (2004).

[79] Corsaro 2011, 9.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Roberts 2000, 56.

of socialization as a unidirectional and over-deterministic process where the child is regarded as the passive recipient.[82] Even within developmental psychology, which has a traditional socialization framework that seems to hold its ground, the assumption of socialization as a unidirectional process has been challenged and replaced by an increasing awareness of children's competent and active nature in learning as well as the reciprocal nature of socialization, especially within the parent-child –relation.[83] Psychological research has taken into account the impact of the cultural context by echoing the argument for understanding childhood as a social construct with varying meaning. As a consequence, it has also become increasingly clear that children are socialized in different ways in different cultures. The understanding of socialization as a stable and homogeneous process regardless of context has therefore been replaced by an understanding of the relation between socialization and context as being contingent.[84]

The development within childhood sociology has clearly challenged the fundamental assumptions of traditional socialization theory. According to Wyness, socialization as a concept is not compatible with understanding "children as constituent members of the social world." To Wyness, "the socialized child suffers the same fate as the developing child, inhabiting the social periphery as a transitional object or project."[85] William Corsaro also makes the observation that socialization has an "individualistic and forward-looking connotation."[86] These scholars argue that socialization as a concept includes implicit understandings about the role and place of children. Both Wyness and Corsaro welcome studies of children in relation to their social contexts, but they do not consider socialization to be a helpful concept in these explorations. Instead, Corsaro suggests the concept of "interpretive reproduction" as an alternative. This concept emphasizes the child's active participation in the learning process while also taking into account the social structure in which that learning occurs. This type of perspective resonates well with James, Jenks & Prout's discussion of "the rise of childhood agency" as a new paradigm, which to them includes, "a call for children to be understood as social actors shaping as well as shaped by their circumstances.[87]"

While socialization thus has been challenged on the basis of the underlying assumptions about children, the concept is still adopted in many fields of research. For example, despite the new developments within developmental psychology, socialization appears to remain in use. Within social studies, socialization has also remained current within

[82] Wyness 2012, 88-95. Strandell (2010) points out how this type of approach has found its way into empirical research of Finnish children as well, both within sociology and in other disciplines that involve adult work with children.
[83] Blunt Bugental & Grusec 2006, 373-376.
[84] It has also been suggested that socialization to a certain extent is domain-specific, which would mean that socialization processes function in different ways in different fields. (Blunt Bugental & Grusec 2006, 376-378; Harris 1995, 462.)
[85] Wyness 2012, 104.
[86] Corsaro 2011, 20.
[87] James, Jenks & Prout 1998, 6.

certain areas of research. For example, Wyness cites how gender studies still use socialization as a concept when describing how children learn gender structures. In other words, this implicitly maintains the emphasis on the structure into which the "asocial child" is gradually integrated.[88] Likewise, the concept of socialization is used within the research from a Marxist perspective which, as Wyness observes, "emphasizes material constraints that differentiate the process of socialization,"[89] and this points to the influence of class structure on children's conception of the world.[90]

To Ivar Frønes, the sociology of childhood and youth that is represented by, amongst others, Corsaro and Wyness is primarily concerned with other matters than socialization. As a result, Frønes contends that empirical research within this field will not result in an increased understanding of how socialization develops. However, Frønes is unwilling to abandon socialization as a concept. He maintains that this concept describes how "a child's development is situated in the society in which he or she grows."[91] However, he proposes that the study of the socialization process must take into consideration both sociological and psychological perspectives, as well as embracing "social forces (…) actively at work."[92] From this perspective, Frønes states that socialization should account for the child's development as a guiding factor on the one hand, and for the child's individual agency on the other. For Frønes, the key to this understanding is to pay closer attention to the role of peers. Whereas the socialization processes that analyze relations with parents, grandparents or other adults almost automatically imply an assumption that socialization is a transmission of culture and the child as learning, adapting and being formed, the role of the child in peer socialization is far more active. Frønes therefore suggests that the balance between agency and structure will be better maintained by acknowledging the role of peers in children's lives.[93] This will be discussed further in Section 2.1.4.

The developments described here have also been acknowledged within religious studies. In the foreword of a recent anthology on religion and youth,[94] Beckford states that the increasing attention to this field has had implications for the understanding of how religious beliefs are passed on. Beckford identifies a shift in religious socialization research from the trans-generational transmission of orthodox Christian beliefs and practices to an increased focus on young people's own agency in how they handle religious matters in their social environments. To Beckford, such a change "signifies a departure from the underlying image of young people as relatively passive recipients of religious knowledge," recognizing to a larger extent "how young people can exercise a high degree of critical autonomy in making

[88] Wyness 2012, 93; Mayall 2002, 168.
[89] Wyness 2012, 93.
[90] Wyness 2012, 93-94. However, Wyness also remarks that Marxists nevertheless tends to be critical towards the structural functionalist implications of socialization.
[91] Frønes 1995, 2.
[92] Frønes 1995, 7.
[93] Frønes 1995, 1-2.
[94] Collins-Mayo & Dandelion et al (2010).

their own decisions about what to believe and how to translate their beliefs into action." [95] To Darren E. Sherkat, religious socialization is "an interactive process through which social agents influence individuals' religious beliefs and understandings,"[96] and this could be understood as an example of this type of change. In other words, even though the influence of others is acknowledged, the (young) individual's religious beliefs and conceptions are nevertheless seen as a matter of personal agency.

This review has demonstrated that as a concept, socialization cannot be adopted without clarification. Some fields within social studies will argue that using this concept implies regarding a child as an object that is determined by external forces and is driven by an interest in children as future adults. However, the criticism from childhood studies implicitly paints a picture of the child as being entirely a product of his/her environment, as opposed to an independent adult in charge of his or her own life. Depicting adults in this manner fails to recognize that sociology is familiar with issues of agency versus structure and freedom versus constraint.[97] In this sense, socialization theory could be understood as a structure-oriented perspective, in which individual behavior is analyzed in relation to societal forms. Furthermore, religious belonging being studied from the perspective of the young adult will imply a further shift away from the tendency to regard young people as "becomings" rather than "beings". It is important to note that given the age group studied here, some of the inherent shortcomings that are acknowledged in the research on children will also partly be avoided. In many ways, Finnish 19-year-olds *are* already adults. For example, from a legal point of view, they are independent[98] and are entitled to vote.

This study, therefore, will adopt socialization as a framework for understanding and highlighting the role of the close relations in religious affiliation patterns while at the same time regarding the young person as being, in Giddens' words, "self-aware, knowledgeable (…), skilled in the ways of the culture into which she or he was born."[99] The path to self-awareness and knowledge is here understood as being influenced by the close relations and social settings. Moreover, the relations between identities and social contexts will be further illuminated by role identity theory, which will be presented in the following section.

2.1.2 Role-identity theory: reflecting and negotiating social positions

Role-identity theory was originally developed by George McCall and JL Simmons. This theory has been influenced by the symbolic interactionist tradition and analyzes collective identities from an individual perspective. According to role-identity theory, the individual is understood as being rational, goal-oriented and reflexive in his/her behavior, yet an individual's behavior is predominantly influenced by the social environment both in terms of

[95] Beckford 2010, xxiii.
[96] Sherkat 2003, 151.
[97] Furseth & Repstad 2006, 3-5.
[98] At 15, young people become legally responsible in Finland. (Polisen, 2011)
[99] Giddens 2006, 163.

his or her societal context and interpersonal relations.[100] Role-identity theory was elaborated as a way to understand, "*who* come together to engage in *what* social acts *when* and *where,*"[101] and the point of departure for exploring these general patterns is that everyday interaction is guided by and organized around social positions or roles. McCall and Simmons do not propose a distinct definition of what they mean by social positions, but their examples seem to indicate that social positions include anything from broad structural categories, such as gender or ethnicity, to situational roles such as "football player" or "young sociology student."[102] Furthermore, both social positions and social roles are believed to result in role identities, and individual understandings of the surrounding world are believed to be influenced by how the individual identifies the roles and positions of self and others.[103]

McCall's and Simmons' discussion concerns how the individual manages social positions. Adopting the distinction between an active "I" and a reflective "me" originally made by William James and later elaborated by George Herbert Mead, McCall, Simmons and later Sheldon Stryker focus on the "me," that is, the reflexive aspect of the self and more specifically, how the individual reflects on her group memberships and affiliations.[104] Although the social positions available to the individual are at least to some extent given,[105] McCall and Simmons argue that individuals have a fair share of freedom in interpreting these positions in a way that corresponds to their understanding of themselves. A role identity is, *"*the character and the role that an individual devises for himself as an occupant of a particular social position.*"*[106] This consists of a conventional aspect (role), based on factors usually understood as being linked to a certain social position, and an idiosyncratic aspect (identity), the individual's own way of acting out his or her social position in a manner that suits his or her persona. The balance between the conventional and the idiosyncratic dimension of a role identity varies from individual to individual – some tend to be more faithful to the manuscript more than others – and some role identities give more room for personal interpretation than others.[107]

[100] McCall & Simmons 1978, 4-13. Role identity theory has later developed into different directions, focusing either on the more internal dynamics guiding social behavior (cf. Burke, 1991) or on the structural influences on identity (cf. Stryker, 1980). Stryker & Burke suggest that these theories are complementary in many ways and state that "each provide a context for the other" (Stryker & Burke 2000, 284). Role identity theory/identity theory is also related to social identity theory that was originally developed by Hogg & Abrams (1988). Whereas role identity theory is concerned with how roles are integrated in the personal identity structure, social identity theory explores how roles result in feelings of belonging to a group and how this belonging is expressed on an individual level and in intergroup relations (Stets & Burke 2000, 226-229).
[101] McCall & Simmons 1978, 15.
[102] McCall & Simmons 1978, 200-225.
[103] McCall and Simmons refer to this process as identification, whereas social identity theory refers to this self-categorization (Stets & Burke 2000, 26-27; 224).
[104] McCall och Simmons 1978, 52-55.
[105] For example, McCall and Simmons (1978, 205) point out how the new-born child are ascribed certain social roles depending on the social context he is born into in terms of, for example, sex, class and religious affiliation.
[106] McCall and Simmons 1966, 67.
[107] McCall and Simmons 1966, 70-71.

Even though the individual understands all role-identities as part of his or her self, some roles are attributed more importance than others, implicitly forming an individual role hierarchy. The formation of this hierarchy is affected by both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. It is suggested that the roles in which the individual feels competent and self-efficient will result in feelings of inner gratification, which in turn will lead to a salient role identity to which the individual will be committed. Moreover, the individual's constant need for support in his or her role performances also play a major part. This means that role support from other people and especially long-term relations are therefore significant. Indeed, long-term relations are believed to have more weight than the number of people involved in this role-support.[108]

The significance of others is also evident in the understanding of how role hierarchies evolve over time. For example, new situations and life stages result in the abandonment of some role identities in exchange for others. Likewise, the meaning of role identities may also be altered. However, these changes are seldom dramatic in character, because major role hierarchy changes may have relational consequences and they therefore may entail risk. Role hierarchies are therefore developed both in terms of how they reflect the individual's ideal self and through the influence by an individual's significant relationships. In this process, the individual is understood as an active agent, one who decides how to mold and shape her role identities in a desired way. This follows the symbolic interactionist emphasis on the individual need for social acceptance and interpersonal relationships without ignoring an individual's self-image and values.[109] In brief, it is the maintenance of the social order on a micro-level which constitute the core of McCall and Simmons' argument.

Role identities are ordered in terms of prominence, and this results in varying in their salience for individual behavior. However, McCall and Simmons make a distinction between role identity and role performance. Role identities are understood as the idealized views of oneself in a certain role that influence one's daily life by how behavior is planned and evaluated. However, role identities do not determine individual behavior, that is, role performances.[110] The objective of this study is to analyze the prominence (identity aspects) of role identities rather than how salient they are (behavior). In other words, discussing a role identity will therefore not be understood as enacting it.

The key concepts in role identity theory have most often been researched quantitatively and have therefore been subject to exact conceptualizations. For example, through these conceptualizations, the connections between prominence and salience and the constitution of role hierarchies have been discovered. Here, role-identity theory will function as a useful framework for three reasons. First, it takes an interest in identities shared by larger groups of people, but approaches these identities from the perspective of the individual. Second, role-identity theory incorporates social roles and positions that are both ascribed and

[108] McCall and Simmons 1978, 70-73; 75, 217-218.
[109] McCall and Simmons 1966, 73-79.
[110] McCall and Simmons 1978, 65-67; 81-82.

achieved and focuses on the individual meaning attributed to these roles and positions. Third, this theory identifies factors that will affect why some social roles and positions are understood as being more significant than others. Even though religious affiliation in Finland is an increasingly challenged identity marker, it could still be understood as being relatively stable.

However, the focus on the stable identities presented here could perhaps be counter-weighted by more contemporary and qualitative examples from youth research. One such example is the work of Amy Wilkins on subcultures amongst the youth in the American context. Through participant observation and in-depth interviews, Wilkins studied goths, wannabes[111] and born-again Christians in the American context from an intersectional perspective. At a first glance, the relevance of this study for my study may seem far-fetched, especially since Wilkins does not acknowledge the connections to role identity theory in her analysis. Furthermore, the young people in these subcultural settings primarily understood their identities as reflecting independence rather than anchorage. Thus, they understood their respective lifestyles as subjective choices leading to empowerment and freedom from the constraints and drawbacks that they identified in mainstream settings. On the other hand, Wilkins' analysis demonstrates that the participants of the respective subcultures shared patterns of gender, race and class, and that subcultural identities consequently were formed in the interplay between the ascribed and achieved aspects of personal identity in relation to the resources available according to a participant's structural location. Wilkins also highlighted how identity discussions within each subculture involved a constant negotiation with the mainstream, middle-class youth culture, which the young people regarded themselves as being opposed to, with high awareness of what was considered to be cool in each setting.[112]

The research of Wilkins indicates that young people's identity work is motivated by the desire to be cool and respected within the structural and intersecting boundaries of gender, race and class. This demonstrates that even the most contemporary identities reflect societal structures and indicate a high awareness of social conventions, regardless of belonging to the mainstream or a minority. These conclusions are in line with how role identity theory describes the importance of interpersonal relations in the formation of role identities and role hierarchies. The study by Wilkins also contributes to our understanding of a subcultural position, which in turn provides insight into how personal identities will also be influenced by whether they reflect a minority or majority position. The following section will focus on the role of majority and minority position in how individual form their understandings of collective identities.

[111] A "wannabe" in this context implies a racial cross-over on the part of white females to a Black and Puerto-Rican hip-hop community (Wilkins 2008, 5).
[112] Wilkins (2008).

2.1.3 Religious affiliation as a majority or minority marker

Religious affiliation and language group are both large-scale, collective categories that unite people beyond immediate social spheres. Relating this to the situation in Finland, Finnish society is characterized by an overwhelming majority of Finnish-speaking Lutherans. Whereas most of the Swedish-speakers in this enquiry share a Lutheran (religious) identity with the majority, their mother tongue differentiates them from the societal norm. This section will therefore provide a brief account of how the majority and minority positions have been discussed in previous studies on identity, namely by focusing on two recurring themes in the discussions: ascribed and achieved identity aspects on the one hand, and themes of normalcy and deviance on the other. This section will also include introduce research on young members of religious minorities in Finland.

In her discussion on ethnicity and language, Karmela Liebkind argues that social identities[113] are more salient for ethnic minority members than for majority members. Liebkind describes ethnic social identity as being both ascribed and achieved. The origin of one's ethnic identity is undoubtedly ascribed, but what the ethnic social identity means to the individual is a matter of choice, thus achieved.[114] Research on minority identities has employed the concepts of ascribed and achieved identity to describe the degree of negotiation space individuals experience in their identity work. In Pia Karlsson Minganti's results, the personal stories of young devout female Muslims in Sweden reflected experiences contradicting pressures from family members and the religious community on the one hand, and from their surrounding societal context on the other. These stories illustrated how the room for achieved identity aspects may be rather limited when the dimensions of gender, ethnicity and religion intersect. Karlsson Minganti reasons along the same lines as Liebkind when describing how such pressures are directed at (ethnic/religious) minority members rather than at their mainstream peers.[115] However, Karlsson Minganti's intersectional perspective also draws attention to that the degree to which a minority marker is experienced as ascribed depends on the other social identity markers it is set up in relation to. This means that the opportunities that individuals have to move in or out of their ascribed minority status vary significantly depending on their intersecting identity markers.

The analysis of the ISSP-data from 15 countries demonstrated how a societal majority and minority position also affects religious socialization patterns on a micro-level. Kelley and De Graaf found that "processes interact with the family's religious background in ways that make family background more important in secular nations, but make national context more

[113] Social identity theory and role-identity theory share the interest in how collective identities are reflected and negotiated on a personal level, and both theories assume that personal appraisals are influenced by the attitudes in the surrounding social context. However, social identity theory presumes that social identities also result in a sense of group identity affiliation, and consequently, in-group and out-group categorizations (Liebkind, 1995).
[114] Liebkind 2010, 18-23. For a discussion on the ascribed and achieved aspects of Finland-Swede identity, see Sundback 2005, 17-18.
[115] Karlsson Minganti 2010, 116-118; 120.

important in religious nations."[116] The impact of family was therefore lower in the religious families of religious societies as compared to the impact of family religiosity in those societies that were predominantly secular. The results therefore indicated a certain dynamic between majority and minority positions and how a minority position would result in a more salient religious transmission at an individual level.

In her exploratory study on Adventist youth in Finland, Arniika Kuusisto discovered the impact of the school context on religious identities of the young people studied. Those attending a mainstream school described how they reflected more frequently on their identity, since the school context meant being exposed to mainstream culture values which conflicted with the values they associated with their religious community. Such encounters resulted in a more constant process of negotiation of and reflection on one's own religious identity.[117] Based on results from the Youth barometer from 2006 that analyzed Finns aged 15-29, Hjelm and Myllyniemi focused on the group of young people in the data who did not belong to either of the two folk churches (13%). Those affiliated with a religious minority community (4%) were characterized by a more salient and active religiosity compared to their folk church counterparts. The former were more prone to identify themselves as religious, were more active in their religious communities, and they described their homes as religious to a much higher extent. They also tended to reflect more on the meaning of life than their peers with a folk church affiliation.[118] For the minority, religious affiliation was therefore a more prominent identity marker that defined both beliefs and practice than for young folk church members.

Out of those who reported having no religious affiliation (9%), slightly more than half stated that non-affiliation was a result of a personal choice to leave the Lutheran Church. Nonetheless, having no religious affiliation did not signify a lack of interest in religious and existential questions. Even though the proportions of non-belief were higher in this group than they were for folk church members, non-affiliation was far from synonymous with non-belief. However, the non-affiliated were characterized by more critical attitudes towards Christianity and especially towards the Lutheran Church. Based on these results, Hjelm and Myllyniemi conclude that the decision to leave the Church could be interpreted as a "counter-statement to the cultural and societal position of the Evangelic-Lutheran Church.[119]" Non-affiliation seemed to imply a conscious position against the religious majority culture, but not necessarily against religion on a more general basis.

Liebkind's reference to the minority positions being more salient than majority positions also illustrates that understanding one's social identity as achieved rather than

[116] Kelley & DeGraaf 1997, 640.
[117] Kuusisto 2011, 51-52.
[118] Hjelm & Myllyniemi (2006).
[119] Of the non-affiliated, 31% identified as religious and non-affiliated also reported thinking about the meaning of life to a much higher extent than those who were folk church members (Hjelm & Myllyniemi 2006, 140).

ascribed appears to be predominantly a privilege of the majority.[120] Liebkind also describes other forms of more implicit privileges that a majority position entails:

> The categories of "majority" and minority" seem to reflect inherently a normative hierarchy that combines the idea of status and legitimacy, of numbers and deviation from the norm. (…) In our social structuring of reality, "the majority" seems to refer to the referent, the measure of all things.[121]

The inherent presence of norms in relation to majority and minority positions has also been detected in research conducted by Fanny Ambjörnsson. In Ambjörnsson's study on young Swedish girls, gender construction came across as a complex interplay between conformity and authenticity. Ambjörnsson argues that "the closer you are to the norm, the larger the possibility you seem to have to be perceived as free and independent." By contrast, subcultures were perceived as being unfree because the inherent behavioral patterns were perceived as being conformist. Therefore, the girls were the most able to achieve the ideal of being free and having individual agency within the bounds of "normal" behavior. These results are an example of the close connections between the majority and normality.[122]

In a critical discussion of the current organization of religious education in Finnish schools, Riitaoja et al. argue that when the role of religion in Finnish schools is discussed, the words "religion" and "Lutheranism" are used interchangeably, which gives little room for other voices to be heard. They argue that this type of discourse is enabled by the majority pattern, which they refer to as "secular Lutheranism," a combination of Lutheranism and secular humanism. On the one hand, Lutheran elements are inherent in Finnish nationalist self-understanding and also occur in personal lifestyle patterns and religiosity, but on the other hand, there is a silent understanding of the Christian elements as being isolated in relation to personal lifestyle and morals. In this cultural setting, authors argue that minorities, be they confessional Christians, representatives of other religions, or atheists, are understood as being distinct, while the majority culture remains invisible.[123] Secular Lutheranism therefore explains some contradictions in Finnish schools, such as the Lutheran religion being allowed at Finnish school ceremonies, yet the school environment is considered to be non-denominational. Riitaoja et al conclude that the current situation is not constructive because it

[120] This notion can also be found in Lynn Davidman's (2007) discussion on American Jews. Hyltenstam & Stroud (1991, 21; 46-47) point out that a societal majority status also entails dominance over the societal policies concerning the minority. Such exercise of power will be influenced by inter-group relations, which are highly context-dependent. For a discussion on religious majorities and minorities in Western societies, see Davie 2007a, 154-159.
[121] Liebkind (1995).
[122] Ambjörnsson 2003, 287-293.
[123] Kuusisto (2010, 56) makes a similar point regarding "Lutheran parents for whom religion is an important part of everyday life" and how such values make them part of a minority group despite being affiliated with the religious majority.

fails to make secular Lutherans aware of "the power asymmetry between different perspectives, their own privileged position and its influence on the inter-group dialogue.[124]"

The theories described thus far have suggested that religious affiliation is contingent upon the surroundings in which it occurs, both on a micro- and macro-level, and how individuals gradually come to terms with such patterns through explicit and implicit transmission. The implications of majority and minority positions have also been mentioned as a crucial factor that needs to be considered to determine how religious affiliation is understood on an individual level. As this review of the literature has demonstrated, majority identities are not necessarily very salient. In fact, being part of what is "normal" in terms of religion means that the informant may not even be highly aware of the position it entails. In addition, role-identity theory has offered a general framework to analyze how individuals develop their social positions as adults, which reflect both individual agency and the continued significance of the social environment. In brief, regarding religious affiliation as a social position is therefore helpful in analyzing it in this study.

2.1.4 Young people in late modern society

The theories described above both approach social behavior on an abstract level. In order to anchor them in a contemporary setting, this section includes more recent perspectives that relate to social belonging and socialization. It begins with an overview of Anthony Giddens' description of contemporary society and his observations on how late-modern life conditions fundamentally affect social life. I will then address the changing role of parents and families in contemporary society as well as the role of peers. It has been suggested that as a consequence of children entering into institutional contexts earlier than before, the peer context has become more central, but it is also a consequence of how previous conceptualizations of childhood have failed to take into account the role of peers.

Anthony Giddens describes late modernity as being characterized by a separation of time and space on the one hand, and by disembedding mechanisms on the other. These changes have resulted in an interconnectedness between the local and the global. In other words, individual life conditions are locally situated, yet they are constantly related to global circumstances and are affected by them. In late modern life, life conditions rely on the institutional frameworks of expert knowledge that is multi-voiced and contradictory and this must be trusted, despite an awareness of the risks that this entails. In a disembedded society, Giddens describes interpersonal relations as no longer being confined to local settings and traditional bonds. A consequence of interpersonal relationships being based on notions of intimacy is that they entail the same interplay of trust and risk as described earlier. Under these circumstances, individual life is described as a reflexive project. Giddens therefore argues that when social and geographical location no longer sets boundaries for available lifestyle options, tradition loses its meaning as a rationale for action and the individual has

[124] Riitaoja, Poulter & Kuusisto 2010, 93.

"*no choice but to choose"* both in small and large matters. As a consequence, by navigating through a world of choice, the individual creates lifestyles and life plans. In the end, the individual is also faced with the responsibility for creating continuity in his or her life story.[125]

Recent changes in family life have been discussed as being the result of individualization processes and as having created an increase in personal autonomy.[126] Three factors have had a profound impact on family life. The first factor is that women have entered the workforce and this has placed children in institutional settings at an earlier stage in life.[127] Individualization has also resulted in more diverse understandings of family as a concept and, consequently, there has been a shift away from regarding the nuclear family as being the only existing model.[128] Third, as a result of changing demographic patterns, children are currently raised in company of fewer siblings than before.[129] This change is likely to result in changing family dynamics and in how parent-children relationships are formed.

Although a large number of children are cared for by those other than their parents at an early stage in the contemporary setting, Ivar Frønes argues that in other respects, parents are more important than ever before, since a less traditionalized society requires a more active role of parents as fosterers. In addition, Frønes suggests that modern family ideology demands that parents should assume the role as "conversational partners and advisers in emotional matters and questions of growing up,"[130] which also implies being significant, but by adopting a different role. As an example, he mentions how parents still influence their children's educational choices, even though they do not assume the main responsibility for their education. Corsaro makes a similar point in relation to leisure time and observes that parental responsibility for children's stimulation and guidance has increased as the role of traditions and local communities have decreased.[131] Drawing on Ulrich Beck, James and colleagues have determined that increasing risk awareness also influences parent-child relationships. As a result of global consciousness, the external world is therefore seen as being dangerous and threatening, which in turn results in children becoming increasingly watched over by their parents.[132] While parents continue to be the most central figures in the socialization process, these comments therefore suggest that the nature of parent-child relationships and how religion is altered at home might be changed as a result of the more general changes in parental roles. These suggestions also indicate that parents and children generally spend less time together than before, but at the same time, parents have become more important as

[125] Giddens 1997, 26-31; 44; 89-122; citation is found on page 101.
[126] Cheal 2008, vii. "Both common sense and sociological models ascribe increasing importance to relations outside the family" (Frønes 1995, 39).
[127] Cf. Mayall 2002, 157; Corsaro 2012, 28.
[128] Wyness 2012, 61. Day (2011, 269-272) found that young people differed from older generations in how they defined their families by being more selective as to whom they counted as their family members.
[129] Alanen et al. 2004, 148-150; 167-171.
[130] Frønes 1995, 38; 3.
[131] Corsaro (2012, 122) has also observed how children's access to media, literature and other forms of symbolic culture, as well as their transitions into peer cultures, are significantly influenced by parental guidance.
[132] Beck (1992); James, Jenks & Prout 1998, 7-8. See also Wyness 2012, 59.

conversational partners for their children. Following this line of reasoning, these changes would imply that there are changing patterns of religious socialization, where religious transmission being increasingly verbal in character rather than patterns learnt by the example of others.

The subordinate societal role that has been assigned to children in the previous conceptualizations of childhood and development explains why peer cultures have rarely been the focus of research.[133] Drawing on Smith and Cowie, Wyness acknowledges that previous research has been preoccupied with children's psychological development and that such interest has resulted in analyzing children in settings where they have been isolated from their social contexts in order to better regulate the factors of interest. According to this position, peer groups have only had a role as "external stimuli."[134] However, recent research developments have created an enhanced interest in children's social cultures.[135] The fact that children enter institutional settings earlier than before not only results in them spending less time with parents, it also gives them access to regular participation in peer cultures at an earlier stage of life.[136] This increasing interest in children's involvement in peer cultures has therefore stemmed from two simultaneous developments; one is the interest in the impact of structural changes on children, and the other has been a growing awareness of the child's social nature that begins at an early stage.

According to Corsaro, one of the key processes in how children acquire knowledge and in how they come to participate in their surroundings is their involvement in peer cultures. From an early age, they are engaged in two cultures, that of the children and that of the adults. Children's evolving membership in a peer culture therefore entails an active learning process; their engagement with other children is a way to "make sense of the adult world" in which they are simultaneously engaged.[137] Corsaro suggests that peer cultures are far more important in the development of the child than previously acknowledged and that the impact of peers on children is equal to the impact of the adult world. These developments have two consequences. First, Corsaro states that recognizing children's engagement with peers automatically implies understanding children as active agents.[138] Frønes elaborates on this point by observing that acknowledging the role of peers also leads to a change in understanding of the socialization process. Whereas socialization in the form of child-adult relationships implicitly assumes that socialization is a transmission of culture in which the

[133] Judith Rich Harris (1995, 1998) has argued that the traditional socialization paradigm has not only overlooked the role of peers and group socialization, but also overestimated the impact of the family on children. She suggests that children's social development in fact primarily is explained by their involvement with peers. Her conclusions have been widely debated and challenged (for example, see Collins et al., 2000).
[134] Wyness 2012, 83.
[135] Mayall 2002, 22. For an account of the role that the sociology of childhood has played in such developments, see James, Jenks and Prout 1998, 94-95.
[136] Corsaro 2012, 28.
[137] Corsaro 2012, 26-27. Corsaro defines a peer culture as "a stable set of activities or routines, artifacts, values, and concerns that children produce and share in interaction with peers" (2012, 120).
[138] Corsaro 2012, 28-29; 147-148. See also Frønes 1995, 4.

child is learning, adapting and being formed, the child takes on an active and acting role in interaction with peers.[139] Second, Corsaro considers the participation in peer cultures to constitute a continuous process which will also follow children through life as adults:

> "children's experiences in peer cultures are not left behind with maturity or individual development; rather they remain part of their life histories as active members of a given culture. Thus, individual development is embedded in the collective production of a series of peer cultures that in turn contribute to reproduction and change in the wider adult society or culture."[140]

From adolescence onwards, the role of peers has been more acknowledged than in the research on children. Frønes' review of previous theories leads to the conclusion that adolescence has generally been understood as an active orientation phase towards the surrounding society, and that this orientation takes place in the company of peers. Frønes also suggests that peers are becoming increasingly important in contemporary society. This is because the high levels of enrolment in age-specific institutions not only affects who young people spend time with, but also results in them developing "a general age-graded view of social life and a peer-oriented social interaction."[141] Thus, an understanding of peer cultures in certain cohorts will contribute to an understanding of societal change as a result of trans-generational change. But as Corsaro argues, experiences with peers will also be later integrated into the experiences that individuals relate to and base their behavior on as adults.

The role of peers has also partly been acknowledged in recent studies on young people's encounters with religion. In Niemelä's research on how the perceived quality of confirmation training is related to the effect it has on the religiosity of participants, confirmation training appeared to be a highly peer-oriented activity. Approximately two-thirds of the participating 15-year-olds reported that their friends played a role in why they went to confirmation training, and their strongest expectations related to aspects that were social and activity related. The fulfillment of their expectations was also strongly related to their expressing satisfaction with confirmation training.[142] Niemelä observes that the social and activity-related elements of confirmation training explain why confirmation training remains popular. She states that "to young people, confirmation training is no longer a course on faith, it is a Camp (with a capital C).[143]" Social pressure is both caused by others participating and by slightly older peers recapping their confirmation experiences. Older peers also lower the threshold of attendance. Furthermore, Niemelä comments on how both young people and their parents seem to regard confirmation training as a normal activity, and states: "A young person seldom needs to explain to everyone why [s]he wants to attend confirmation training. However, a person who chooses not to probably does."[144] The religious dimensions

[139] Frønes 1995, 1-2.
[140] Corsaro 2008, 28-29.
[141] Frønes 1995, 27.
[142] Niemelä 2002, 68-69; 87-93; 135-136.
[143] Niemelä 2002, 174; my translation.
[144] Niemelä 2002, 173; my translation.

of confirmation training were also recognized, but the social dimension nonetheless played an inherent part in the choice to attend.[145] These results suggest that young people's encounters with the Church should be understood as being collective in character rather than individual. It could also be argued that peers constitute a central context for religious issues to be addressed. In a study on youth and religion in Sweden, the most mentioned arenas where religion had been encountered during the past six months were on television, at school or work, and amongst friends.[146] Furthermore, the Finnish Youth Barometer from 2006 found that respondents named friends as those they most often discussed religious issues with.[147]

These findings suggest that peer cultures form an arena in which religious issues are addressed, but also that peer cultures are the backdrop against which they encounter institutional religion in the form of school and religious institutions. From this perspective, it could be argued that previous studies on youth and religion have not paid sufficient attention to the social settings that young people are part of. The present analysis will explore the suggestion that this is an area which demands greater attention.

2.1.5 Stability or change?

The last section will address how the changes that late-modern society has undergone for the living conditions of young people. A central issue here concerns whether youth should be considered as a relatively stable phase of life or whether it is a vehicle of societal change. More precisely, this raises a number of questions. First, due to their stage in life, are young people more susceptible to the surrounding changes in society than adults? Does such susceptibility therefore result in a societal impact having more profound and long-lasting effects on young people than adults? Since these are by no means new questions in the research on young people, I will present the main arguments used for both these perspectives and will discuss their implications. The section will then conclude by providing an account of how I will approach the research problem in this enquiry and consequently, how the position of Giddens and the changing role of parents and peers are understood in relation to the results of the present analysis.

The discussion of how societal change influences the lives of young people depends on whether adolescence and young adulthood is evaluated in terms of stability or change. When youth is understood as a moderately stable stage of life, youth is then regarded as a specific age phase in their development toward adult life that entails specific developmental tasks.[148] According to this model, the behavior of young people is considered to be age-

[145] Niemelä 2002, 173-178.
[146] The study (Lövheim & Bromander et al., 2012) was conducted on Swedish youth aged 16-24 in 2008. Bromander 2012, 67.
[147] 66% of the respondents reported discussing religion with their friends at least sometimes. The second most common response was to discuss religious matters with one's mother (50%). (Myllyniemi 2006, 71-72)
[148] Lövheim 2005, 11-13. Here, Lövheim points out that another perspective that assumes the stability of young people, but for different reasons, can be found in research focusing on the differences between social groups. From this perspective, it is argued that the experiences young people have in adolescence will be influenced by

related, which is therefore different from adults. As a consequence, differences are temporary in character. If one adopts this position, then the religious differences between generations are therefore an indicator of religious issues being the task of older rather than younger people. For example, Jeffrey Janson Arnett describes 18- to 25-year olds as going through a life phase he refers to as "emerging adulthood," which is described as being related to a search for identity, instability, self-centeredness, a feeling of in-between, and opportunities.[149] The life span model explains age differences in a similar manner. Here, the different social roles that are assigned to the different age groups particularly in family settings are thought to influence the general outlook on life that the youth have. This means that raising children or dealing with the death of the parent is understood as being associated with increasing religiosity and since young people have not yet had these experiences, they are likely to be less religious.[150]

Studies of youth that regard youth as being a stable phase of life will interpret the attitudes and values of young people as expressions of how they experience their lives from a "here and now" perspective. On the one hand, this outlook naturally allows room for a youth perspective and allows young people to speak for themselves. On the other hand, there is a risk that such a perspective will dismiss young people's concerns because they are understood as being age-related and therefore as being temporary.

When youth is analyzed in terms of change, young people are understood as being more susceptible to their surroundings than other age groups. This is based on the assumption that young people are preoccupied with forming their identities. It has been argued that the impact of the surrounding world is profound to the extent that generations will differ from each other depending on the living conditions that are experienced during adolescence. This means that the age differences in religiosity reflect the different experiences of different cohorts.[151] This perspective suggests that social change occurs when generations replace each other and when they integrate their cohort-specific life experiences into society through their decision-making. Ronald Inglehart and Thomas Ziehe also examine the values of young people from this perspective, but they arrive at different conclusions as to whether the most fundamental aspect of social change is related to material conditions or cultural conditions, respectively.[152]

On the one hand, research from this orientation tends to follow the attitudes and concerns of young people closely, because they indicate more fundamental societal changes. Young people are therefore taken seriously due to their role as future decision-makers. On the other hand, this orientation to analyzing young people runs the risk of viewpoints of young people because the research interest focuses on other topics. For example, in a research

---

the social groups they belong to and as a consequence, this will affect which arenas they have access to. The individual's social location is understood as having more explanatory power than the age phase per se.

[149] Arnett 2004, 14-15. Arnett is cited in Niemelä 2008, 29.

[150] Niemelä 2003a, 198-199.

[151] Ibid.

[152] Lövheim 2005, 11-13. See also Inglehart (1977) and Ziehe (1994).

review of four large-scale questionnaires on religion directed at young people in the Western context, this tendency was apparent. The questions about religion in these questionnaires did not primarily aim at understanding the role of religion for young people, but reflected an interest in the future of religious institutions or concerns as to how religion was related to pro-social and to anti-social behavior.[153]

Giddens' description of late modernity will be attributed different importance, depending on whether youth is understood as an age phase that is to be overcome, or as a stage that is crucially important for how adult life will be approached. However, I suggest that a third, equally viable option is possible, which is to approach the study of young people openly without a pre-determined framework. The assumption of this approach is that young people's views and reflections about their religious affiliation are not to be interpreted as indications of specific, yet temporary developmental tasks, nor are they to be interpreted as signposts for future changes. A more open-ended orientation allows the reflections of young people to be taken at face value. The interpretation of results will therefore primarily be discussed in relation to previous research. From this perspective, it is possible to discern whether young people form a distinct and different voice in comparison to adults, or whether both the young and older adults in fact seem to approach religious affiliation in a fairly similar manner. A more open-ended perspective is also one additional strength of the actor-based approach in comparison to the childhood research that was presented earlier. Furthermore, the discussions on religious affiliation in this study will be analyzed in order to discern whether they are characterized by the reflexivity that Giddens proposes as a central feature for late modernity.

As for the changing role of parents and peers, this enquiry is not longitudinal, which means that notions of change over time will not be explored. However, the way in which these notions have been described will be addressed in the analysis of the findings, especially concerning the role of peers and on how religious affiliation is enacted and interpreted. However, childhood research, as well as the study by Niemelä, suggest that the role of peers should be taken into consideration when analyzing how religious affiliation is enacted. The same could be suggested for how religious education is experienced. To address these issues, the design of the present study will acknowledge that peers may have an impact on how religious affiliation is understood. As for the changing role of parents suggested here, this study will focus on whether children regard their parents as conversational partners in existential and religious matters, and whether religious affiliation has been addressed in their conversations.

[153] Klingenberg 2012, 40-42.

2.2 Religious affiliation in contemporary Nordic societies

2.2.1 Religious affiliation as a social category

Whereas Section 1.2 included a general outline of the religious affiliation in Finland, this section will discuss generally institutional religion and religious affiliation. Institutional religion is a central issue in contemporary research on individual attitudes in Europe for two reasons. First, much of the theoretical base of the sociology of religion was written in a historical context that was marked by the declining societal significance of religious institutions. James Beckford argues that in the initial analysis of European religion from a sociological perspective, the terms 'religion' and 'Christianity' were used interchangeably.[154] Second, although concepts such as privatization, individualization and de-traditionalization all imply a shift away from an institutional setting, religious institutions remain the point of departure for analyzing religious change. This section will demonstrate how the role of religious affiliation has been discussed from a contemporary northern European perspective, which has also to some extent influenced how religious socialization has been studied in Finland. The last section here will focus more specifically on the Swedish-speaking group and on previous findings on religious affiliation for this group in Finnish society.

In Finland, the point of departure for studying religiosity has been religious affiliation, including belief, and most studies have obtained results through large-scale, quantitative surveys. The most important factor for Lutheran Church membership is the opportunity to participate in life rites (funeral, baptism and marriage) and the Church's maintenance of graveyards is also regarded as a "very important" reason. Religious affiliation therefore seems to be motivated primarily by the solemn and religious framing that the Church is able to offer for significant events in family life. However, over three-quarters stipulated 14 different reasons as being at least "rather important" motivations for their church membership, which indicates that the reasons are manifold.[155] Kati Niemelä has commented on how the reasons that are most often mentioned include a reference to collective dimensions, both manifested by family occasions and in relation to a wider community, where the Church is believed to be a resource especially for exposed societal groups.[156] In a Nordic comparison, Finnish membership was characterized by the highest tendency to feel attachment to church membership.[157] Accordingly, church membership in Finland appears to be a moderately stable expression of collective patterns.

More recently, Jonas Bromander has conducted two studies of church membership in Sweden. His most recent results from 2010 suggest that Swedes also understand church

[154] Beckford 2003, 40.
[155] Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 57-58. The broad base for church membership in Finland has also been stated in comparison to other Scandinavian countries (Sundback 2000, 62), regardless of the respondents' sex and age (Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 34).
[156] Niemelä 2003b, 129-130.
[157] The Finns were also the most prone to describe their beliefs in God in theistic terms and to regard themselves as being religious (Sundback 2000, 47-51; 59-62).

membership as being related to collective factors, including tradition and the societal role of Church rather than individual faith.[158] However, Bromander also discovered that approximately 30% of the participants responded positively to the statement "I have not thought about why I am a member in Church of Sweden." Bromander therefore suggests that this lack of reflection should be considered in any analysis of church membership patterns generally.[159] Even though membership in the Church of Sweden does not seem to be either an urgent or a central matter for most of its members,[160] the Church of Sweden nevertheless maintains infrequent, yet regular contacts with most members, mainly through life rites, as 85% of the Church members reported having had these contacts during the past year. The corresponding proportion of Swedish non-members is 70%.[161]

The role of religious affiliation is also analyzed by Ina Rosen in her research on how belief and religion are discussed in the Danish setting[162]. Rosen's main interest was in personal beliefs, but she was also interested in how these beliefs relate to institutional (i.e.) Lutheran Church adherence. At the outset, Rosen describes Denmark as a religiously privatized and differentiated nation where a majority (over 80%) still belongs to the Lutheran state church. Despite high membership figures, popular life rites and popular confirmation training, Rosen emphasizes the steady decline in membership and the modest knowledge of Christianity amongst the Danes. Rosen even suggests that "[i]t is conceivable that the church is so insignificant religiously that people do not even conceive their membership as a religious membership."[163] According to Rosen, the high membership rates can be interpreted as a desire to maintain a link to a cultural heritage. Since the Church tax in Denmark is low and there is a willingness to take part in the life rites that are offered by the Church, membership rates remain high. The effort needed to leave the Church is understood as being more taxing than remaining a Church member.[164] The interviews conducted by Rosen included many referrals to institutional, (or in Rosen's terms, packaged)[165] religion. The common theme of these conversations was the expression of the respondents' distance from dogma through institutional belief and practice and appreciation of the "non-religious" institutional expressions that are related to the common good or that serve to connect the individual to a social and cultural heritage. The beliefs of the respondents were only vaguely, if at all, related to religious belonging. Instead, beliefs were considered to be a personal and private aspect of

[158] In the previous study (Bromander 2005), approximately 80% named the willingness to take part in life rites as a reason for church membership and for this reason, it was omitted from the subsequent and more condensed study. (Bromander 2011, 60-65.)
[159] Bromander 2011, 61-62.
[160] This is the conclusion by Bromander and it is based on how the mean value concerning feelings of affinity to the Church of Sweden was 2.26 on a scale from 1-5, where 1 signified "very weak" and 5 signified "very strong" (Bromander 2011, 65-66).
[161] Bromander 2011, 100-101.
[162] Rosen's findings are based on 12 focus-group interviews in the greater Copenhagen area, including a total of 41 informants. (Rosen 2009, 194).
[163] Rosen 2009, 35.
[164] Rosen 2009, 34-35.
[165] Rosen defines packaged religion as "a complex of ideas, behaviours, frameworks that are all related with a common essence" (Rosen 2009, 105).

life without a connection to practice, collectivity, devotion or social and collective consequences.[166]

Phil Zuckerman concurs with Rosen regarding the role of religious affiliation in "Society without God", an ethnographic study of Swedish and Danish religiosity. Zuckerman interprets religious membership and life-rite participation as constituting a contradiction to the more defining patterns of non-belief and the lack of interest in discussing the belief patterns that characterize Scandinavia. His analysis of how Swedes and Danes explain the meaning of religious affiliation and the behavioral patterns relating to the Lutheran tradition leads him to conclude that the patterns could be understood as a form of cultural religion, which is a concept that was established by Nicholas J. Demerath. Zuckerman describes these cultural religious elements as follows "people identifying with historically religious traditions, and engaging in ostensibly religious practices, without truly believing in the supernatural content thereof."[167]

Zuckerman and Rosen both study mainstream religion in the same cultural context and both arrive at similar conclusions regarding the role of religious affiliation in this setting. They conclude that religious affiliation should not be understood as a marker for personal religiosity and both have similar results regarding the descriptions of attitudes towards public and salient religiosity. Zuckerman reports that "to public profess a belief in God or Jesus [in Scandinavia] marks you the strange one, the deviant one, the oddball."[168] He continues and cites one of his interviewees stating that "young people think that religion is kind of taboo."[169] This is much in line with the latter part of the citation which is the title of Rosen's thesis: "(…) I'll be damned if I'm religious."[170] However, it is interesting to note that whereas Rosen assigns belief a central role in her study, it is a lack of belief that plays a central role in Zuckerman's analysis. These findings illustrate a common feature of religious studies regarding the divergent role that is assigned to religious affiliation.

In Grace Davie's analysis of European religion, the disjunction between belief and belonging served as a starting point. This type of disjunction challenged the view of secularization as a linear development in which all dimensions of personal religion are believed to undergo similar change. The concept "believing without belonging" described the mismatch between what Davie describes as hard and soft variables.[171] "Believing without belonging" has since been extensively discussed and even reversed,[172] but it has effectively challenged the assumption that religious indicators point in the same direction on an individual level. Davie continued her conceptualization of European mainstream religiosity

[166] Rosen 2009, 83-101.
[167] Zuckerman 2008, 155.
[168] Zuckerman 2008, 12.
[169] Zuckerman 2008, 13.
[170] Rosen (2009).
[171] Davie 2007a, 138.
[172] Davie 2000, 3; Davie 2007b, 25; Storm 2009, 704.

through the concept of *vicarious religion*, in which patterns of religious adherence are put in focus. The main tenet of her theory is the idea of a continuing, yet implicit bond between Europeans and their churches. One of the most salient indicators of such a bond is how institutional churches are financed. To Davie, the willingness to pay a church tax, which is paid especially in the Scandinavian countries, is an indirect way of indicating approval: "No population would support to such an extent institutions of which they fundamentally disapproved."[173] The role that the Church assumes in framing and directing extraordinary events indicates a mainstream consent to continued Church presence.[174] Accordingly, vicarious religion is described in terms of how "an active religious minority can operate on behalf of a much larger number, who implicitly at least not only understand, but quite clearly approve of what the minority is doing."[175] Other examples referred to by Davie that reflect how vicarious religion at work in societies across Europe are the ways in which church leaders and churchgoers believe, embody moral codes and debate unresolved issues.[176] Thus, religious belonging becomes a salient indicator of implicit and rather diffuse, yet persistent individual religion.

Abby Day has also incorporated the concepts of belief and belonging in her qualitative research, but she has re-interpreted these concepts in accordance with her findings. Her results, which are based on discussions initiated by the open-ended question *"What do you believe in?"* highlights the importance of affective and mutual relations. As a consequence, the belief in belonging, which Day reflects mirrors how people hold "relationship-centered and relationship-guided beliefs," and understand themselves as "being 'in relation to' something or somebody, (…) expressing their identity as an expression of belonging."[177] Day identified two types of belief systems. First, theocentric belief systems predominately correspond to what is generally analyzed within religious studies, but only a small minority of the informants described harboring such beliefs. Those having anthropocentric belief systems sometimes held theistic beliefs, but these beliefs did not play a non-prominent role in comparison to strong and salient anthropocentric beliefs. Beliefs and adherence generally referred to as religious thus had a subordinate role in comparison to the strong patterns of social belonging that was identified in the mainstream. Based on these results, Day expresses doubts regarding the "dominant theories in the social sciences relating to individualism and fragmentation."[178] For Day, the collective aspects of social life are as present as ever.

The study by Day was inspired by the 2001 British census in which 72% responded that they were "Christian." This was also an attempt to understand what that label meant for those interviewed. It transpired that being Christian meant different things, depending on

[173] Davie 2000, 40.
[174] Davie 2000, 71-81.
[175] Davie 2007a, 141.
[176] Davie 2007b, 23.
[177] Day 2011, 204.
[178] Day 2011, 204.

which belief systems people had. Day identifies two sub-groups of Christians: the nominalists and the faithful. The nominalists were characterized by anthropocentric beliefs and by the distance they felt toward institutional religiosity. Nevertheless, when presented with the census question, nominalists immediately responded that they were Christian. For them, being Christian was related to the larger societal context that they belonged to: "their identification with Christianity rests with circumstances of their birth, their ethnic affiliation and their social aspirations."[179] This type of category became distinct especially in comparison with the faithful, that is, the "God-believing, church-attending Christians"[180] who had presented themselves as such in the beginning of the interview and who complemented their self-description with theocentric beliefs. Day concludes: "Christianity is an important resource people sometimes use to reinforce their identity,"[181] but they do this in different ways, depending on the more over-arching belief system they hold.

This outline suggests that there is no consensus on the social and personal meaning of religious affiliation amongst the Northern European majority populations. What seems to be a crucial factor in understanding the relation between institutional religion and individual religiosity is how the latter is conceptualized. Previous research has also illustrated how the role of institutional religion in the studies on individual faith will depend on whether that research is conducted from an individual perspective or from one that is institutional, focusing on either private or public practice. As a result, the research results are sometimes rather contradictory. For example, the conclusions drawn by Kääriäinen et al on religious affiliation in the Lutheran Church as playing a central role in Finnish vernacular religion[182] is in stark contrast to how Rosen describes the role of religious affiliation in the Danish context. These types of contradictions raise the question of whether the lack of agreement reflects real differences between the majority populations, different perspectives on behalf of the researchers, or whether it reflects methodological differences. After all, the Danish data were retrieved through theme interviews and the Finnish data were obtained through quantitative surveys. In this respect, the present study addresses a gap in the current research because it attempts to study religious affiliation through qualitative and open-ended questions.

2.2.2 Religious socialization in contemporary Finnish society

A considerable number of studies address how young contemporary Finns relate to their context in terms of religion. For example, the concepts used to address this theme vary, the most common being religious upbringing[183], although religious transmission[184] and religious socialization[185] have also been analyzed. As the central position of "religious upbringing"

[179] Day 2006, 129.
[180] Day 2006, 128.
[181] Day 2006, 149.
[182] Cf. chapter 1.3.
[183] Myllyniemi (2006), Niemelä & Koivula (2006), Niemelä (2006a, 2008), Suonperä (2008), Tapainen (2008), Ristimäki (2010)
[184] Kuusisto (2003).
[185] Klingenberg (2005), Helander (2006).

indicates, when the religious concerns of young Finns are studied from a relational point of view, the main interest has been the relationships between children and parents. These connections have been studied both from the perspective of young people[186] and parents.[187] Young people have been approached in various ways by questioning them about their upbringing. For instance, in a study conducted by Niemelä, young people were asked to relate to statements that described their childhood home in religious terms. Furthermore, Helander as well as Wilska et al. have measured the correlation between the beliefs and practices of parents and children (both based on children's information).[188] In Helander's study, these questions were combined with questions on young people's conceptions about their parents' expectations for them in terms of religion. Since the quantitative studies for the most part have been aimed at the youth population generally or at certain Finnish areas, the results reflect a majority, that is, the perspective of the Lutheran Church members. In contrast, minority patterns have been given considerably less attention, which is understandable given the modest numbers of minority adherents found in the large Finnish population samples. The qualitative and mixed-method studies referred to here have also been interested in majority patterns rather than in those that are minority.

Some of the research mentioned above has analyzed other arenas that young people frequent, specifically, educational and religious institutions. Niemelä & Koivula conducted a regression analysis to analyze the influence of different arenas, including the home as well as school and the Church.[189] Niemelä conducted a longitudinal study on how confirmation training is experienced and valued by young participants over the long term. This study probed various areas that are potentially influential for an individual religion to obtain a fuller picture of what seems to be the decisive factors in the more lasting effects of confirmation training. Niemelä also included questions about young people's home environment.[190]

The results from these studies complement each other and offer a predominantly coherent picture of the religious transmission in Finland. First, previous research indicates that there are changing patterns of religious transmission in Finnish homes. In the World Values Survey 2005, the results of the question "I have had a religious upbringing" displayed clear age differences, indicating that older Finns agreed with this statement to a much greater extent than young Finns.[191] This question has later been included and discussed in three subsequent studies on informants from the Helsinki metropolitan area who were 15 to 29

[186] Klingenberg (2005), Helander (2006), Niemelä & Koivula (2006), Niemelä (2006a), Wilska et al. (2006).
[187] Suonperä (2008), Tapainen (2008), Ristimäki (2010).
[188] Niemelä (2008), Helander (2006), Wilska et al. (2006).
[189] Niemelä & Koivula (2006).
[190] Niemelä (2008).
[191] The proportion of Finns at "retirement age" agreeing with this type of statement was 75%, whereas the corresponding proportion amongst people below 25 years old was 56%. The proportion of agreement in the total population was 66%. The WVS-results from Finland are discussed in Borg et al., 2007. See also Niemelä & Koivula 2006, 163 ff.

years old,[192] as well as those who were 20 to 39 years old,[193] and on the 20-year olds in the city of Tampere.[194] These studies all confirmed the "low" levels of religious transmission that were reported by the young people in the WVS study.

These studies also identify a group of young people who ascribe both themselves and their parents as having a religious identity and the studies report on salient religious transmission, including both public and private religious practice. In her discussion on the results of the study in Wilska et al., Helve states that for this group, the religiosity at home is further reinforced by the manner in which parents enroll their children in church activities, such as Sunday school and church day-clubs. For this group, religious socialization is salient and overt, and it has an impact on the young individual's religiosity.[195] However, these socialization patterns characterize only a small proportion of Finnish Lutherans. For most young Lutherans, the patterns of religious socialization are not as clear-cut, and it is amongst the middle-ground that the more major changes seem to have taken place regarding what is passed on and by whom.

Young Finns nevertheless stated that their parents influenced them in forming their religious views. In phone interviews conducted in the metropolitan area, young adults who did not come from religiously active homes and who regarded themselves as "habitual Christians" still reported their religious upbringing as being influential in terms of providing them with Christian ethical guidelines, such as respecting others and knowing right from wrong. Furthermore, they were reported being willing to pass on their Christian upbringing to their own children.[196] The parents of confirmands in a study conducted by Anu Suonperä were characterized as "accentuating the common good rather than the maintenance of religious values or the maintenance of a Christian habitual culture,"[197] which supports Niemelä's & Koivula's results. Likewise, the conclusion that Ristimäki draws in her study of the parents of young children is that the parents' conception of what a Christian upbringing entailed was related to their socializing of their child in society in terms of how to treat others. This regard for other people was also seen as the most important motive for offering the child a Christian education.[198] These results confirm Ketola's description of Finnish religiosity as being moderate in character.

Even though these results seem to indicate that parents are willing to give their children a Christian upbringing, from the perspective of Finnish children, this type of Christian upbringing does not come across as being salient. The majority of young Finns think that their parents want them to make up their own minds in religious matters. For example,

[192] Cf. Wilska et al (2006).
[193] Cf. Niemelä & Koivula (2006).
[194] Cf. Niemelä (2008).
[195] Helve 2006, 103; 106.
[196] Niemelä & Koivula 2006, 167-169.
[197] Suonperä 2008, 252.
[198] Ristimäki (2009).

according to Helander's results, less than a third thought that their parents wanted them to adopt their beliefs, and even fewer thought that their parents would like them to attend religious services.[199] Helander's interpretation of her results is that Finnish parents seem to pass on to their children their view that religion is a private matter, even to the extent that parents are reluctant to influence their children in religious terms.[200] This explains perhaps why approximately one-fifth of the 20-year olds in Niemelä's study were unable to state whether they had had a religious upbringing from their mother or father, respectively, and why parents were placed in fourth place when respondents were asked to identify who had influenced their religious thinking the most.[201] This reluctance by parents is echoed in the research on parental views on religious transmission. For instance, Suonperä describes the level of religious transmission in Finland as "rather low,"[202] and when parents were asked to describe the religious atmosphere of their home, the mean response fell in the middle of the scale.[203] In Ristimäki's study, responsibility for providing children a Christian upbringing, the parents placed the Church in first place and themselves in second place.[204] These results support Helander's suggestion concerning how "passing on the religious heritage is perceived as being primarily the task of the Church,"[205] which confirms Niemelä & Koivula's interpretation that parents regard religious transmission as being a difficult task.[206] In her discussion of the generational differences that are referred to in Section 1.2, Niemelä argues that the low levels of religious transmission in Finnish homes are a contributing factor. In her conclusion, Niemelä argues that the changes in young people's religiosity as being similar to the changes found in other age groups. Moreover, these changes can also partly be interpreted as consequences of the latter: "when parents have detached themselves from a clear Christian tradition, it is clear that this tradition is not being transmitted to one's children in an equally powerful way as it is perhaps has been received from one's parents."[207]

Religious socialization in Finland therefore appears to be a somewhat contradictory matter. On the one hand, religious affiliation results in some behavioral patterns rather than others and this suggests religious transmission. Membership in the Lutheran Church is in fact

[199] Helander 2006, 165.
[200] Helander 2006, 165.
[201] Niemelä 2008, 141-144. The most powerful influences reported on individual religious thinking were a school teacher in religious education, a priest, and another church employee (these were described as having significant or some influence by 76%, 66% and 66%, respectively). Moreover, six out of ten respondents regarded their parents as having had significant or having had some influence on their religious thinking. However, amongst those who reported having a religious upbringing at home, parents were also seen as being more influential.
[202] Suonperä 2008, 247.
[203] Suonperä 2008, 246-247. The statements on the opposite ends of the scale were, "Religion is not important to us at all" (1) and "Religion is very important to us" (7).
[204] Ristimäki 2009, 123-124.
[205] Helander 2006, 165.
[206] Niemelä & Koivula 2006, 176-177.
[207] Niemelä 2003a, 203.

also passed on, since baptism presupposes that at least one parent is also a Church member.[208] On the other hand, the way in which religion is regarded as a private matter also seems to affect how religious matters are handled at home. This seems to make religious transmission implicit, due in part to the reluctance of parents to impose their religious views on their children. The question is how these patterns of transmission are perceived by young people. The present study addresses this by approaching the matter qualitatively[209] and from the perspective of the young people themselves.

2.2.3 Religious affiliation and language – the Swedish-speaking group

The first and most important point that needs to be made is that the similarities are greater than the differences between language groups in terms of their reported religious belonging. The shared religious patterns of Finnish-speaking Finns and Swedish-speaking Finns probably explain the rather weak interest in conducting research on the religion of Swedish-speakers generally.[210] However, some differences can be detected, and these will be presented here because these differences give a rather contradictory image of the religious patterns in the Swedish-speaking group.

On the one hand, membership rates indicate that Swedish-speakers are more loyal towards the Church than Finnish-speakers. In 2007, the Borgå diocese had the highest membership rate (89.7%) in Finland, and was also characterized by the lowest proportion of members leaving the Church.[211] In her study of the patterns in leaving the Church in Finland, Sundback discovered differences between the language groups even in the same municipality. Especially in the decades following WWII, the support for Swedish-speaking matters affected people's loyalty to the Swedish-speaking Church context. Sundback states the following:

> Since ethno-political rather than religious motives led to the founding of the Borgå diocese, the ethnic factor is likely to strengthen the traditional congregational loyalty of Swedish-speakers. The membership of a congregation and the Borgå diocese signals a "Swedish" interest, while the diocese's status in the national Church also confirms the equal status of the Swedish-speaking Finns with the Finnish majority in a civil religious sense.[212]

Sundback has also analyzed the connection between religious and ethnic belonging in other studies. The increasing bilingualism as a result of urbanization and individualization is believed to affect both religiosity and Swedish-speaking identification in a similar direction.

---

[208] Baptism is a requirement for becoming a member of the Church. Kyrkolagen (26.11.1993/1054) Chapter 1, §3.

[209] Apart from Tapainen's (2008) interview study on parents and the mixed methods approach by Niemelä & Koivula (2006) and Kuusisto (2010), this research review is based on quantitative data.

[210] An illustrative example is that since 1979, the religiosity of young Swedish-speaking Finns have only been studied comprehensively twice. See further Klingenberg (2005) and Holm (1979).

[211] Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 54, 62.

[212] Sundback 1991, 252; my translation. However, Sundback not only attribute the points to the differences in church adherence s being Swedish. This is also an effect due to population density. Until 1985, the Swedish-speaking group increasingly became a rural population. (Sundback 1991, 253-256)

Sundback expected to discover more salient connections between the religious and the Swedish-speaking identity in the stable and fairly traditional (rural) areas than in the more urban areas around Helsinki and Åbo. In the more urban areas, the local environments have changed the most in terms of urbanization, Fennicization, as well as more general life style changes. The traditional areas would then also be characterized by a higher degree of ethnic identity. The verification of this hypothesis would mean that increasing bilingualism has a secularizing effect.[213]

Sundback's results partly supported her hypothesis. The dominantly Swedish-speaking areas were characterized by a stronger affinity with the Swedish-speaking regions and by stronger indicators of personal religiosity.[214] The regions of Ostrobothnia and Uusimaa were the most different from each other in terms of religious and ethnic affinity. However, response patterns were also affected by more individual factors, such as a Swedish or bilingual/Finnish identification and originating from a monolingual Swedish or bilingual home. Sundback's conclusion is that ethnicity and religion seem to be related and are believed to affect Church affiliation the most: "perhaps (…) Church membership is an identity-building factor which Swedish-speaking Finns are reluctant to abandon when they stop believing or cease to attend Church."[215] However, Sundback argues that the relation between religion and ethnicity is neither salient nor acknowledged in the Swedish-speaking group.

Another interesting result for the present study was a question about how different collective identities were valued. Here, linguistic identity emerged as being significant, while religious identity was not considered to be very important.[216] These results confirm the ideas in role identity theory, where all collective identities are not equally important, but are varyingly salient at an individual level.

Whereas Swedish-speakers seem to be more traditional than the Finnish-speaking population in terms of Church adherence when comparing language groups, Nils G Holm detected more non-traditional religious beliefs amongst Swedish-speakers. Swedish-speakers also expressed more pluralistic religious views and reported experiences beyond the everyday to a higher extent. Another general theme was the pull towards the religious middle ground, both in terms of belief and prayer. Swedish-speakers were characterized by more belief in God and in an after-life than Finnish-speakers, but these beliefs were expressed by the more non-dogmatic alternatives. The "edges" of traditional belief and non-belief were thus not as represented in the Swedish-speaking group as they were for the Finnish-speakers.[217]

[213] Sundback 1994, 5-6; 33.
[214] Here, personal religiosity refers to regarding one's religion as being important, being a member of a religious community and regarding oneself as religion. (Sundback 1994, 34-35) The results from a more recent study suggest that the regional differences in terms of religion has further increased; see Sundback (2010a).
[215] Sundback 1994, 38.
[216] Sundback (1994).
[217] Holm 2000, 332-339.

According to Holm's results, Swedish-speakers attended church less than Finnish-speakers. However, Holm referred to other studies that have determined that there is a rather sprawling pattern in the Borgå diocese, where an active nucleus of laypersons in small parishes attends church with a frequency that the majority of Swedish-speakers who are more passive in their church participation. As a result, the attendance numbers for this entire diocese rises above the national mean.[218]

The review of past research has demonstrated that the Swedish-speaking group in Finland presents an interesting case for exploring the ethnic dimensions of religious affiliation, if not only due to the diverse patterns that occur within this group. The higher proportion of religious affiliation nevertheless suggests that the minority context does play a role in maintaining church membership, but it remains unclear as to why religious affiliation is considered to be significant. Could factors such as strong social capital, low levels of mobility, a higher degree of religiosity or a strong ethnic identity of this group account for their religious affiliation? However, these issues do not constitute the main focus of this study. The present study only examines the religious affiliation in the context of the Swedish-speaking population of Finland – the Swedish-speaking group is simply the research context in which religious affiliation is explored. However, this research review suggests that when discussing the results, I will need to return to the question of whether Swedish-speaking Finns need to be understood as either similar to, or different from, the Finnish-speaking Finns in terms of religious affiliation.

2.3 Proposing a model for understanding religious belonging

This literature review has presented some contradicting tendencies. On the one hand, the main characteristics of contemporary society indicate the increasing role of individual agency and the decreasing role of tradition (Section 1.1). One example of this is Giddens' theorizing on individual reflexivity and choice as being characteristics of late modern life (Section 2.1.4). For young generations, regardless of life domain, the notions of individuality and choice in a consumption-oriented society are likely to have an impact. The stress on individualized choice is counterbalanced by human behavior being also related to one's social context and significant relations. Research on young people demonstrates how they are tightly connected to their social surroundings. Socialization research (Section 2.1.1) exemplifies these notions. Even though recent research places more emphasis on the agency of the young person, the overall orientation persists of socialization as a factor with an explanatory value for human behavior. Furthermore, the discussion of majority and minority perspectives (Section 2.1.3) illustrates how individual choice is influenced by the social setting in which it takes place: this means that collective identities remain partly ascribed so that the contemporary ideals of individualism cannot be completely erased. As a result, close relationships as well as larger cultural patterns continue to affect individual choices. It has even been suggested that a

[218] Holm 2000, 335.

consequence of increasing risk awareness in contemporary society is that people become even more embedded in their close social networks as a strategy to cope with ontological insecurity (Section 2.1.4).

In order to gain a fuller understanding of the religious affiliation of the young people within the Swedish-speaking community in Finland, socialization theory functions as a framework for exploring the social context in which the young individual becomes self-aware and knowledgeable. The traditional understanding of socialization agents as well as previous research have suggested that when the young person makes religious choices, the central figures and major influences are parents and family, school and peers (Section 2.2.2). However, recent changes in family interaction and composition imply that parent-child relationships cannot be assumed to function as they formerly have. This is supported by recent studies on the religious socialization in Finland, which suggests a shift in who is understood to assume the main responsibility for the religious upbringing of children since a growing number of parents do not even necessarily have any interest in being, in Furseth & Repstad's words, "religious role models."[219] A review of the research has also revealed a void in the knowledge of how the role of peers should be understood in the socialization process. Therefore, the present study will focus particularly on what is reported on the impact of peer relationships on religious affiliation.

Role-identity theory (Section 2.1.2) will function here as a framework for the general understanding of the complex interplay between individual and his or her surroundings. Part of this framework pertains to the idea that social positions are not equally valued, but ordered into a personal role hierarchy. This enquiry does not aim primarily at identifying individual role hierarchies or even the role of religion in those hierarchies. However, role-identity theory makes a distinction between inhabiting a social position and ascribing it value. This distinction will be taken into account when religious affiliation is analyzed.

While role-identity theory acknowledges a certain individual freedom in interpreting roles in desired ways, it also offers an explanation as to why these roles nevertheless seem to be maintained in expected ways.[220] By emphasizing the role of stable and long-term relationships in how collective identities are valued and enacted, role identity theory proposes that substantial changes in individual role hierarchies are likely to occur at a social price. It suggests that if religious affiliation is a social position which is supported by significant others, be they parents, family members or friends, it is likely to be more valuable to the individual. The findings by Day support the suggestion that religious affiliation in fact may be motivated by its social embeddedness, especially due to the role that the majority churches play in framing solemn family events. Role identity theory can therefore be understood as a complement to contemporary socialization theories.

[219] Furseth & Repstad 2006, 117.
[220] Thoits and Virshup (1997, 111) have commented on how role identity theory focuses on the regularity and relative stability of role hierarchies.

The emphasis on social relations that is offered by the socialization theory and role-identity theory is complemented by the discussion on majority and minority positions. By focusing on how the minority positions tend to be more salient and prominent than the majority positions, this discussion offers an important addition to the overall understanding of religious affiliation, because it suggests that the interpretation of role identities are also likely to be depend on how they are situated in the societal context at large. The understanding of role identities as having both conventional and idiosyncratic aspects will also be used as a point of departure for exploring the cultural conventions related to religious affiliation. The negotiations and positioning inherent in these discussions on religious affiliation will then be analyzed in order to examine the conventional understandings of religious affiliation in Finland and how these understandings contrast with the non-conventional. I will now turn to how these orientations are reflected in the more specified questions in this enquiry.

3. RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHOD

3.1 Specified research questions and limitation of study

The theories and research presented in the previous chapter have resulted in a somewhat contradictory image of religious affiliation in the contemporary Nordic setting. Although religious affiliation implies structural presence, the traditional ways of belonging based on inherited social positions and expectations are believed to be abandoned in favor of religious belonging as a matter of choice, where the key is the individual's desire to belong or not belong. Research on religious affiliation has also identified a more diversified meaning of belonging, including at times the suggestion that religious affiliation is not predominantly maintained for religious reasons. Furthermore, the declining membership figures in the Lutheran Church in Finland also suggests a more individualized stance towards Church membership, just as the tendency to regard membership as being detached from spiritual concerns. On the other hand the Church membership in Finland gains significance from its collective dimensions and is also related to religious belonging in terms of personal identification. These notions indicate how the understanding of religious affiliation reflects neither pure individual agency nor deterministic social structure, but rather, the muddy waters in between.

The question then is how profoundly individualization has changed individual relations to larger collectivities, such as the subject of this analysis, Lutheran Church in Finland. The caption of the chapter in which Furseth & Repstad discuss contemporary religious identity is entitled "How embedded? How individualized?."[221] This notion captures the research interest of the present study.

Adopting this orientation, the purpose of this study is to discern how young Swedish-speaking Finns understand and explain their religious affiliation. The following issues will be emphasized in this study:

a) How religious affiliation is reflected in and affected by social relations, with a focus on the role of family and peers,

b) How the previous experiences of religious communities and schools have contributed to the various interpretations of religious affiliation, and

c) The relation between religious affiliation and religious identity in terms of personal beliefs and attitudes toward religion.

This inquiry adopts a perspective of young people where the role of religious adherence is understood from the perspective of the young individual, who is understood as being a reflexive agent in ascribing different value to his or her collective identities. As a

[221] Furseth & Repstad 2006, 122.

consequence, the questions are worded so that they presuppose choices and agency by the individual. Also, the accounts of young people are driven by an interest in their understandings at present.

When exploring the personal accounts of religious affiliation, special focus will initially be directed towards whether religious affiliation is discussed in either collective or personal terms. This, in turn, evokes questions about religious affiliation as a matter that is either questioned or self-evident, whether notions vary according to the societal majority or minority position, and to what extent religious affiliation is personally significant. This enquiry will contribute to the discussion on the role of collective identities in an individualistic culture and will incorporate concepts that are derived from previous studies on collective identities. Collective identities are understood here as including dimensions that are both ascribed and achieved as well as aspects that are both conventional and idiosyncratic. It has also been suggested that the personal understandings of collective identities will be influenced by societal factors, such as majority or minority positions.

Previous research on the majority religion in Finland has pointed to the inherent role of family in how religious affiliation is acquired and enacted. However, the question is open as to what type of socialization is denoted by religious affiliation. Previous research reports that privatized belief, low levels of practice and notions of religiosity as a private matter suggest that the type of religious identity that church membership entails is likely to be nominal in character. This study will therefore focus on the situations in which young people acknowledge that religious affiliation has been actualized and on the extent to which this actualization has been interpreted as being an expression of the religious transmission by the parents and the more extended family. In addition, this study will focus particularly on how religious affiliation is actualized in peer settings and on how the role of peers is acknowledged on a personal level in church issues in Finland.

This study is conducted in a Finland-Swede setting, but the intention of this thesis is not to analyze the linguistic or ethnic dimensions of religious affiliation amongst Swedish-speaking youth in Finland. Thus, the Finland-Swede community constitutes the research context rather than the research aim. However, the relations between the Swedish-speaking community and the Lutheran Church will be addressed in two ways. First, given that the Swedish-speaking members of the Church are organized so that they belong to a specific diocese of the Finnish Church as well as to Swedish-speaking parishes on a local level, this study aims at discerning how young people acknowledge the linguistic aspect of their church membership and, if so, whether it affects the maintenance of their church membership. In this sense, the first research question regarding church membership that is related to social relations includes a specific reference to the Swedish-speaking context and to the possible relations between a linguistic minority identity and religious affiliation. Second, previous research has established the heterogeneity of the Swedish-speaking group, which will be considered when exploring the possible underlying patterns in attitudes towards church

membership. Furthermore, since the language group also means that the young Swedish-speaking Finns form a collective, this study will conclude with some reflections about the commonalities, variations, and ambivalences in how language group affiliation and religious affiliation are discussed respectively.

Finally, I will point out some limitations of this study. The questions directed to the young people concern a wide range of topics, including both values and beliefs. However, the main focus of this study is religious affiliation. From such a perspective, values are studied in this analysis to the extent that they are relevant for young people's understanding of their religious affiliation or that they provide a more complete understanding of the present concerns of the young people being investigated. In a similar vein, this analysis does not focus primarily on beliefs, and does not aim at producing an exhaustive account of the beliefs that these young people hold. Questions on belief are therefore primarily discussed in relation to religious affiliation. In addition, I acknowledge Beckford's notion that *"*phenomena widely considered religious are not confined within the boundaries of particular institutions or organisations"[222] and I do not suggest that the results of this study reflect an exhaustive account of the religiosity of the young people who were interviewed. Even though this enquiry was originally inspired by a previous quantitative study, these studies will not be related in the present study.

The review in Section 2.2.1 illustrated some of the diverge understandings of religious affiliation in contemporary social studies. As these differences are partially related to methodological issues, I will address the role of method in exploring religious affiliation before I turn to presenting how this enquiry was conducted. More specifically, I will address the challenges of studying "religion" in contexts characterized by a dominating religious tradition and how religious affiliation has been understood in such picture.

3.2 Determining the questions

3.2.1 Methodological implications from previous research

Before presenting the outline of the study at hand, I will shortly return to evolve some notions in the previous chapter about the role of method in religious studies. More specifically, I will address the challenges of studying "religion" in contexts characterized by a dominating religious tradition and how religious affiliation has been understood in such picture.

Recent years have entailed a growing dissatisfaction with how religion is conceptualized in contemporary research, based on the notion that religious studies have not kept up with the supposed shift from traditional to individualized religion. According to Rosen, religious studies often assume that different dimensions of religion "all somehow are signifiers of the same signified"[223] and if individual religiosity does not comply with such

[222] Beckford 2003, 26.
[223] Rosen 2009, 15.

assumed structures, it is regarded as inconsistent. The findings in her study contradicted such understandings.[224] Likewise, Day's sociology of belief suggests that contrary to academic assumptions, by definition belief is not religious. Day's results from her asking the open-ended question of "What do you believe in?" indicate that when people are given the opportunity to describe their beliefs without references to religion or transcendence, a new sociology of belief emerges where beliefs are highly meaningful, but do not necessarily relate to transcendent Others.[225] These conclusions concur with Beckford's interpretation of the sometimes counter-productive mismatch between first-order and second-order concepts within religious studies that arises when academic concepts are not helpful tools for understanding a social context.[226]

Rosen's interest in religion as an existential resource results in her study emphasizing individual meaning systems rather than collective expression. Since institutional religion appeared distant from everyday matters and did not stand out as an existential resource, religious belonging was interpreted as being insignificant. Accordingly, the value of tradition, both as reflected in personal experience and as a reason for church membership, is de-emphasized. In other words, these dimensions are not considered to be related to Rosen's understanding of religion. The institutional connection to the Church that occurs in the majority is therefore not assumed to affect beliefs and religion, which somewhat contradicts the multi-faceted patterns of belief and religious identity found in the data. Moreover, the social, traditional and non-religious interpretation of rites that were reported in the data is presented as a new finding concerning Danish religiosity. However, such findings are much in line with previous findings on Nordic religious patterns.[227] On the other hand, the general problem that Rosen directs attention to have been commented on by other scholars as well. These notions were already reported by Davie's early studies on European religious patterns. According to Davie, how academics understand "religion proper" has assumed consistency and any pattern that has resulted in some variables having been ignored because it did not fit the picture of how Europe was becoming increasingly secularized. Vicarious religion was therefore an attempt to identify "forms of religion that normally lie hidden"[228] in the mainstream population.[229] Recent studies of youth and religion in the Nordic setting have also addressed the methodological and conceptual challenge of studying religion.[230]

Similar criticism has been expressed in the studies on religious socialization. Despite awareness of how growing individualization tendencies might have implications not only for religion, but religious socialization as well,[231] empirical studies nevertheless reflect traditional

[224] Rosen 2009, 157-164.
[225] Day 2011, 89-97.
[226] Beckford 2003, 19-29.
[227] See for example Bäckström (2000).
[228] Davie 2010, 264.
[229] Davie 2007a, 137-143.
[230] Cf. von Brömssen (2003); Lövheim & Bromander et al. (2012); Sjöborg (2013).
[231] See for example Arweck & Nesbitt 2010, 77.

understandings of religion and explore religious transmission quantitatively through patterns of consistency.[232] These notions reflect how some theories on religious socialization assume consistency as well. For example, Sherkat describes how beliefs and understandings result in preferences that lead to different types of commitments, including affiliation.[233] When adopting this position, religious affiliation is assumed to be in line with the beliefs and practice, and patterns that do not display this degree of consistency tend to be interpreted as being incoherent. Given what was stated earlier regarding religious transmission in Finland, these conceptual understandings do not sufficiently account for the empirical reality. This suggests that the awareness of changed religious patterns at an individual level has not always been taken seriously in the studies on religious transmission, but also raises the important question of whether consistent patterns of salient religiosity are the only indication of religious socialization. Furthermore, if traditional institutional religiosity diminishes as a result of increasing individualization, the type of religion and religious socialization studied characterizes a diminishing part of the population, while the growing majority is characterized by "something else." If so, does this mean that the majority of the population is characterized by a lack of religious socialization? The methodology adopted to analyze religion and religious socialization therefore has a direct impact on what is known about contemporary social reality.

This suggests that when analyzing social reality, pre-set conceptions about religion should be adopted with caution, and that fields traditionally understood as religious, such as practices, beliefs and affiliation, need to be approached in an unbiased manner. This position is similar to James Beckford's call for a social constructivist approach to religion within social studies by acknowledging the context-specific character of religion rather than by assuming that religion is characterized by a fixed content.[234] However, the question is how to analyze a social context that has a certain religious institution in a majority position.

If we consider how Davie's concept of vicarious religion has been received academically, it is apparent how these discussions reflect divergent understandings of "religion proper." In a critical article, Steve Bruce and David Voas questioned whether the large-scale behavior patterns that Davie refers to actually are religious in character. Drawing on results from Voas & Crockett on the British situation, Bruce and Voas argue that the big picture of the majority religion points to a unidirectional religious decline.[235] To them, Davie's conclusion concerning how "religion, often in hidden and immeasurable forms, remains socially significant"[236] is therefore misguided, and the implication that religious belonging is a religious matter is therefore regarded as being far-fetched. To demonstrate this,

[232] Arweck & Nesbitt 2010, 69-70.
[233] Sherkat 2003, 158.
[234] Cf. Beckford (2003).
[235] Voas & Crockett (2005); Bruce & Voas 2010, 243.
[236] Bruce & Voas 2010, 258.

they offer alternative interpretations to the empirical data that Davie bases her case on.[237] The latter points to how part of their criticism relates to methodology. Davie understands vicarious religion as a phenomenon that can be studied, yet not directly measured, since it is not assumed to be a conscious behavioral pattern. Bruce and Voas oppose this interpretation as well as the argument that vicarious religion indicates the approval of the general public.[238] Their debate illustrates how the selection of variables to study is both affected by how the concept of religion is regarded and, in turn, will lead to different conclusions on the religious development in Europe.

Approaching religion as a subject of study without acknowledging the role of institutional religion may also imply a certain bias, since this fails to account the impact that the surrounding cultural context may have on personal understandings.[239] As Beckford points out, social reality is characterized by rather clear conceptions of religion that are not problematized in everyday life, which leads to the suggestion that "meanings attributed to religion" should preferably be studied in specific settings, for example within institutional and organizational contexts.[240] This is also in line with how Nancy Ammerman understands the relations between religious institutions and individual spirituality:

> Religious institutions do give shape to discourse about spirituality. (…) What we find is that spiritual experiences are institutionally shaped. The stronger a person's ties to a religious institution, the more likely they are to talk about spiritual experiences and meanings in ways that take God to be an actor in the story.[241]

I therefore decided to approach these fields within the contexts that the informants were mostly familiar with, but from a social constructivist approach. I examine the negotiations and discussions in relation to an institutional religious context, but without pre-defining these fields as being religious. The social constructivist nature of this study is therefore reflected in the second-order analysis rather than in the first-order questions about church membership. This is an inherent question in the present study, which addresses the religious affiliation patterns in a variety of families, aiming at an increased understanding of what is being passed on, and how families that are not characterized by salient religious patterns nevertheless maintain their contact with a church setting. Despite the references to the Church settings, it is also important here to note that I did not recruit informants on the basis of religious adherence because my primary research interest was in the youth population, not in the Christian majority culture. In short, the references to the church setting here therefore reflect the research context rather than the research interest.

[237] Bruce & Voas (2010).
[238] Bruce & Voas 2010, 244-245.
[239] Riitaoja et al. have proposed a similar argument regarding what is considered to be normal in the Finnish context (Riitaoja, Poulter & Kuusisto 2010, 89).
[240] Beckford 2003, 17.
[241] Ammerman 2010, 157.

The theoretical orientation that is adopted here is to analyze religious affiliation from an individual perspective in order to understand the larger collective cultural patterns that concern institutional religion in the Finnish context. The underlying assumption about the young people interviewed reflects what was said in the first chapter: they are raised in a culture that emphasizes individual choice and freedom from restraints. Based on the previous research, I therefore expect that the discussions on religious affiliation will be underlined by these young people having a self-understanding as free and individual actors in terms of religion.[242] However, another assumption that partly contradicts the first is that there are larger, societal patterns that are involved in the fairly homogenous "religious" Finnish landscape.[243] I also agree with Furseth and Repstad in their statement that individual religiosity is often formed in a, "type of critical dialogue with established faith traditions in established faith communities."[244] The dialogue is described as being critical, but nevertheless implies a bond to an institutional context. Even though the Lutheran Church in Finland could be described as an established faith community, it should not be understood as a cultural frame that has the potential of becoming a uniform social community with the authority to maintain the religious norms and standards of its members. Previous research indicates that most members are characterized by a distant relationship to the Lutheran Church and that relationship is actualized in specific settings. With this in mind, the aim of this thesis is to understand how religious affiliation, as well as the contact to the religious setting that it provides, are discussed and what type of identity markers that religious affiliation entails.

The reliance on quantitative methods also has implications for how religious socialization is described in research results. Despite the growing awareness of individual agency of young people in religious transmission, quantitative studies nevertheless study transmission as a uni-directional process, where the indicators of religious socialization concern religious content (usually measured in terms of religiously orthodox beliefs) and practice. Despite the conceptualizations of religious transmission that reflect a growing awareness of the child's active agency and choice in the transmission process, quantitative studies are confined to studying socialization as religious content that is being passed on from parents to children. For example, Kelley & De Graaf describe the religious socialization of devout parents as a process of inculcation, and they describe how the family as a "force" affects religious beliefs and is accompanied by other "forces" when the children reach adolescence, such as peer groups and school.[245]As Arweck and Nesbitt observe, such research confirms the continued primacy of family influences on individual religiosity, but does not lead to increased knowledge about "the ways in which faith or religion is transmitted in the family context," for example whether religious transmission seems to be either a

[242] See for example Helander 2006, 172-173.
[243] By religious, I refer to the Finnish landscape on an institutional level and would like to avoid making assumptions on a more general connection between religious affiliation and individual religious identity.
[244] Furseth & Repstad 2005, 170.
[245] Kelley & DeGraaf 1997, 640.

predominantly implicit or explicit matter.[246] In addition, despite a growing awareness that religious transmission not only consists of deliberate and explicit action by parents, this is nevertheless precisely what tends to be measured in quantitative studies.

On the other hand, the previous chapter demonstrated how the quantitative studies on religious socialization in the Finnish majority context have nevertheless resulted in a vast body of knowledge about the Finnish situation. These findings serve as a point of departure for this study. Qualitative studies have the advantage of taking into consideration both explicit and more implicit factors when exploring the religious socialization in Finnish homes, which in turn enables the researcher to explore the contradictions and paradoxes, rather than simply indicating that they exist. In this respect, this enquiry may complement previous results by exploring them on an individual level and by explaining them from a young person's perspective.

3.2.2 The interview guide

The interview guide was designed with a few central guidelines in mind. The first concerned the fact that the research field in question was religion, which implied specific challenges. The first is the multi-faceted character of religion. Repstad has warned of the risks of studying multi-faceted social phenomena through a qualitative approach that completely takes on the perspective of the informant. Repstad argues that these types of results tend to be too diverse and difficult to relate to each other in the analysis.[247] The second is that the topic of religious affiliation is potentially sensitive in the Finnish setting, because religious matters are perceived to be private in character. For this reason, questions needed to be carefully worded. Third, the interview guide also needed to be sufficiently flexible to account for each informant having a different degree of experience in discussing his or her religious affiliation.

For these reasons, it seemed sensible to plan the questions beforehand and ask them in a similar manner in all interviews, an approach which also addresses issues of reliability.[248] I therefore decided to conduct semi-structured interviews, which means that the questions were planned beforehand and fairly standardized, but aimed at open-ended, non-standardized responses.[249] The interview guide (Appendix 1) provided me with a sense of security in the interview situation and made it easier for me to focus on the informant rather than on my own part of the conversation. As I became more accustomed to the questions, I managed to conduct the interviews without the interview guide and only consulted it at the end to ensure that the most central themes had been covered. This contributed to a less formal atmosphere in the interview situation.

[246] Arweck & Nesbitt 2010, 69.
[247] Repstad 1999, 65-66.
[248] Kvale 1997, 213.
[249] See further Eskola & Vastamäki 2001, 26; Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006, 56-57. Semi-structured interviews can be understood as a cross between a structured and qualitative interview; see Trost 2005, 19-21.

The interview guide was planned at a stage when the precise research objective had not yet been established, and as a result, the guide contains a number of themes that were eventually determined to be irrelevant for the enquiry. The most central themes and subthemes of the interview are found in table 1[250], where the themes in bold were included in the analysis. In the following, I will describe the main principles that informed the interview guide.

Table 1. Main themes of the interview

Central theme	Sub-themes	Introductory question
Introductory questions	**Family background, education, friends,** leisure time activities and media habits	"Tell me about yourself!"
Linguistic identity	**Language usage at home,** **Language competency and practice** **Language identity**	"Would you say you are unilingual or bilingual?"
Existential questions and values	Central values and guidelines **Admirable and non-desired qualities in others** **Beliefs in after-life** Centrality of existential questions	"What is most important to you at this stage of your life?"
Religious affiliation	**Religious affiliation in the family** **Affiliation patterns in the extended family**	"I will now ask you some questions about the Church, since so many Finns are church members. How about your family, does your family belong to the Church? Why is that?" [251]
Primary religious socialization	**Descriptions of parents in terms of religion** **Religious activity of parents**	"If I asked your mom if she would consider herself a Christian, what do you think her response would be? Why?"
Secondary religious socialization	**Religious education** **Participation in religious activities during childhood and adolescence**	"What did you think of RE?"
Personal dimensions of religious identity	**Religious labels** **Religious beliefs** **Private religious practice** Religious literacy	"Would you call yourself Christian?" "What do you think when you hear the word God? /Jesus?"
Future	Future occupation, geographical location, **religious affiliation,** family situation	"Imagine your life in ten years!"
Value circle	-	(…) "Select the ten values that are most important to you and place them in order of significance in the circle!"[252]

[250] The themes in bold print were included in the analysis.
[251] The last question was adjusted according to the informant's religious affiliation.
[252] The results from the value circle assignment have only been included when they are relevant for the purpose of the study and will for the most part be omitted in the discussion of the results.

The agency perspective on young people influenced the way in which the interview questions on religious affiliation and participation in two ways. First, the introductory question concerning why the young person was affiliated with a religious community or had no religious affiliation implicitly referred to religious affiliation being a choice made by the individual's family. Second, the question presented to those who had participated in confirmation training about why they chose to do so, also implied that this was a choice. An additional reason for posing questions in this manner was to make the informants reflect on religious affiliation as a personal choice. This was motivated by findings from previous research about majority religion in Finland and the fact that an individual's stance towards religious affiliation and its consequences is often unreflected upon.

Since, religious affiliation does not imply felt affinity or a personal religious identity in the Finnish context, questions on existential questions and values were posed before the theme of religious affiliation. By disengaging these subjects, it was also possible to establish that those who expressed religious notions here did so at their own accord, and not as a result of being prompted by other questions. As patterns of belief and non-belief in an afterlife did not correspond to religious affiliation in the data, this proved to be a good choice. Previous discussions on religion in Finland were also considered when planning the order in which questions on religion, beliefs and faith were asked. Matters that were perceived as being potentially sensitive, such as personal beliefs, were discussed last.

The social-constructivist approach informing the study affected the interview design in two ways. The first example concerns the use of different labels as a point of departure in discussion without pre-defining their content. Questions on religious or Christian self-identification have often been used in quantitative studies in Finland. For example, the question, "Would you say you grew up in a Christian home?" has been analysed in relation to personal religious beliefs and/or the behavior of young people in a number of Finnish studies.[253] However, as the previous Section demonstrated, previous commentators have also problematized the use of such questions within religious studies. My intention was therefore to explore how the young people themselves understood the meaning of concepts such as "Christian" or a "Christian home." The second example concerns questions on belief, which were also intentionally open-ended in character. The questions: "What do you think when you hear the word God/Jesus?" were sufficiently open-ended to initiate discussions on belief without establishing beforehand what these concepts meant. Furthermore, these questions allowed the informant to describe his or her images of these concepts before establishing personal belief or non-belief. This enabled open discussion on the relationship between religious affiliation and felt affinity.

The questions on religious socialization mapped the role of both primary and secondary religious socialization agents. Primary religious socialization was addressed

[253] Cf. Myllyniemi 2006, 66-67; Niemelä 2006a, 163-165.

through questions on perceived affinity on the one hand and explicit behavior[254] on the other. Questions concerning parents' Christian self-identification were used as a means to initiate reflection on the religious profile of parents. Such questions also revealed what type of accounts the informants were able to provide about their parents. These questions could be criticized for resulting in "secondhand accounts"[255] of the respondents' parents, but on the other hand, Bromander has argued that subjective impressions rather than objective facts may have more impact on religious socialization from the perspective of children.[256] Furthermore, questions were asked about both the religious activity of parents and family practices.

As for secondary religious socialization agents, previous research has demonstrated that school and church are the main arenas for encountering religion in the Finnish context. Questions asked participation in church activities during childhood and adolescence were mapped through questions on the most common forms of activity for children.[257] Furthermore, religious education is also organized along the lines of religious affiliation. The aim of these questions was to elicit information on what type of mediator of religious knowledge RE was perceived as, and whether RE was acknowledged as an arena for "pupils (…) encountering the religious and ethical dimension in one's own life and the life of the community"[258] as it is intended to be according to the National Core Curriculum.

At the end of the interview, I would ask the young person about his or her hopes and wishes for the future. Even though statements about the future perhaps express current values rather than future behavior, they may nevertheless serve as an indicator of what is regarded as desired and undesired in adult life. The interview ended with a practical task in the form of a value circle (Appendix 2).

3.3 The informants

3.3.1 Selecting the informants

In this section, I will describe the procedure I adopted in targeting a specific research population, how I selected informants and requested their participation in the study, the general features of how interviews were conducted, and the ethical issues that arose in relation to these steps. In the last subsection, I will provide an introduction as to how those I met through my interviews described their lives at present and how these accounts may contribute to the results of the study.

[254] Questions were asked about both the religious activity of parents and family practices. The questions about parents' activity mapped practices that would be tangible to other family members, such as listening to religious devotions on the radio, or watching telecasted religious services and attending church services. The questions on family practices included such activities that have often mapped in quantitative research, such as saying an evening prayer, going to church services, and saying grace (See for example Wilska et al. (2006); Ziebertz & Kay (2006); Niemelä (2006a)).
[255] Creswell 2009, 183.
[256] Bromander 1999, 31-32.
[257] Questions were asked about participation in daytime clubs, Sunday school, and preadolescent clubs. Cf. Kääriäinen et al. 2009, 66; 70.
[258] National Core Curriculum for Basic Education 2004, 202.

Since qualitative research explores phenomena by acknowledging details and a multitude of dimensions rather than generalizability, the questions of representativeness are not crucial in the selection of a research population.[259] On the other hand, multi-dimensional accounts require a wide range of perspectives, which makes the selection of a research population far from irrelevant.[260] In order to enable a multitude of Finland-Swede young voices to be heard, I decided to use regional heterogeneity as a starting point for the research design, especially because religious heterogeneity partly corresponds to regional areas.[261] The next question was how this study would relate to the quantitative study that was conducted in 2003. The option of a longitudinal study only existed in theory; the 2003 survey was answered anonymously, which made it impossible to match the surveys with the informants. I then had two options: either to select an entirely different sample within the young Swedish-speaking population, or to formulate a design resembling the one from the 2003 survey. Since the quantitative study served as an inspiration to this enquiry and the studies were conducted within a time span of only a few years, I decided to maintain the research population of the pupils in the Swedish-speaking schools in Finland who were born in 1987.

The 2003 survey was distributed to 11 schools that covered the heterogeneity of the Swedish-speaking population rather well. All four Finland-Swede regions were included, and the locations selected within each region represented the different linguistic settings and degrees of urbanity (see table 2).[262] For this enquiry, I chose three locations that represented different forms of Finland-Swede living environments. The location referred to as "Bigcity" is a Finnish-speaking urban location, "Middletown" is a middle-sized bilingual location and "Countryside" is a Swedish-speaking rural location. These locations were part of the 2003 survey, but I decided not to divulge information regarding which regions these locations are placed in, since such information could reveal the identities of the young people interviewed. Such a decision was further supported by the findings, because the similarities were greater than the differences in how young people from different locations discussed their religious affiliation.

[259] Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 1997, 163-164; Holme & Solvang 1991, 100-101, 107.
[260] Holme & Solvang 1991, 102, 114.
[261] For a research review on regional patterns of religiosity, see Klingenberg 2005, 15-18.
[262] Klingenberg 2005, 38. The proportions of the Swedish-speakers are based on the data from 2003.

Table 2. The locations selected for the 2003 survey

Region	Category	Location	Swedish-speakers, percentage
Nyland	Big city, Finnish-speaking majority	Helsingfors	6.3
	Middle-sized, bilingual location	Sibbo	40.8
	Rural location, Swedish-speaking majority	Ingå	62.3
Österbotten	Big city, Finnish-speaking majority	Vasa	25.2
	Middle-sized, bilingual location	Kristinestad	57.2
	Rural location, Swedish-speaking majority	Pedersöre	90.9
Åboland	Big city, Finnish-speaking majority	Åbo	5.2
	Rural location, Swedish-speaking majority	Kimito	76.4
	Rural location, Swedish-speaking majority	Dragsfjärd	64.4
Åland	Middle-sized locality	Mariehamn	91
	Rural location, Swedish-speaking majority	Finström	95.5

The student bodies from the schools participating in the 2003 survey from these three locations comprised the frame for the research population.[263] When pursuing an upper-secondary education, most 16-year-olds select a school that is close to their comprehensive school, which enables them to live at home for an additional three years and to pursue further studies in partly familiar social settings. Most pupils were identified through consulting the annual reports[264] from the comprehensive schools in 2003 and from the secondary schools from the previous school year in each location, respectively. By matching the names of the pupils from 2003 to the secondary-school students from the previous school year, 73% of the comprehensive school pupils were identified.[265] In order to further obtain varied accounts from each location, the main objective was to balance gender structure and students from the different grades of secondary education (table 3). The latter was important because the choices of secondary education relate to academic interest.[266] I soon discovered that the tendency to select an upper-secondary school education seemed to correlate to how urban the setting was. The proportion of pupils who selected upper secondary education in Bigcity was estimated to be 80%, while the correspondent proportions of Middletown and Countryside were estimated to be 60% and 40%, respectively.[267] Informants were therefore selected according to their schooling patterns in each location.

[263] However, participation in the previous study was not a precondition for being interviewed.
[264] Most comprehensive and upper-secondary schools in Swedish Finland publish annual reports at the end of each school year. These reports provide an overview of the school and the school year and often include a list of the pupils enrolled.
[265] Bigcity: 65%; Middletown: 89%; Countryside: 79%.
[266] Cf. Pirttiniemi 2000, 39-49.
[267] This information was obtained through phone calls to the student counselors of three comprehensive schools from the selected locations of the 2003 year study.

Table 3. Background factors in the design of the study

	Percentage of student body selecting upper-secondary school	Number of upper-secondary students in the study	Number of vocational-school students in the study
Bigcity	80	9 (4 M, 5 F[268])	2 (1 M, 1 F)
Middletown	60	6 (3 M, 3 F)	4 (2 M, 2 F)
Countryside	40	4 (2 M, 2 F)	6 (3 M, 3 F)
Total	-	19 (9 male, 10 female)	12 (6 male, 6 female)

After dividing the names from each location into categories according to gender and educational choice (for example, female vocational school students), I drew lots to determine who would be selected. Whereas the 2003 year survey was conducted during school lessons, the objective was to conduct this enquiry independent of the school context and to contact the informants personally without intermediaries. Contacting informants directly was also a means to grant anonymity to those who agreed to participate, since it they could decide whether they wanted others to know that they would be interviewed. In 2006, over 95% of 16-19-year olds had their own mobile phones,[269] and it was fairly easy to determine contact information for those selected through an internet search engine.[270]

When contacting an informant, I introduced myself as a researcher at the University of Helsinki and referred to the study that had been conducted in their comprehensive school three years earlier. Then I asked whether they would be willing to meet me for an interview about what it is like being young and Swedish-speaking as well as what they regarded as being important and meaningful in life. If the informant preliminarily agreed to meet me, I promised to contact them later to specify the date and time for the interview. Only one informant asked more specific questions concerning my field of research at the beginning of the interview. In general, however, the young people I met seemed fairly uninterested in the overall research project. The majority agreed to be interviewed. Out of 42 phone contacts, 30 agreed to be interviewed.[271] My mention of the existential dimension of the interview (that is, questions on values and the meaning in life) seemed to provide enough information for those called to determine whether or not they were interested in participating.

Before the first interview, I conducted a test interview. A teacher in a Bigcity upper-secondary school presented my study during class by adopting the method described above and asked whether anyone would be willing to participate. One pupil volunteered and gave

[268] The pilot interview is included in this number.
[269] Statistics Finland (2006).
[270] Fonecta (2006).
[271] Eight people were either unavailable or were not met due to the practical difficulties of finding time for a meeting.

her contact information to her teacher, who then forwarded it to me. The test interview was conducted a few days before the first interviews were scheduled. Since the test interview was successful, and the test interview basically followed the same format that was adopted later, it was included in the research data. I conducted most interviews in April and May.[272] This means that a total of 31 informants were finally interviewed. In the following sections, each informant has been assigned a code which contained the following a) whether the informant in question was from Bigcity, Middletown or Countryside (B/M/C), and b) the gender of the informant, and a number. Followingly, the code MF1 refers to Middletown Female 1. In the following, I will shortly describe the encounters with these young people.

3.3.2 Conducting the interview

The interviews were conducted in April and May 2006 during regular office hours. In Bigcity and Middletown, it was possible to meet the informants in university facilities.[273] In Countryside, I had fewer options and consequently met informants at a school, most often one that the informant was not enrolled in, and the interview was conducted in an empty classroom. These facilities met the criteria for good interview locations since they allowed conversation without interruptions.[274] Two interviewees in Countryside cancelled on short notice and this led to a hasty recruitment of new informants who matched the profile of those who were originally selected in terms of their Countryside origin, gender and school choice. Rather than by drawing lots, the new interviewees were recruited by snowball sampling, in which the school staff played a crucial role.

When I met an informant, we would enter the facility for the interview together in order to establish that the location of our meeting was new to both of us.[275] On our way there, we would chat about rather neutral topics. If anything crucial was brought up, I re-approached the subject during the interview. When BM1 and I walked to the interview location, he referred to our initial phone conversation and commented on how he did not regard himself as a "real" Finland-Swede. I ensured him that his enrolment in a Swedish-speaking school qualified him as being as good an informant as anyone of the other. Approximately 10-15 minutes into the interview, when I addressed the questions on language, I raised the issue of his initial misgivings as an interviewee by saying: *"When we came (...) here, (...) you said something about not knowing how much of a Finland-Swede you really are (...)."* This made BM1 develop his reflections on how he perceived his Finland-Swede identity and what his feelings of estrangement stemmed from. Thus, the analyzed data originates from the recorded part of the session.

[272] In mid-February, regular upper-secondary classroom teaching ends for pupils in their final year, and independent preparations for matriculation exams begin. Matriculation exams are administered in March and are completed at the latest at the beginning of April. Then exams are reviewed by both internal and external examiners in April and May. Graduation takes place at the end of May or at the beginning of June.
[273] One of the interviews occurred at very short notice and the only option available was to meet the informant (BM4) in a workroom, which was a theological department.
[274] Eskola & Vastamäki 2001, 27-29.
[275] Eskola & Vastamäki 2001, 27-28.

Before the interview began, I repeated the information that I had stated during the initial phone calls concerning myself and my research and that the interviews would be used for research purposes only. If needed, I stated that the 2003 year survey was irrelevant for the current interview. I also assured them of their anonymity and added that any details that could reveal their personal identity would be removed or altered. Then I introduced my MP3-player and explained why I was recording the interview and again reassured them that the recorded data would be for my personal use only. I had expected some reactions on the MP3-player, such as comments on anonymity or more subtle reactions, such as inhibition or repeated glances at the MP3-device. However, most interviewees seemed to be indifferent to the interview being recorded and I also attempted to downplay the existence of the recording device.[276]

At the beginning of the interview, I allowed time for the issues of their current occupation, leisure activities and for other aspects of daily life. My intention was to convey that I had a genuine interest in the informants as individuals and that I wanted to help them to feel comfortable in the conversation. I also hoped that my engagement would create a sense of trust. When I approached personal matters about important values, qualities appreciated in others, and current worries, the tone of the conversation often changed in character and the pace slowed. Those who had been somewhat reserved from the beginning would become even more quiet and seemed somewhat uncomfortable. It is difficult to know whether these reactions correlated with the topic of discussion or was a result of their experiencing difficulties in expressing themselves. I tried to be encouraging by confirming that the questions undoubtedly were difficult and by allowing these informants take their time. However, some were enthusiastic and engaged in lengthy reflections. The informants would also vary in terms of how personal they chose to be in their responses. The manner in which I introduced religious affiliation[277] also proved to be successful. For example, the informants would nod when I referred to the common nature of church membership and they offered information about their religious affiliation status in a rather neutral manner. These questions did not evoke a similar "change of tone" that occurred when asking them to reflect on personal matters – the major change of tone concerned the shift from general to personal matters, rather than the move from non-religious to religious issues.

Occasionally, the conversation would take unexpected turns when the tone of the conversation became more personal. For instance, when I asked one informant what he currently regarded as being most significant, he became quiet and then responded: *"Eh… like… where is this going again?"* We both laughed because his response was unexpected, but he repeated his question and the transcription reveals how I verbally encouraged him to continue his line of thought. It seemed as if his plan to provide a truthful response made

[276] Repstad (1999, 71) states: "My experience is that the more relaxed the researcher is in relation to the tape recorder, the less the respondent cares about it." (My translation)
[277] In three interviews (CF1, CF5, BF7), the family's religious affiliation patterns had surfaced earlier.

matters of anonymity more urgent. I responded by repeating that the recording of the interview was to be used for my own purpose only and that any information that could connect a comment to him personally would be removed or altered. He continued:

> ***Informant:*** *So this is anonymous?*
> ***M:*** *Yes, it's absolutely anonymous. Yes.*
> ***Informant:*** *[You asked me] What was most important in life?*
> ***M:*** *Yes. Most important.*
> ***Informant:*** *(Silence) Hmm… difficult question. I always think a lot about things, but I have a hard time getting anywhere. (Sighs) Most important? That's difficult. Can I think about this, can I respond to that a little later?*

The manner that the informant chose to return to the initial question suggests that I interpreted his concerns correctly. During the rest of our conversation, the informant chose to be rather open and personal in his responses. The informant also requested more time on a few other questions, and as I returned to these questions at the end of the interview, he delivered responses with some certainty, which suggests that his delaying of the conversation may also have stemmed from his needing more time to reflect.

When interviewing talkative informants, their responses would not always relate to the topic. In order to ensure that I had understood the gist of their response, I would ask *"so you mean that..?"* and then offer them my account of what I had just heard. As a consequence, the informant could confirm whether my interpretation was correct, which increased the validity of the subsequent analysis.[278] The citations in the result chapters include my defining questions whenever they resulted in the informants developing their responses further.

After thanking the informant for agreeing to meet me, I stopped the recording. After the interview, every informant was offered chocolate. This small gesture was surprisingly appreciated. In addition, I would also ask which impressions they had from the interview and whether any of the questions had caused personal discomfort. The informants' reactions partly correspond to gender division. For example, male informants would generally say that they had not been uncomfortable during the interview, but that they thought that the questions were difficult. In contrast, the female informants were more enthusiastic about the interview experience and some of them expressed how they appreciated talking about themselves. One interview concluded with the informant spontaneously thanking me before I could thank the informant. The interviews also reflected that the female informants were more experienced in talking about themselves and their lives. Their reactions may well reflect the degree of familiarity with the types of questions that were asked. On a general note, many commented on the difficult questions and some meant that it had been slightly unsettling to realize that they were unable to answer the questions on religious affiliation, even though these questions had seemed to be fairly easy. These comments pinpointed how the questions on religious affiliation were perceived as being particularly challenging.

[278] Kvale 1997, 223.

Before parting, I urged the informants to contact me if they had further questions or comments later on. Towards this end, they all had received my contact information when I had been in touch with them previously. However, none of the informants chose to contact me afterwards. This means that the interviews were the only time that I had met these young people. After each interview, I made short notes on how I had perceived each interview situation in terms of social interaction and I noted which themes I regarded as having dominated the conversation. I also added other remarks that could be useful to remember when analyzing the data. The interviews lasted from approximately 45 minutes to almost two hours. The average interview was approximately 70 minutes.

In the following result chapters, citations from the informants are written in italics. Just like in this section, some conversational themes are referred to without mention of the informant code. When this occurs, this is a deliberate strategy in order to preserve the anonymity of the informant.

3.3.3 Ethical considerations

According to Steinar Kvale, ethical matters become especially relevant in relation to three steps in the interview process: informed consent, confidentiality and consequences.[279] To adhere to these, I will discuss how I have addressed these issues during the research process.

When contacting the informants, I chose not to be explicit about my theological training and I also deliberately withheld that I intended to ask questions concerning religious affiliation, identity and belief. The decision to present myself as a youth researcher rather than as a scholar of religion stemmed from some of the reactions that my theological training has triggered. I suspected that some people would interpret theological studies as a marker of religious identity and as harbouring a more favorable attitude towards the Lutheran Church or towards Christianity in general. Since these impressions would lead to interview situations in which informants would primarily understand me as something other than a researcher and they would express their responses accordingly, I decided to withhold this information. Another reason not to specify beforehand all the themes of the interview became clear through one of the first phone calls I made to a presumptive informant. When I mentioned that I would address questions on religion and the Church during the interview, the young person instantly declined, since “she was not religious and regarded religion as being private.” I learned from this encounter that if I would have continued to be explicit about these subject matters, I would likely have ended up with a group of informants who would be characterized by their strong opinions in favor of or opposed to matters of the Church, religion and faith. As a consequence, the main objective of targeting mainstream youth would then have been thwarted. Kvale stipulates that one reason to deviate from the principle of informed consent is

[279] Kvale 1997, 107-112.

if it is believed to render responses that are more unmitigated and honest.[280] My choice therefore reflects this aim.

Since the questions on the Church and religion were unexpected, I was sensitive to the verbal and non-verbal reactions they evoked and I was careful to allow the informants to set boundaries for what they wanted to share. This sensitivity was also taken into consideration when designing the interview guide. However, some variations arose in where these boundaries were set and sometimes it was difficult to estimate in advance how a question would be received. The clearest example was my discussion with BF5 about BF5's beliefs in an afterlife:

> ***M:*** *What do you think happens when someone dies?*
> ***BF5:*** *I think [that person] is born again.*
> ***M:*** *Mm-hmm. Have you always had that belief?*
> ***BF5:*** *No, but there was a thing that happened which made me believe that.*
> ***M:*** *Mm-hmm. Do you want to describe [what happened]?*
> ***BF5:*** *Hmm, I'd rather not.*

In the actual situation, I remember being surprised by how BF5 so explicitly declined to answer my question. Nonetheless, I responded "*Mm-hmm*" and moved on. This reflects how I generally reacted when I discovered that an informant was hesitant to respond. Some of these situations were rather awkward for me, but I nevertheless regarded it as important to allow the informants to determine what they wanted to share.

As for the issues regarding confidentiality and consequences, the primary task for me to respect the rather high degree of trust that the young people placed in me during the interview. Few would pay attention to issues of confidentiality and research purpose, or would even ask questions to make certain that I was the researcher I purported to be. However, a carefree attitude towards being interviewed about somewhat personal matters indicates a lack of reflection or experience regarding similar situations, but this may also indicate trust towards the adult world. Since few informants took precautions in these respects, I therefore foresaw it as my responsibility to a greater extent. In practice, this means that I have handled delicate information with care, both during the interviews and in the analysis.

According to Kvale, the intimacy of the interview situation combined with the researcher's interest may tempt the informant to divulge information that he or she later may regret.[281] During the interviews, my experience was that for this reason, personal relationship matters especially needed to be handled with care. As a result, I decided not to ask questions on the interviewee's relationship status during the interviews. This is because conversations on boyfriends and girlfriends could be sensitive for many reasons. First, not being involved in a relationship was sometimes a sensitive issue, but being involved in a relationship could also

[280] Kvale 1997, 107-108.
[281] Kvale 1997, 110.

be rather complicated. Another occasionally sensitive topic was the informants' relationships to their parents. On the one hand, all the informants described their contact with their parents as being good, but some responses were delivered almost as an automatic reflex that suggested that the comment reflected what was appropriate to say rather than what was truthful. In one conversation, the informant's response of "yes" combined with body language and the pitch of the informant strongly suggested that there was more to say on the matter, and therefore I remained silent to wait for the informant to continue. However, that informant also remained silent and did not want to continue the response. As a result, our nonverbal interaction finally became so awkward and full of undercurrents that we both burst out laughing. In situations such as these, I chose not to pry further. These response patterns suggest boundaries regarding what is socially acceptable and what are non-appropriate ways of describing family relationships and suggest that the informant tends to not be forthcoming on bad family relations and problems. In fact, the only time bad family relations were addressed, these discussions concerned other people or were told in order to convey how good relationships were at present. This was another area where I chose not to probe further.

I have also attempted to report results in an ethically responsible manner. Some informants shared their personal and rather painful experiences concerning parents' their divorce, and their difficult relationships and loss. Whereas this was their choice, the degree of trust that these accounts reflect also entails a responsibility on behalf of the researcher. I have therefore chosen to omit these stories or to write about them in a more generic manner. This has perhaps resulted in less interesting accounts, but has nevertheless safeguarded the integrity of the young people who were interviewed.

3.3.4 Life phase: status and plans

The main objective of this section is to present an account of the young people I encountered during the interviews and to describe their lives at present. The conversations we had reflected unique life stories rather than commonalities and illustrate how differently young people describe their life situations when they are offered the opportunity to do so in their own words.

On one level, the life stories of the 19-year olds represented stability rather than change. All but a few informants had lived in the same location throughout their childhood and adolescence. Regardless of the area, their grandparents and extended families were also for the most part described as residing close by, even though extended family members often were scattered over a wide area. Bigcity informants seemed to be the most tightly connected to their location, which was somewhat surprising, given the rapid urbanization process in Finland after World War II. On the other hand, 17 of the 31 young people I met had experienced their parents divorcing, which often signifies a rather dramatic change in the children's everyday patterns at home. For most, their parents' divorce had occurred some years before the interview and the informants had already settled into routine living arrangements that involved both parents. For those who had experienced the divorce of their

parents rather recently, the issue was more delicate and unstable from a relational point of view. In some instances, it was apparent that having experienced the divorce of one's parents had had an effect on the informant's values or close relationships.

The interviews revealed that many of the Bigcity informants came from a rather privileged background: they had highly educated parents with prestigious jobs. Their upper-middle class background was also reflected in their life-style markers, such as their referring to upcoming trips abroad and to their costly leisure time activities. Many of these informants had goals of pursuing long and prestigious university studies and they often mentioned their preparations for entrance exams. In Middletown, the informants' descriptions of their parents' occupations disclosed that most of their parents were employed in lower civil servant positions or service occupations. In Countryside, most parents seemed to be in occupational fields related to service professions or to manual labor. These patterns therefore reveal that in this data, regional background coincides with class affiliation to some extent.

Despite being the same age and structurally located in a fairly similar setting in terms of their current occupations, the informants were preoccupied with different activities at the time of the interviews. All informants but three were about to graduate from secondary school in the near future. Those who would not graduate had taken advantage of the opportunity to attend upper-secondary school at a slower pace and would graduate the following year.

The informants' current life situation and future plans appeared to evoke reflections on life goals and values to a varying degree. Most informants expressed being aware of the change to come, but all were not equally occupied with preparing for the future. The vocational students were still enrolled in school, but the upper-secondary school students had completed their matriculation exams before the interviews and were no longer occupied with obligatory daytime schooling.[282] While waiting to graduate, most had a temporary job or studied for entrance exams. Many upper-secondary students commented on the peculiar situation they were currently in. This transitional period entailed both freedom and responsibility. Those studying for the university entrance exams often introduced this topic as something that they currently pondered on or worried about. They had few scheduled activities, but many tasks they were personally responsible for accomplishing, and this situation was described as novel and slightly unsettling. Some described how preparing for entrance exams had made them aware of their own personal responsibility for achieving their dreams. Others commented on how the uncertain future that lay ahead caused anxiety or feelings of distress. Amongst those who were about to graduate, some informants were clearly affected by the special stage of life they were experiencing and the growing independence and responsibility they were facing at the time. Many of the conversations contained clear underlying issues concerning their growing up and moving on.

[282] Matriculation exams usually begin in March and are completed at the latest at the beginning of April. The exams are then reviewed by both internal and external examiners in April and May. Graduation takes place at the end of May or at the beginning of June.

However, those who were graduating also tended to describe their current life situation differently depending on their plans for the year ahead. These plans were in part gender-related because almost all the males planned to do their obligatory military service.[283] Conscription occurs at set dates, and most males I interviewed were planning to leave for the Nyland brigade either during the summer or during the following winter.[284] It seemed as if the conscript year ahead had a calming effect on these interviewees' apprehension about the future, as if the future was not yet within their reach. Just like conscription, those who had plans for a gap year seemed to express a similar position. Their awareness of what they were going to do during the year ahead seemed to cause them to feel as if matters were settled. In this respect, those who were conscripts and those who were planning a gap year resembled the three informants who were not yet planning to graduate from upper-secondary school. Facing an unknown future therefore seemed to cause more anxiety than the transitional period per se.

However, educational plans and gender differences were not the only factors that resulted in the different descriptions of the present and the future. Regional background also seemed to account for some differences in living arrangements, both in terms of previous experiences and changes for the near future. In the Bigcity group, no informants had yet moved out from their childhood homes and few had plans to do so in the coming year. Whereas some expressed a desire to move, they regarded it as being financially difficult. However, most seemed to be satisfied with not moving yet. For these informants, the transition to a new stage in terms of occupation would not therefore entail independent living arrangements for this group. In Middletown, I encountered a different scenario. Those who intended to pursue further studies expressed that they would most likely move away from home as a result. Moreover, three informants had already moved away from home to live alone or with friends, which was possible in part due to the reasonable housing prices in Middletown. The effects of their having moved away from home were sometimes rather salient in their conversations. For example, these informants would more often refer to money and expenses as well as to mundane everyday tasks, such as doing the laundry or cooking. Such experiences of independent living had clearly made an impact on their lives. The Countryside informants resembled those in Middletown in the sense that some informants had already moved away from home during their secondary or vocational studies. Furthermore, in Countryside, future plans were noticeably often characterized by their plans to move further away after graduation. Their longing to experience a different setting than their Countryside was evident, although many Countryside informants also expressed how they could envision themselves living there as adults. These findings are rather contradictory compared with how the differences in the youth population are described. Whereas Bigcity youth gave the

[283] Four of the male informants were to pursue civil service or did not face military service for other reasons.
[284] Most Swedish-speakers choose to do their conscript year in the only Swedish-speaking garrison in Finland, the Nyland brigade, which is located in Ekenäs (Tammisaari). Until enrolment, the future conscripts hoped to find temporary jobs or to study for entrance exams.

impression of being rather settled in their current everyday settings, the willingness to explore new vistas was reported by the Countryside informants.

It is important to emphasize that I am not suggesting that the differences reported between Bigcity, Middletown and Countryside informants are representative for the Swedish-speaking youth population. Nevertheless, factors such as socioeconomic background, choice of secondary education and opportunities to obtain housing, all varied according to location and this gave each setting its own character. However, these accounts also demonstrate that despite the shared age cohort and experiences of moving from one life phase to another, previous experiences play a central part for how these young people experienced their current situation. Those who already had an independent life also had a different outlook on life as a result. Others, however, did not envision such plans for themselves in the near future. The future was also described differently, depending on how close or distant it seemed. Whereas impending entrance exams made the informants aware of personal responsibilities and this could trigger their fear of failure, which in turn seemed to induce further existential reflections, plans for a sabbatical year or military service seemed to put these types of reflection on hold. Since female informants were more involved in formulating their plans for the near future, the reflections evoked by these plans may be a contributing factor to their being more involved in thinking about existential matters as well, which I will return to in Chapter 7. However, as for now, I will turn to how the analysis of the interview data was conducted

3.4 Analyzing the data

3.4.1 The role of the researcher in interviews and analysis

Here, I will shortly address my own role as an interviewer, and how factors such as language, age and appearance may have influenced the conversations during the interviews. As for language, my speech attested to my being a Swedish-speaking Finn (as opposed to a native Finnish-speaker who is fluent in Swedish), but I tried to maintain "linguistic neutrality" by speaking standardized Swedish during our conversations. My questions and additional comments during the interview indicated that I was familiar with the Swedish-speaking local culture of that specific location. As I had lived in the regions in question, I was fairly well acquainted with the local organizations such as sports teams, music associations and other leisure-related activities. As a consequence, my follow-up questions were at times rather context-specific. Likewise, our discussions on educational choices also revealed that I was familiar with the local setting. Since most informants continued to speak their regional dialects[285] during the interview regardless of the location, they seem to have regarded me as part of their cultural "in-group". Indeed, had they suspected that I did not comprehend their dialects, they would probably have switched to a more standardized Swedish. Nonetheless,

[285] The Finland-Swedish context is characterized by a variety of regional dialects, and especially some of the rural dialects may even be difficult for other Finland-Swedes to understand. The urban Swedish is heavily influenced by Finnish elements.

they seem to have remained uninformed about my regional background. The Countryside informants trusted me to understand their dialect, but expressed uncertainty as to how familiar I was with their region. For example, some informants would offer detailed information about their place of origin.[286]

It seemed as if my style of presenting myself and my background caused similar reactions in all three locations. Whereas I was not considered fully part of the informants' peer group, I seemed to be familiar enough to understand and to relate to the most fundamental features of their everyday lives. It must have also been obvious to the informants that I was somewhat older than they were (ten years), yet clearly younger than their parents. I had presented myself as a researcher, and I suspect that as a result, a few informants mentioned their own interest in pursuing academic interests. However, the informants were unaware of my personal values and preferences regarding the matters we discussed.

The researcher is not only an inherent part of the data collection process, but is also an inherent part of the data analysis. Kvale describes how the positivistic strands of qualitative research have been characterized by beliefs in an objective truth about social phenomena being out there within the researcher's reach, provided that the right questions are posed to the people who are in possession of it.[287] It is fairly easy to dismiss positivistic claims in writing, even so, I would like to point out how encounters with some groups of informants made me reflect on these issues, and how these reflections have affected my analysis.

Some interviews were characterized by monosyllabic responses, avoided eye contact and periods of unresponsive body language. These interviews often left me frustrated about my failing to establish contact that was felt to be genuine. This indicates how I implicitly regarded "genuine contact" as a path to authentic responses from the young people I interviewed. However, these situations did occur, and gradually, I also came to regard these interviews as being a highly significant part of the data. These situations also indicate that all young people are not equally interested in reflecting on meaning and identity, which resembles my previous experiences of interacting with young people. Following the argument that there is a "truth" about social phenomena, then silence and awkwardness are part of this truth. When presenting the results, I have therefore included the awkward silences, monosyllabic responses and "*I don't know"* answers. I would also argue that the diverse way in which the informants answered my questions reflects the diversity of the young people interviewed. These types of response also point to the relational dimension of interviews. Since interactions take different forms, interviews will also be different in character.[288]

[286] In these situations, I chose not to divulge how familiar I was with the matters that they described because this was not relevant to the interview.
[287] Kvale 1997, 203-206. See also Silverman 2010, 167-173.
[288] The relational character of conversation is also discussed in Charlotte Linde's presentation of how life stories are told (Linde 1993, 4; 11).

Whereas some interviews were replete with silence and reluctance, others were characterized by social competence and enthusiasm. The latter form of interview would usually be a pleasurable experience for me as an interviewer. However, working with the data made me realize how these informants were anything but indifferent towards how they presented themselves. These interviews would include statements of self-presentation that implied self-awareness (*"I'm the kind of person who…"*), and references to social desirability (*"Here, it would be nice to say that X, but I must admit…"*). These comments direct attention to another aspect of the reason that objective truth about social phenomena should be questioned – people are generally aware of how they present themselves in social situations, and interviews are no exception.[289] However, the dimension of social desirability inherent in the responses could also be regarded as valuable, since they direct attention to the "typical, common and the ordinary" of the social world these young people belong to.[290] If the purpose of the present study is not to discover the genuine or objective truth about how people regard their religious affiliation, but more to explore in an open-ended manner how young people describe and discuss their religious affiliation, their comments indicating social desirability can be understood as reflecting their perceptions of what they feel is socially acceptable to say. This further points to the data not being an exhaustive account of the reflections of young people. Rather, the data reflects what the informants chose to share in conversation. Even though many of the interviewees exhibited trust and sincerity, I nevertheless considered the interview to be a sequence of continuous decisions by the informant about what they wanted to share and what they chose to remain silent about.

When meeting me, the informants had very little idea of what to expect, and this must be considered when evaluating their responses. In some respects, the informants may have had a general conception of how they wanted to present themselves and this may have affected the conversations. However, they were not prepared to discuss religious affiliation. Their responses must therefore also be understood as being situational and spontaneous. It is highly likely that they would have expressed differently if they had more preparation or if the interviews had been conducted in another setting. Moreover, the statements regarding labels and nominal Christian identity should also be understood as constituting spontaneous reactions during social interaction with an unknown person rather than as being level-headed statements that had been reflected upon extensively prior to the interview.

3.4.2 Content analysis as a research tool

The analytical orientation to this study corresponds to what John Creswell relates to as a basic qualitative analysis, which is described as initially approaching the data as a whole, identifying central themes and then moving on to understand how these themes are interrelated and how they describe the phenomenon in focus. While this process consists of a

[289] Bryman 2012, 223-224.
[290] Kvale 1997, 212; cf. Schofield (1990).

number of steps, it is also circular in character.[291] My analytical procedure could also be understood as a thematic content analysis, characterized by an interest in how individuals construct meanings.[292] However, since these terms are rather generic in character, the main objective of this section is to describe how this analysis was conducted.

I began transcribing my data while still conducting the interviews. Since my research aim did not concern language use or conversation per se, my transcriptions were not characterized by the level of detail, for example, found in conversation analysis.[293] Transcribing the data in full, 518 pages, was time-consuming but proved to be the initial step in the analysis because it demanded continuous reflection on the discussions on religion in relation to the daily lives of those interviewed. The transcription process also made it very apparent that the individual responses were not always eloquent and detailed. The difficulties inherent in attempting to describe religious affiliation and its consequences therefore needed to be considered when selecting an analytical approach. After listening to the data twice, I composed a three to four page summary of each interview to better construct a profile of each informant. At this point, I realized that my initial research purpose of determining the possible regional patterns of religiosity as indicators of ethnic identity did not correspond to my data. The logical consequence of the unreflected meaning of religious affiliation was that the linguistic dimension of that affiliation was even less acknowledged.

The analysis had an abductive approach.[294] Whereas previous research and theories established a fundament for how the research problem was formulated, the analysis was conducted in an open-ended manner without a direct influence of a particular theoretical perspective. The first and tentative analysis of the data concerned religious affiliation, since this theme was crucial as a turning point in the interview. The first task was to explore which explanations the informants offered to why they had or had not a religious affiliation in an open-ended manner. Open-ended questions are inductive in character, acknowledge the informant's perspective, aim at obtaining the detailed and multi-dimensional accounts rather than simple explanations, and they are oriented to understanding and explaining the data.[295] Thus, the first analytical question was: "How do the informants explain their religious affiliation?" The responses on religious affiliation were then categorized thematically according to their content. This thematic approach proved to be illuminating. It offered insight into how religious affiliation, which is a common social position and a socially tangible phenomenon, nevertheless reflected diverging understandings. My next step was to examine further the discussions on identification involving the discussions of the label "Christian," since I had found these discussions intriguing during the transcription process. A key to understanding my data was to examine the ways in which the informants described the

[291] Creswell 2009, 185-190.
[292] Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 93; 101-104.
[293] Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006, 74.
[294] See further Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009, 96-100; Alvesson & Sköldberg 2008, 54-56.
[295] Hirsjärvi, Remes & Sajavaara 1997, 165; Creswell 2009, 175; Saaranen-Kauppinen & Kuusniekka 2006, 6.

meaning of Christian identification. These discussions pointed to the role of the social context in which religious affiliation is discussed and negotiated, both during the interview and in the informant's everyday social context. The interplay between the collective and personal dimensions of identity that were expressed in these discussions captured the richness and diversity of the data.[296] These initial stages of the analysis therefore established the specific aim of the study and offered a strategy to analyze the rest of the data analytically.

Once the specific objective of the study was established, I chose to proceed as I had begun by approaching the data thematically by using open-ended questions concerning its content. In order to analyze the massive data, I coded the sections of the interviews that I would use in the analysis. I used two types of codes. The first was purely content-related ("What is the informant saying in relation to this theme?"). However, I also partly coded according to how the content was expressed. While working with the themes of religious affiliation and ascriptions of the Christian label, I noticed a recurring response pattern. These response patterns were characterized by the frequent use of negations in the form of "I would say I am Christian, but not in a way that…" or "I do belong, but not in a way that…." These positionings seemed to function as a way for the informants to negotiate the meaning of religious affiliation, identity and practice, and as they kept recurring, I would also code them according to content.

Each code included the theme of the conversation as well as a more specific referral to its content.[297] The data on confirmation will be used here as an example. One of the questions I posed about confirmation was what the informants recalled from their confirmation camp. If an informant commented on how she remembered playing volleyball, this response was marked by the code "Confirmation camp: games." A response that included many different memories confirmation was marked by several codes. When I had completed the coding, the theme "Confirmation camp" included a total of 28 codes (see table 4). The previous notions of how discussions would also include negotiations and negations resulted in a complementary set of codes that related to language use and to styles of expression, rather to than content[298] (for example: "Positioning: not like Church" or "Positioning: not like a "real" Christian"). Coding was therefore characterized by an open-ended approach similar to the one in the initial thematic analysis.

The next step involved categorizing the codes into larger and more abstract categories according to content. To proceed with the same example, all codes on the theme "Confirmation camp" were sorted into six categories: evaluation, social dimension, specific activities, new encounters, learning and positioning. The sixth sub-theme concerns how

[296] Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2009, 91-93) point out how the challenge of the qualitative process is to limit the research scope to certain features of the data while disregarding others.
[297] Thus, codes were "emerging" (from the data) rather than "pre-determined" by previous theory or research (Creswell 2009, 187).
[298] Saaranen-Kauppinen & Puusniekka 2006, 74.

informants explicitly would downplay the religious dimension of confirmation camp. This categorization process was also a means of testing the validity of the codes in terms of how accurately a code matched the data and how consistent the coding was. At this stage, the codes were revised or new ones were added when needed. This also ensured that the specific definitions and classifications on the codes were maintained.[299] The codes were primarily used as an orientation to the data. For example, determining the more abstract thematic categories, the codes were used in an interplay with the full wording of the responses because the latter provided information about the context in which a theme appeared.

Table 4. Example of a coding tree

Coding Step 1		***Coding Step 2***
Over-arching theme	**Content**	**Sub-themes**
Confirmation camp:	Positive evaluation	Statements
Confirmation camp:	Positive memory	
Confirmation camp:	Interesting at the time	
Confirmation camp:	Don't remember	
Confirmation camp:	Bad experience	
Confirmation camp:	Not much fun	
Confirmation camp:	Desire to leave	
Confirmation camp:	Friends mentioned	Social dimension
Confirmation camp:	Common experience	
Confirmation camp:	Teacher's aides	
Confirmation camp:	Camp	Activity
Confirmation camp:	Games	
Confirmation camp:	Special occasion	
Confirmation camp:	Devotion	
Confirmation camp:	Confrontation	Meeting place
Confirmation camp:	Discussion	
Confirmation camp:	Pressure	
Confirmation camp:	Ethics	
Confirmation camp:	Reflection	
Confirmation camp:	Learning by heart	Learning
Confirmation camp:	Lessons	
Confirmation camp:	Learning	
Confirmation camp:	Not seriously	Positioning
Confirmation camp:	Not like the Church	
Confirmation camp:	Religion not in focus	
Confirmation camp:	Not for me/us	

When analyzing data, Creswell has suggested that the researcher should particularly note the surprising and unexpected, since these segments may well indicate new insights.[300] While sorting codes into larger categories often resulted in insights and ideas, these insights were not necessarily the most accurate reflections of the data. I would therefore continuously test my own conceptions of the data to determine whether unexpected results were in fact an

[299] Creswell 2009, 190.
[300] Creswell 2009, 186-187.

exception to the more common response patterns, or if they recurred more generally. By scrutinizing the conceptions this way, I was able to establish the existence of some patterns while eliminating others. For example, the informants used different personal pronouns when discussing the reason their families belonged to a religious affiliation. For instance, whereas some would say "We belong to X," others would speak of their families as "they" and a third group would say "I guess you…". These patterns were intriguing and I speculated on whether they indicated larger patterns reflecting the degree that church membership was understood as being a matter of personal agency or pre-determined family structure. At one point, however, I discovered that the pattern correlated with how the initial question was posed. In other words, I had been unaware of how I would sometimes ask "How about your family, why do you belong to the Church?" and at others inquire: "How about your family members, why do they belong to the Church?" Had I not questioned and tested my own assumptions on this matter, I would have risked presenting results under false pretenses. These attempts to falsify my own assumptions through the analysis were a means of conducting a "validation through control."[301]

When reporting the results, another guideline was to embrace all the types of responses by all the informants. From the researcher's point of view, it is easy to analyze and to work with eloquent statements, but all people do not deliver these types of comments. An inability to express oneself undoubtedly presents a dilemma in qualitative analysis, as this may stem from both a lack of verbal ability and a lack of interest. When little information is forthcoming, it is difficult to determine the reason. Nevertheless, I have aimed at granting all informants a voice both by a) continuously pointing out their existence and by also trying to cite them when these citations are not eloquent, and b) by trying to discern whether these types of responses were more frequent as a reaction to some questions rather than to others and, if some questions elicited less information, what this stems from.

This chapter has covered a large number of themes, ranging from specified research questions to practical and ethical issues encountered when conducting the interviews for this study. When meeting an informant, the most crucial factor for this enquiry, religious affiliation, was still an unknown factor. In the following chapter, I will turn to the religious affiliation patterns found in the data, and moreover, how individual religious affiliation was explained during the interviews.

4. RELIGIOUS BELONGING: MAJORITY PATTERNS

4.1 Religious affiliation

The point of departure for presenting the results is the "what" and "why" of the religious affiliation reflected in the data. I will begin by addressing the patterns of religious affiliation

[301] Kvale 1997, 218-219.

that were discovered and how these patterns affect the results being presented. In the second section of this chapter, I will explore how the family patterns of religious affiliation were explained and discussed by the majority members. In the final section of this chapter, I will turn to address the patterns of religious socialization that occur in the family, both through how parents are described in religious terms and how religious affiliation has been enacted at home.

As predicted by the statistics on religious affiliation, most young people whom I interviewed were members of a family where everyone in the family belonged to the Lutheran Church. Table 5 illustrates, this was the case for more than half of the informants. Other patterns of religious affiliation that were observed in the material were a *mixed pattern* and a *minority pattern*.

Table 5. Patterns of religious affiliation in the data

Majority-pattern families	Mixed-pattern families	Minority-pattern families
MM1 MF1 MM2 MF3 MF5 BM1 BF1 BM3 BF4 BF6 CF1 CF2 CM2 CF3 CM4 CF4 CF5	MM3 *MM4* MM5 MF4 BF3 BF7 BM2 BM4 MF2 CM5	BF2 BF5 CM1 CM3

A *mixed-pattern family* was characterized by an internal heterogeneity in terms of religious affiliation. The declining membership rates of the Lutheran Church would perhaps lead one to assume that this heterogeneity would stem from the affiliated parents' not having baptized their children. However, the data reflected the opposite trend. In the mixed-pattern family, it was most common that one or both parents had left the Lutheran Church whereas the other family members remained church members. Most non-affiliated parents had been Lutheran Church members at some point but left, and the informants from these families did not refer to this as a recent change of events. In some cases, the mixed patterns had originated from children joining the Church during confirmation training. Occasionally, the mixed-pattern families were characterized by parents being affiliated with different Christian communities.

The *minority-pattern families* were characterized by shared religious affiliation patterns, either by being members of a Christian minority, or by not being members at all. The reason for these two minority patterns form a group despite their diverging affiliation status is the way in which they discussed their religious affiliation. These discussions had in common that they reflected an awareness of the societal minority position the religious (non-)affiliation had placed them in. These experiences were occasionally expressed in a rather vivid and detailed style, but the information that these accounts contained also made it possible to identify the informants, especially since the minority member group was rather small. The minority members will be discussed briefly in Section 7.1, but these will be examined

primarily to provide an alternative account of religious affiliation than that reported by majority members.

The patterns of affiliation that were detected indicate the significant presence of the Lutheran church in Finnish family settings. Most informants were members of the Lutheran Church, along with siblings, parents, grandparents and other family members. The only other more "consistent" non-Lutheran membership patterns that had endured more than one generation were detected in the families who belonged to other (Christian) communities. These patterns therefore illustrate how the societal patterns of a strong religious majority are made concrete on a micro-level.

What was even more interesting, however, was that church membership also permeated the family histories of the non-affiliated families and family members. For example, parents who had no religious affiliation also came from church-member families, but they had left the Church as adults. Moreover, the informants from non-affiliated families had at some time belonged to the Church, but they had left along with the rest of their families as children or as adolescents. The grandparents of these informants still belonged to the Church, and with few exceptions, the more extended family were also members. In this respect, the societal majority position of the Lutheran Church was reflected in how the non-affiliated in the data were surrounded by their Lutheran family members. The general impression of the membership patterns discovered through these interviews is therefore that religious non-affiliation appears to be a personal decision rather than a family pattern, and it is also a rather recent phenomenon in most families.

As these findings suggest, the dividing line for response patterns reflected the division between the majority members and minority members, not between affiliation and non-affiliation. The social division found is therefore between those belonging to the Lutheran Church and those who do not. For these reasons, this study began to evolve around the church members and the response patterns from this group. When responses refer to "the Church", I mean the Lutheran Church. If I exceptionally refer the Orthodox Church, this will be explicitly mentioned. In the following, I will turn to how the societal majority, the church members, explained their church membership and to which extent these explanations reflect the role of religion in their family context.

4.2 Church membership – why?

4.2.1 "It is something you do" – Church member families

In this section, I will present the first and largest group of church members whose families also belonged to the Lutheran Church. The informants from this group not only shared membership patterns, but also offered similar reasons as to why they were church members and shared how they regarded membership from a long-term perspective.

When I asked these members why their family belonged to the Church, responses were seldom forthcoming, and I often had the impression that this difficulty was because this was the first time the respondents had to articulate their reflections on this topic. The silences, words and hesitations that indicated a need to think were common, such as "Well…" and expressions such as "I don't know, I guess…." Furthermore, two informants were unable to respond and they simply could not think of a reason as to why their family belonged to the Church. This group was therefore for the most part characterized by being rather unreflected regarding their church membership.

The most common theme reasons for membership were that church membership was described as a family tradition and/or as a societal tradition. For example, BF6 thought that her parents were church members "(…) *because their parents have been [members] and their parents have been [members] and so on,"* while MF3 described membership as *"a good old habit."* In other words, church membership was portrayed as a heritage from earlier family members that was anchored in specific family traditions and a part of their family identity. However, these traditions were not necessarily too articulated. In fact, often few, if any, statements indicated that families had made an active decision to maintain this tradition. Rather, church membership appeared to be a rather unreflected aspect of life that sometimes was described in a rather deterministic manner. BF1's comment *"That's just the way it is"* was similar to how other informants would respond. Church membership was not described as a personal choice, but rather, it was passed on from one generation to the next. In fact, MM4's response indicates that he understood himself as a link in this chain of membership: *"I suppose that… [since] you belong [to the Church] during your first eighteen years – [church membership] hasn't bothered you during your first eighteen years and probably won't bother you [in the future] either."*

Even though MM4 did not regard membership to be a matter of his own personal choice, his response indicates that he still does not mind continuing this tradition from earlier generations. Other informants also expressed this attitude. Even though church membership was not understood as a personal choice, it was not seen as bothersome or disturbing. When I asked MM5 why he thought his family belonged to the Church, he responded: *"I guess you were enrolled when you were born and… it's not like you ever considered leaving."* MM5 later expressed the intent to maintain the status quo in terms of membership, but expressed this in a rather passive and cautious manner as well.

Some references to tradition went beyond the family's religious affiliation to a larger cultural and societal context. For example, three informants stated that they were church members because *"It is something you do."* Just as those who described church membership as a family tradition, these informants aimed at remaining church members in the future. CF3 even thought that leaving the Church would make her family stand out in a negative manner and she described Lutheran membership as the following: "*It is something everyone is, really. If you're not a church member, then you're a little different. That's what I think."* CF3 seems

to suggest that in her context, being a church member was a characteristic of a "proper citizen." Even though others did not concur with her opinions, it could be suggested that she nevertheless captured what other informants appeared to convey when referring to how being a church member is "something you do." In short, being a church member was understood as being normal.

Other reasons for church membership were often presented in clusters and the informants would cite several reasons for membership. One such reason cited was the religious beliefs of their parents, another referred to the Christian message in general and how that message was in line with the values they had been taught at home. MM2 thought it was good that her family was a member of the Church, since *"you don't feel worse from… hearing, like, what is said in church and stuff. So (…) it hasn't affected me negatively."* In reference to their parents' positions on faith issues as a reason for membership, faith and beliefs were expressed in rather vague terms. For instance, MF4 referred to how her mother belonged to the Church because "*I think she believes in God,*" and MF1 commented on how "*Dad is kind of religious.*" Even though these references were somewhat indistinct, they indicate that the informants nevertheless understood their parents' stand on faith issues as one factor in their church membership. However, the religious aspect of church membership was often understated, as if the informants wanted to emphasize that the connection between membership and faith nevertheless was not that visible in everyday life.

One of the informants clearly differed from other majority members in her descriptions of herself and her family. When introducing herself to me in the beginning of our conversation, she described herself as a Christian, and she emphasized the religious dimensions of her life throughout the interview. In her discussion of membership, she stated that her parents had raised her in a way that corresponded to her personal religious identity. The strong links between her Lutheran religious affiliation and religious identity was a stark contrast with how the other majority members described the role of their religious affiliation. This suggests that the minority of active and convinced believers among church members has very little in common with the membership majority in terms of how they understand and describe the function and role of membership. For the most part, the responses from young majority members were characterized by indistinctness and a lack of personal agency.

The vague and uncertain answers indicate that the informants based their responses on impressions and beliefs on the motivations of their parents to pass on the tradition of Church membership to them, rather than on actual conversations on this subject. Few informants referred to actual statements by their parents or to discussions that addressed church membership. The lack of personal agency expressed in these comments was most salient in the reference to tradition. The willingness to uphold traditions could be a deliberate choice, but this was not what characterized the comments on religious belonging in this group. Rather, the response *"it is something you do"* appeared to be something to refer to for want of more reflective statements. Family traditions were also often intertwined with cultural or

societal traditions. This further suggests that the informants struggled with formulating reasons for membership, but nevertheless understood that the reasons related to factors beyond their personal sphere. Likewise, a lack of personal agency was also implied when church membership was presented as something inevitable, almost to the extent that the family could not be seen as being personally accountable for it. When family tradition is part of a societal pattern and common cultural heritage, personal accountability for maintaining church membership is perhaps seldom required, despite membership being maintained through infrequent, yet continuous choices, for example, through life rites. The social setting therefore contributes to certain traditions being upheld without question.

The question is therefore whether the cultural tradition of church membership is significant on a personal level. References to tradition could imply that membership is mainly a remnant of the close interconnection between national identity and Lutheranism that has been transmitted from earlier generations, but these references could also imply that church membership is part of the informant's cultural identity and a larger "we" still has some significance for contemporary young people. One indication of the significance of the tradition of church membership has is whether the informants believed they would retain their membership as adults. This was, in fact, what most informants from membership families claimed they would do. Few offered a reason for remaining a member, but their responses indicated that they did not need to comment on this further because maintaining their membership was self-evident to them. The informants who chose to comment generally referred to how they saw no point in changing the status quo on this matter. For example, MM1's comment was: "*You're a member by default, so I don't think I would go ahead and leave just like that."* This type of reasoning resembles the previous citation from MM4 regarding why his family belonged to the Church. MM4 stated that even though membership was not described as a matter of personal choice, leaving was not desirable, either. Informants therefore seemed to be characterized by having no complaints about the current state of affairs. As his reason for wanting to remain a church member, MM5 referred to how he saw church membership as *"a kind of a security."* MF5, on the other hand, considered it as likely to *"belong the way I belong now."* She had previously been rather explicit about how her personal values sometimes contradicted Christian values – yet she could imagine remaining a member with the low level of engagement it currently implied. MF1, by comparison, commented on how she thought her church membership would acquire a different meaning over time as her faith would mature with age.

Church membership was therefore considered to be an ascribed part of life. The willingness to maintain membership seems to be compatible with regarding church membership as a part of a larger collective tradition that was shared by other family members and by society at large. This group of church members seemed to have adopted their parents' attitudes towards church membership: it was a part of life that was upheld by larger collectivity patterns, not very reflected on, but not undesirable, either. Being a church member

was thus in tune with how religious affiliation in the societal context is carried out, which most likely also means that my question on the reasons for membership are seldom actualized in an everyday Finnish context. The statement "it is something you do" perhaps refers to the more invisible cultural patterns these members are part of, and as a result, they are seldom held accountable personally for them. The second large group of informants, whose families were more heterogeneous in terms of religious affiliation, seemed to be more aware of their accountability. I will now turn to examine this group more closely.

4.2.2 "I'm still here…" Members from families with mixed membership patterns

Some church members did not regard church membership as being self-evident or natural, and some of them also had plans to leave the Church. For instance, when I asked BM2 about the church membership in his family, he did not respond directly; instead, he commented on his own membership: *"I haven't left the Church, although I no longer think that much about faith and the Church, but I, I'm still here. I don't know where it leads, but…*" BM2 expressed no immediate intent to leave the Church. Instead, he expected future events to lead him into making a decision that could go either way and he was reluctant to express which direction this would take him. BM2 was therefore truly undecided on this matter. MF2 expressed similar notions in her response, and she was unsure of how she would think about her membership in the future: "*(...) you never know whether something comes up that makes me leave the Church later or… something that keeps me in. I guess that's what I'm trying to figure out, how things will be."* Others were more clearly on their way out, although they had not yet carried through their decision in practice. These informants shared an indifferent stance towards religion, which could be described as "I don't know and I don't care." Their plans on leaving the Church were thus rather consistent with the attitudes they displayed towards the Church and religion more generally.

These informants, as well as many others who did not regard their church membership as being self-evident, had one factor in common – either one or both of their parents did not belong to the Church. In other words, they had been raised in mixed-pattern families, due to one or both parents having left the Church after their children were born. These children had nevertheless remained members and had also been confirmed in the Church. These informants regarded church membership differently from the members discussed in the previous section. They regarded church membership as a personal choice, something that needed to be justified on a personal level in order to be maintained. It is rather likely that this personal accountability for church membership is related to the example offered by their parents, who had demonstrated that church membership is optional.

There were also a number of informants whose parents' affiliation patterns diverged between them. In most of these families, one parent did not belong to the Church but the rest of the family did. When these informants were asked about the underlying reasons as to why one of the parents was not affiliated, they generally responded with little hesitation. For instance, MM3 referred to how his grandparents' religious fervor had his non-affiliated parent

to be reluctant towards religion. MM3 also referred to how the conditions at the outset partly explained the matter: *"he never joined a church, either, 'cause he wasn't born into one."* MF4 gave a rather explicit account of how her parent had explained his decision to leave the Church in a conversation they had. He stated that he did not believe in the Church and that he was not interested in funding activities he was not personally interested in. Although all did not explicitly refer to conversations that they had with their parents on the subject, they described reasons for not belonging in a more explicit manner than the church members who tried to explain the reasons for their parents' church membership.

However, when these informants were asked to state the underlying reasons for their Church-member parents' belonging, they had similar difficulties as the informants in the previous section. In other words, the informants from mixed-pattern families were rather clear as to why their non-affiliated parents did not belong to the Church, but were more uncertain as to why their affiliated parents were church members. The same pattern occurred with the informants who had one parent who belonged to another religious community than the Lutheran Church. The reasons were much clearer for the other affiliation than the Lutheran membership. This suggests that although one parent deviates from the societal norm in terms of the religious affiliation in his or her family, the religious affiliation of the parent belonging to the majority is not automatically focused on.

The informants in the mixed-pattern families therefore displayed diverging views on how they regarded their church membership in terms of the future. Just as personal accountability was apparent in how they described their non-Lutheran parents, their own religious affiliation was described as a personal choice. It seemed as if the non-affiliated family members in the mixed-pattern families had set an example. In these families, membership in the Lutheran Church was not understood as inevitable or something which needed to be passed on from one generation to the next. It was also rather striking how the non-membership patterns in the family were described as informed decisions, while the reasons for the Lutheran parents to be members were uncertain. This points to how the societal majority and minority positions seem to affect individual choices to a great extent.

Church membership was therefore expressed differently depending on how established it was in the family context. These differences highlight that the majority position that the Lutherans have in Finnish society results in a more unreflected religious affiliation, while a minority position, be it a non-Lutheran religious affiliation or having no religious affiliation, calls for a more pronounced stance that the children of minority member parents could account for. A known fact concerning Finnish religiosity is that religion is not something that is discussed very often, not even in family settings. According to these results, this statement perhaps needs to be revised somewhat: in general, religion is not a topic of discussion in *Lutheran* families. Previous notions of how religion is regarded as a private matter in Finland are therefore confirmed in these results at least on behalf of the church-member majority. In

contrast, the children of non-Lutheran parents generally did not have to speculate why their parents were either affiliated with minority organizations or were not affiliated at all.

However, the informants tended to downplay the religious reasons for their membership and, most of all, their personal accountability for church membership, and this sometimes made me reflect on to what extent the Lutheran responses genuinely reflected the informants' family patterns and to what extent they reflected the socially acceptable way to talk about religion in Finnish society. I am not suggesting that my informants are any more religiously inclined than they appear to be, as this statement would not fairly represent their position. However, just as church membership was sometimes presented as a norm, presenting oneself and one's family as not *too* interested in religious matters also seemed to characterize how the informants discussed their religious affiliation. This delicate balance is best exemplified in the following response, where BF4 describes why her parents are church members in the following manner: "*Well… (…) they've always been [members], and they keep on belonging, they don't consider leaving the Church but they are not active in the Church either, I guess that's, that's how you act, it's out of tradition, maybe.*"

The issue of what is socially acceptable in terms of religion is something that I will discuss at more length in subsequent chapters. Here, I will simply state that although Lutheran membership was described as an ascribed identity that the informants had not considered before, I find it premature to conclude that they regarded it as insignificant or something that they were indifferent to. After all, even though the informants did not regard membership as a personal choice, they nevertheless displayed a willingness to maintain it. The question then is what makes church membership valuable enough to retain it in adult life.

4.3 Religious socialization in the family

4.3.1 Parents from a religious perspective

The main objective of this section is to delve deeper into how these young people describe their parents and what they know about their parents' religious views. In order to contextualize such descriptions, this section begins with a general overview of how informants described the role of their parents in their lives.

In some of these accounts, adolescence was described as a critical period from a relational perspective. For example, CF5 recollected her past years as a difficult period regarding her relationship with her parents. When I asked her why she thought things had become so bad, she said:

> ***CF5:*** *Hmm… I don't know. Right then, I was so unstable, I was in a developmental crisis (…). I was so focused on breaking away from my parents, freeing myself, maybe that [was it].*
> ***M:*** *Mm-hmm. What happened then?*
> ***CF5:*** *Well (…) I've grown up some, I've become older and reached the conclusion that mom and dad are kind of handy. (Both laugh) Now I think things are going well.*

CF5's recollection is a rather typical description of the teenage "sturm und drang" phase. However, there were surprisingly few accounts like hers in the data: rather, most informants recounted stories of stable and respectful parent-child relationships. Apart from the direct questions on parents and families, many interviews included spontaneous references to the central role of parents. For example, the informants would talk about their parents and siblings with warmth, and one informant who had moved away from home mentioned how she still talked to her parents every day. Others who still lived at home described how their relationships were not free of conflict, but nevertheless very close. BM4 even stated that unlike some of his friends, he was in no hurry to move out because his relationship with parents was actually a reason for staying:

> *That's the way it's always been, (...) I don't know why, but either there's something wrong with me or then there's something wrong with my parents. I've never had any trouble with them – it's strange, you always tend to have some problems with your parents, but that's not been the case for us.*

BM4's relationships with his parents contradict the image he has of "normal" parent-child relationships, which also confirms the previous suspicion about how these interviews perhaps should not be understood as providing the full picture of their life situation (see section 3.3.3). However, the frequent referrals to parents and other family members were nevertheless a surprise to me. I had expected to encounter an age group that was embarking on a path away from their parents and consequently, they would mentally and physically be in the process of distancing themselves in order to start a life on their own terms. Instead, most informants described relationships that resembled that of BM4, rather than the opposite. A few informants also pointed out how the support of their parents and family was especially crucial in their present situation. For instance, CF2 stated that she regarded her parents, siblings and grandparents as being the most significant in life: *"I think I have such big support in them, and, they believe in me (...). I think it's important right now."* CF1 reasoned along the same lines:

> *Maybe because I am at a stage of life where I don't really know what I am about to pursue, and, that way the world feels a little unsafe because all the secure stuff from before, like school (...) has vanished. So that way I've begun to appreciate my family especially (...).*

Other responses emphasized the significance of close relations more generally; although they acknowledged a variety of aspirations and significant matters in life, their close relationships were what truly mattered to them. When BF4 explained why family and friends were what she valued most in her life, she concluded by saying: *"everything else you can do without."* BM1 explained: *"Other people (...), they are really the ones that make you go on."*

The role of parents and families were further highlighted when I asked who the informants thought of as their role models. In fact, all of those who named a specific person,

mentioned a family member, and in most cases, this family member was a parent. CF2 named her father, and said: *"He's always been there for me and… believes in me."* CF2's appreciation for the continuous support that her parents offered was also echoed in the responses of others. Other informants would say that parents were role models due to their life experience and wisdom that they had. The respondents' parents were described as appreciated and reliable sources who offered good advice. In the words of CF4; *"they know quite a lot and they've been through a lot."* The third tendency was to mention specific qualities that they appreciated in their parents, such as an optimistic spirit, independence and integrity, and as mentioned previously, self-discipline and perseverance. Several female informants also mentioned how they looked to their mothers as role models because of their inner strength, which also recurred in their descriptions of grandmothers or aunts. When BF7 described her mother, she described her as the backbone of the family who dared to have strong opinions and said that she admired how she *"simply didn't let anyone step on her."* Strength was also mentioned as the reason for CM4 and MM2 regarding their fathers as role models, but in their cases, the strength that they referred to was physical. Both were impressed by how their fathers kept in shape, despite their age. The responses to this question also reflected that their grandparents had played a major part in the lives of some of the young people. They described why they looked up to their grandparents in a way which stemmed from close relationships rather than observations at a distance. The specific qualities referred to when describing their grandparents resembled how their parents were described.

The accounts informants provided of how questions of faith and religion had been addressed at home should therefore be underlined by their relationships with their parents being described as close and stable. The previous chapter already reported that those who belonged to the Lutheran Church found it difficult to explain why they were members, which suggests that church membership has rarely been addressed at home. Therefore, it is not surprising that describing the religious identity and beliefs of parents also proved to be a challenging task. The informants tended to base their statements on their parents' beliefs on hunches and subtle signs rather than on references to discussions and statements. The informants therefore responded with caution, but they nevertheless expressed a desire to express at least what the parent in question was not.

My conversation with BF3 is a good example. When I asked her whether she thought her father would identify himself as a Christian, she thought so, but added: *"but it's not like he's active in any way. He never goes to church or anything like that."* I then asked whether she thought he held beliefs, that he had faith in anything. BF3 paused and responded: "*I think so, yes. His parents are quite, they are believers, so… I think that he has some kind of image too, but not, we haven't talked about it."* This segment includes several characteristics that are typical of how parents would be described. First, even though BF3 explicitly states that faith had not been discussed at home, she nevertheless has a conception of her father's stance on faith issues. But she expressed her response with caution because her descriptions were based

on impressions rather than "facts" from conversations on the matter. Second, it seemed important to BF3 that I would not get the wrong impression of her father. Even though she thinks he could refer to himself as a Christian, he did not display salient and active religiosity, and it appears to be important to her that she makes that point understood.

Since parents and children rarely seemed to have engaged in discussions on faith or church membership, the isolated incidents when religion actually was discussed were attributed considerable importance. For instance, when I asked CM2 why his family belonged to the Church, he referred to tradition and added: *"It's not like they're religious or anything."* However, when he described his grandparents as being more religious than his parents a moment later, he added: *"my mom's a little more religious than my dad, too."* When I asked him how he knew, he recounted how upset she had become in a discussion they had when he had indicated that his church membership meant very little to him. This was the only reason CM2 offered as to why he would describe his mother as being religious. On the other hand, CM2 was able to provide an account of his mother: for others, speaking of their parents' beliefs proved to be a very difficult task. BM4 was rather certain when he stated he did not think that his mother would identify as Christian, since she never had anything to do with the Church. However, he had much less to base his response on when I asked him whether he thought she had any beliefs: *"You always believe in something – she would surely say that, I don't know what she believes in but, almost everyone (...) believes in something."* BM4 was previously cited for describing his relationship with his parents as exceptionally good, yet he draws on what he knows about people's faith generally in this response. This is rather indicative of parental religious beliefs constituting unknown territory for some informants. Likewise, MF4 had no idea about what her father would say about being a Christian: *"I actually have no idea about what he would – he could say no or he could say yes or he could say I don't know."* I often had the impression that the informants were responding with a clear image of their parents in mind, but when asked to describe that, it became clear that this matter was something they actually knew very little about.

On the other hand, CF4 offered an interesting perspective as to why these questions sometimes were difficult to answer. When I asked her whether her mother would say she was a believer, CF4 became quiet and then said: "*I think that would be a hard one for her to answer."* The reason that responding was difficult for CF4 was not primarily due to this being an unknown territory; instead, she refers to how her mother is undecided in religious matters. This citation suggests that matters concerning church membership and faith do not necessarily automatically resolve themselves over the years.

Neither was questions concerning the parents' public practice and activity the key to a deeper understanding of their church-related attitudes. To the extent that attending church services was reported at all, these were framed as being family matters. Those who reported that one of their parents would attend church or attend a regular activity at church, such as singing in a choir, were exceptions to the general inactive majority of parents. In fact, these

questions often seemed to be redundant in the interview, given how the informant generally described his or her family's life. Considering the modest religious activity in Finland reported elsewhere, nothing else was expected. What the informants reported on the religious practice in their families in the following section shall therefore be understood as a nearly total account of the religious activities of families. Furthermore, only a small number of informants mentioned that their parents watched religious television programs or listened to religious radio programs at home. Those who did report this activity as a deliberate activity on a more regular basis[302] had already described their parents as either religious or as being Christian. The questions on the consumption of religious media therefore did not provide additional information about parental attitudes and behavior. It is, however, interesting to note that the children of "religious" or "Christian" parents who watched or listened to Christian programs did not necessarily describe their childhood home as being Christian. This strengthens the notion that in most homes, the individual religiosity of the parents did not seem to have an impact on their family life generally.

The question on whether or not the respondent's parents would describe themselves as Christian did not result in clear accounts and descriptions. However, the interviewees' responses nevertheless resulted in interesting notions regarding what the label "Christian" seemed to entail and what type of a social category "Christians" constituted. These negotiations recurred regardless of whether the informant was male or female, and where he or she came from. The question was often replied to with the counter-question: "*What do you mean by…?.*"[303] Alternatively, the informant began his response with his or her own definition of what he meant by this label. This need for clarity points to a lack of common understanding of what labels such as "Christian" or "believer" refer to or mean. As a consequence, church members needed to define these labels and negotiate their meaning when using them. Furthermore, the tendency to define, describe and negotiate also indicate the informants' need to "get it right" and implied that it was important to them not to place their parents in a social category in which they did not belong. When responses were affirmative, they therefore included the frequent use of negations *("Yes, but not…")*. Since these response patterns recurred when informants negotiated this label in relation to them personally, I will come back to this issue in a subsequent section (section 6.1).

Here, I will only provide a short account for the general characteristics of how the majority members reasoned regarding their parents' Christian or non-Christian identity. Being Christian seemed to refer to both collective and individual identity markers. When the informant sensed that his or her parent would understand his- or herself as being Christian in one way but not another, the question became difficult to respond to. Those who understood

[302] A few informants mentioned that their parents listened to radio devotions, but as a result of the radio always being turned on at home.

[303] I responded these types of counter-questions by encouraging them to define themselves what they meant by such a label and make their response according to that definition.

"Christian" as being a label that referred to the personal dimensions of identity often referred to a parent's faith or belief:

> ***M:*** *If I were to ask whether your Mom would say she's a Christian, what do you think would be her answer?*
> ***BF6:*** *I think she would say yes.*
> ***M:*** *Why do you think she would say yes? How would she defend that?*
> ***BF6:*** *I think she would say that, that she thinks that there is a God. That's what I think.*
> ***M:*** *Mm-hmm. So if I were to ask her whether she has a faith, what…*
> ***BF6:*** *Mm-hmm. [Answers affirmatively]*
> ***M:*** *Then she would say yes?*
> ***BF6:*** *Yes.*

The informants tended to describe the religious profiles of their parents in rather modest terms. For instance, CF1 thought that her father would claim that he was Christian, because: "*he has a faith, he believes in something. Eh… and he believes, doesn't believe in Hinduism or anything like that, he believes in the Christian [things]*." MM5's response reflects these same notions: *"he believes that there is something [out there], but that he doesn't know what it is, something like that."* Notions of belief in "*the Christian stuff,*" that "*there is a God*" or how "*there is something out there*," therefore referred to a perceived connection between a Christian identity and belief. Other responses related to a more collective dimension. MF5's account of her mother was: *"I thought she would base it on that she has been raised, or, [her family] has always belonged to the Christian Church and stuff. But not like Christian in a particular [way], like that someone [in her family] would follow certain rules or something."* The responses that referred to collective dimensions often were characterized by how the Christian identity of their parents should not be understood as an indicator of them being Christian in a very salient way, just as BF3 previously expressed that his father being Christian did not imply that "*he's active in any way.*" Those who expressed their responses to these questions with most ease were those who knew that their parents did not believe. For example, MF3 instantly responded that her father would not refer to himself as a Christian, and said: "*He would say that he… thinks for himself. Yes. That he hasn't got any proof.*" MM4 stated: "*We're not religious people who go to church and stuff.*"

In this context, it is interesting to note that informants often described grandparents with more clarity than parents. When grandparents were described as "religious," and I asked the informant what that meant, informants would for the most part provide a rather clear account that included references to church activities, overt discussions on religious matters, or symbols at home, such as a cross or religious paintings. Some informants also acknowledged that their grandparents had functioned as actively religious socialization agents in a manner that their parents had not. BM2 referred to how his grandparents had taught him how to pray, and MM1 described how his grandparents were "*believers, like, totally.*" MM3, in turn, described his grandparents as "*totally religious*" and referred to how they went to church.

When these informants described their parents, it was apparent that their parents and grandparents were not characterized by their having a similar approach to religious matters. The contrast between the salient beliefs of their grandparents and vague beliefs of their parents indicates that the difficulties in describing other people's beliefs were confined to the majority member parents. Thus, the tentative descriptions regarding parental belief cannot be interpreted as the informant's inability to describe faith in general. In fact, it could be argued that one reason the informants described their parents in such a vague manner may be related to how the informants implicitly compared them to their grandparents, who were more salient and verbal about their religious beliefs.

It could also be proposed that their grandparents had influenced the informants in another way. This concerned how the informants might understand the role of religion as an age-related matter. Not only were the religious people they knew the best much older than they were, some also commented on how their grandparents' religious interests had increased as they had become older. This has led some informants to draw the conclusion that religion was not a matter for young people. For example, BM1 said: *"If grandma sometimes talks, or tries – now at Easter, she tried to tell me something about Jesus, and I just thought that, well, that's probably something that you start believing in when you're old or something."* MM5 reasoned the same way when he explained why he had not given much thought to existential matters as these reflections would just take time away from other matters in life that he was interested in. However, he also referred to how religious beliefs would perhaps make more sense in old age, as one would become frightened of dying and increasingly indisposed to participate in other activities. In other words, MM5 appeared to draw from his experiences of how older people generally behave.

This chapter has pointed to how matters that would indicate a parental stance on religious issues or their relation to the Church are rarely discussed in the Church member homes, which made informants somewhat uncertain as to how to explain their parents' position on these matters. When personal affiliation patterns are similar to those found in the majority, these patterns do not need to be explained or verbally expressed. The fact that these matters are also considered to be private in character further enforce the observation that parents and children seldom seem to approach subject matters that are related to religion.

Even though the main impression from the interviews is that parents and children rarely discuss matters of faith and religion at home, parents were nevertheless more popular to talk with than peers. When I later asked whether existential and religious matters were something that the informants would talk about with their friends, some referred to faith as being something that they preferred to discuss with their parents. Here, mothers seemed to be easier to approach than fathers. This reflects a certain amount of variation in the data. However, for the most part, the families seemed to have kept silent on religious issues.

4.3.2 Religious practice in the family

When I planned my interview guide, I assumed that a general question about religious behavior would be responded in the negative, since few of the informants spontaneously would associate their family with attending church or participating in religious practices. I therefore decided to ask rather detailed questions about specific activities and practices in order to help the informants articulate part of what their majority membership entailed. However, the topics I asked about did not seem very familiar or common at all to the young people who were interviewed. This could of course mean that I posed the wrong questions on the wrong topics. But given what is known about public religious practice, it is more likely that this lack of response or topics to elaborate on reflects rather the informants' lack of interaction with religious institutions and common Christian practices.

I will begin with an account of how informants described the occurrence of institutional practice in their family. Most informants could remember going to church together with their family, regardless of whether the informants were either male or female, or whether they lived in a Bigcity, Middletown or Countryside environments. In general, church-going was described as neither a frequent nor a very characteristic matter. Rather, the responses indicated that a family only would attend church on special occasions, or in connection to specific life rites. For example, CF1 said: "*Every now and then [we go to church], I mean, it's not like we [go] every Sunday but, occasionally (...). I generally link the church to like, funerals and stuff. And at Christmas Eve, it's tradition that we go church then.*"

CF1's description captures how church-going generally was portrayed as a regular but rather infrequent practice. Some described how attending a service at Christmas was a part of their extended family celebrations with their grandparents or uncles and aunts also attending. Some were explicit that this tradition was something the informant personally could do well without, but as long as the other (older) family members wanted to go, the informant did not mind going. Likewise, participation in life rites such as baptisms, confirmations, marriages and funerals, also involved the extended family. Some informants also remembered how the family had attended a church service since other family members were engaged in it. All these ways to describe church-going therefore shared the references to a family setting. The company of close ones and respect for them rather than its religious content was what made church-going meaningful. The informants' comments were also characterized by how they mentioned that these occasions did not make their families "typical" church-goers.

Confirmation is an inherent part of the Finnish affiliation pattern that most informants had participated in (see also Section 5.3.2). At this point, I will focus on the more specific question of parental will in relation to the informant's confirmation, and whether the will of their parents had surfaced at the stage at which informants had made their decision to attend. The informants' responses were rather divided on this matter. For example, BM2 was one of

those who were the most certain that being confirmed was their own choice. When I asked him what his parents thought about him becoming confirmed, he said:

> *BM2: They didn't [mind], like… [they had] a really neutral attitude, they had no objections and they did not [speak in favor] of it, I got to do what I wanted.*
> *M: Had you chosen differently, what do you think they would have said – would it have been the same?*
> *BM2: I think [their reaction] would have been the same.*

Responses such as the one from BM2 usually came from church members from mixed-pattern families. Thus, the parents who were described as having the most neutral stance towards confirmation were for the most part not church members. This suggests they had confidence in the children's ability in making their own choices, but also a trust in the youth activities arranged by the Lutheran Church. This reaction might be explained partially by what was discussed in Section 4.2.2. In other words, for most non-affiliated parents, leaving the Church had been their own choice as adults, which suggests that confirmation training was part of their own life history and a rather familiar procedure.

Others also claimed that their parents were rather indifferent about them being confirmed, but for other reasons than the previous group. For instance, MM5 responded as follows: *"I don't think they thought anything [about me attending], it was just something you did."* Here, MM5 did not acknowledge the role of his parents in his choice, but still perceived confirmation to be something that was expected of him. This suggests that these children and parents shared an understanding of confirmation as the normal and expected thing to do, and as a consequence, parents seldom needed to air their personal opinions regarding their children's participation. BF4 expresses something similar in her response: *"Had I not wanted to be confirmed, well they wouldn't have objected to that, but, I do think that they think that [me being confirmed] was the normal thing [to do], or what they had had in mind, too." Since both* children and parents regarded confirmation as "something you do", the enrolment in confirmation training had not turned into a situation where parental will had become salient. BF4 has therefore maintained an image of herself as being uninfluenced by her parents in religious matters, because she had not yet encountered a situation which that have challenged that notion.

There was, however, a group of informants who expressed that their parents wanted them to be confirmed. Some even referred to how their parents "*forced*" them to attend confirmation training. However, their parents' reasons for this enforcement did not seem to relate to religious matters. Rather, the argument "*it is something you do*" recurred in these responses, but in a more forceful manner. Hence, the informants had perceived that their parents' wanting them to be confirmed stemmed primarily from the pressure to conform to societal norms. There were a few exceptions. For example, MF4 said she thought her parents would have been confused if she had chosen not to be confirmed: *"They would never have forced me into it, but (...) especially mom would have thought 'how unnecessary of you not to*

go, it's going to be fun'. They would have let me gone through with it, though." M4's response reflects that she regarded her parents as being rather salient in their roles as socialization agents, but not as religious socialization agents specifically.

These responses suggest that the informants' enrolment into confirmation training had not presented a situation where the religious disposition of parents had become more salient. As confirmation is embedded both in the Finnish youth culture and the surrounding cultural context, it rarely evoked discussions at home. When this occurred, these discussions seemed to frame confirmation as a socially expected act rather than a family affair: in these discussions, the parents' salient sanctions were not perceived as being related to religion, but pertain to what is more generally sanctioned. However, the informants' attendance at church as well as confirmation attests to the major impact that the family has had on church-related matters. Consequently, it could be stated that the data suggests that Finnish parents (along with grandparents and other family members) seem to socialize their children into "using" the church as the place for important ceremonies, but not necessarily in a way that incorporates a religious dimension.

As for more private practice, saying an evening prayer corresponded to clear regional lines. This practice was only found in Countryside and Middletown. Response patterns also followed gendered patterns. Girls more frequently than boys stated that their families had said evening prayer, which confirmed my quantitative data from 2003.[304] Those who remembered saying evening prayers as a childhood ritual named both their parents and grandparents as the initiators. When staying with their grandparents, evening prayer was said at bedtime. The same appeared to be the case for saying grace at meals. However, very few reported as having said grace at all, and no one mentioned participating in this practice at home. Evening prayer and saying grace were described similarly. For example, those who mentioned praying with their grandparents did not mention praying with their parents, which suggests that prayer was a tradition that parents no longer upheld, but grandparents had chosen to maintain. Even though this suggests that the "chain" of saying evening prayers had been broken in these families, the socialization patterns nevertheless seemed to have had a strong impact when these informants discussed evening prayers from a future perspective. Those who had said prayers with their parents or grandparents also expressed how they wanted to uphold these practices with their own children. Correspondingly, those who had not prayed with their parents did not see it as likely to begin praying with their children. In the words of CM2: *"No, I don't think so. It's not like anyone ever prayed with me, either."*

Considering the modest rates of church activity reported here, it could be suggested that when participation in church activities actually does occur, it is noted, due to its exceptional character. However, the findings in this section suggest otherwise. Infrequent

[304] Whereas 54% of the girls responded that they had said an evening prayer at home as children, only 41% of the boys stated that they participated in this practice. Likewise, 49% of the girls but only 39% of the boys reported as having been raised in a Christian home. (Klingenberg 2005, 86-87)

participation in church services was not recognized as indicator for religious preferences or as a consequence of religious affiliation on behalf of parents. When participation in church services and life rites takes place in a social setting where such participation does not make the family stand out from others, it is described as part of convention. The question is, then, what kind of conclusions informants draw about their conventional childhood homes in terms of religion.

4.3.3 "A Christian home?"

The question as to whether or not an informant would describe being raised in a Christian home did not only offer further insight into the meaning of the label "Christian". This question also evoked the informants' reflections on the type of influence their family had exerted in terms of religion. As for the meaning of the label "Christian," the responses to this question further established the lack of consensus regarding what being "Christian" actually meant, which in turn resulted in a perceived need to explain one's response. These answers also indicate that even though the parents of these informants have made religious choices for their children in terms of church membership, this alone does not result in categorizing one's home as being Christian. Instead, the responses suggest that other factors were at play.

Some informants opted to name different criteria or indicators of a Christian home in their responses, and here membership appeared to be an important factor. For example, BF1 stated that she was from a Christian home, because *"we belong to the Church and (...) it's Christianity and not Buddhism or anything like that [that is the tradition we belong to.]*. CF4 also attributed some weight to the family's religious affiliation. However, she was also eager to not give the wrong impression of her home when describing it as being Christian: "*(...) [When I hear] 'Christian' I think [about], those who go to church every weekend, so (...) I would say that no… not like really Christian. But you belong to church."* Even though CF4 did not think her family corresponded to her image of "typical Christians", she nevertheless regarded church membership as a factor which needed to be taken into account. Those whose parents had left the Church recently seemed to offer the same reasoning when stating that they used to come from a Christian home, but they no longer considered this to be so.

Values and traditions were also discussed as indicators for a Christian home, and just like church membership, these discussions also referred to being Christian as a cultural and collective identity rather than a personal identity marker. Furthermore, these discussions also included positioning against salient and active Christianity. However, these discussions were also characterized by more ambiguity. The following is an excerpt from my discussion with MM3:

> ***M:*** *(...) If I would ask you if you think you grew up in a Christian home, what would your answer be?*
> ***MM3:*** *Well yes, like sure, (...) Christian values and stuff, that's something you've learned. Cause those are like rather universal values too, really.*

M: *What values are you referring to? Is there a specific [value] you have in mind, or any specific [values]?*
MM3: *I don't know really, it's like… not to hurt others (…) all that stuff… it's not so particular, really.*

MM3 considered his home to be Christian because of the transmission of Christian values, although he described these values as universal rather than explicitly Christian in character. MF5 also referred to values in her response, but did not see her home as being Christian, because had it been Christian, she would have noticed. Then she added:

> *OK, some (…) ethical issues (…) might be based on some Christian faith, but then I think that the Christian faith is so broad that, like your own thoughts could be in line with that although you don't [consider yourself to be] that Christian. So [ethical guidelines] in a common sense, in a normal way….*

For MF5, the lack of salience made her conclude that her home could not be characterized as Christian in character. Here, I suggest that MM3 and MF5 describe Christian values in a similar way, yet they arrive at different conclusions regarding whether these values are understood as an indicator of a Christian home. Their diverging conclusions seem to stem from how their different interpretations of the term "Christian". Whereas MM3 discusses being Christian as a cultural and collective matter, MF5 discusses being Christian as a personal and salient dimension of life. Regardless of these conclusions, both seem intent on describing their homes as being, in MF5's words, "*normal*" from a religious perspective.

Similarly, an evening prayer tradition at home did not seem to constitute a sufficiently solid criterion for defining one's home as Christian, and vice versa – an informant's impression of coming from a Christian home did not necessarily entail the habit of saying evening prayers. Likewise, other forms of religious practice did not seem to be strongly connected to describing one's parents or home as being Christian. In the case of public practice, it seemed as if few informants even acknowledged that their childhood involved Christian elements. When they were posed questions regarding specific behavior, the social dimension of these practices was emphasized while the Christian dimension was downplayed. When the connection between private practice and Christian identification was examined, there was a stronger connection between identification and practice, but this connection also tended to be ambiguous.

This question also evoked reflections on how the informants had perceived their parents as socialization agents. The informants' responses related to how the religious attitudes of their parents were perceived and whether or not their parents had passed on their attitudes to their children. Those who described their homes as being Christian referred to certain behavioral patterns, such as saying evening prayers or acknowledging that their parents had passed on their faith to them. When CF1 was presented with the question of whether she had been raised in a Christian home, she responded with certainty (*"Yes, I am"*)

and stated that she has attended Sunday school and "*adopted her mom's Christian perspective.*" However, MM2's response, *"Not that I've noticed,"* is also telling. The parents' lack of saliency in religious matters was also referred to here. BF5's reason for responding "*No*" was that: *"It's not like we ever have had [or did] any God-stuff or that we would pray to someone."* Church membership was not acknowledged as a factor to take into account in the homes where Christian elements were described as absent. For example, when BF3 compared her home to a church activity that she identified as influential, her home undoubtedly fell short: "*Because (...), when I was really little, I used to (...) be a believer then because, (...) in [church activity], that's the way it was [there]. At home, they have never in any way – they haven't said that God doesn't exist, but it's not like they ever said that he exists, either."* The reluctance on BF3's parents to transmit religious beliefs here functioned as a sufficient reason for BF3 to state that her home was not Christian.

In contrast, CF3 struggled more with her response. Initially, she said that her home was "*not* 'real' *Christian,*" but then continued: *"But like, they thought that we should attend Sunday school, and that we should be confirmed. (...) They have told us, like what it's all about, but they have felt that it's [our] own choice."* Even though CF3 had detected that her parents thought that she had to resolve religious matters on her own, they had also influenced their children in making certain choices. However, CF3 still was reluctant to describe her home as Christian, since it did not match her perception of a "Christian" home. Others would attribute not having grown up in a 'Christian' home to their parents' lack of agency in religious matters. In these responses, the parents' agency was brought up foregrounded, but the negotiations and discussions on what the label "Christian" actually entailed remained. For example, CM2 stated: "*Well, no, I'm not (...) raised in a Christian [home]. We're just normal, we don't think about stuff like that, none of us do."* The notion of being ordinary as opposed to being raised in a Christian home likewise recurred in BM1's response: "*I wouldn't say [I come from an] entirely Christian home. Maybe an ordinary Finnish home. (...) None of my friends (...) are more Christian than me (...), I don't know anybody who would, like have [such customs] in their family that they would say some evening prayer or anything like that."*

BM1's response basically involves him creating certain criteria that he thinks are attributed to a Christian home and then concluding that his home does not meet those criteria. It could be suggested that my previous questions on religious practice at home implicitly had created a norm for what a Christian home entailed. For example, BM1 refers to how neither he nor his friends have said evening prayers at home, which was something I explicitly had inquired about just minutes earlier. Likewise, BF5's referral to *"God-stuff"* being absent in her home could be interpreted in the same manner. Had my interview design been different, some of these informants may have reasoned differently about their homes. I suggest that without the referrals to explicit religious behavior, the proportion of people who considered their childhood home to be Christian and referred to church membership or a larger cultural context in their responses may have increased.

This, in turn, draws attention to how the ascription of someone or something being Christian seemed to depend on the context. This was also explicitly expressed by BF4, who observed that her recent acquaintances had changed her understanding of a Christian identity. She commented on how these people *"have a Christian home that I don't really have"* and then stated that the definition of being Christian might vary, depending on the situation: *Sure, when I talk to a foreign person I say that sure, (...) that's what you are in Finland, you're Christian, but then… (...) I wouldn't describe [my home] as a Christian home, that's not something I emphasize when I describe my family. It's not, like, on the top of the list."*

Another prevalent pattern that occurred, especially amongst those who described their homes as being Christian, was their tendency to talk in terms of being Christian as though it entailed a scale of many degrees. As stated earlier, very few informants came from families who were engaged in church activities on a more regular basis, and most informants would not describe their parents as having a salient Christian identity. When these informants described their homes as being Christian, they added: *"not that super strongly, but still"* (BF7), *"to some extent"* (CF2), *"although (...) it doesn't show*" (BF1), *"although (...) not like actively religious"* (MF1). CF3, who previously was cited, said: *"I don't know how to explain [this]. Like, they believe in God. But that's about where the line is drawn (...). They don't pray either – [being Christian] is just like something everyone should be. It's so imprinted in society, you are [supposed to be] Christian here."* In her eagerness to do justice to her parents when describing them, CF3's comment highlights the bottom line in many responses, which was the need to describe one's home as being normal, that is, not deviant, in terms of religion. When describing their homes as being Christian to a certain degree, the informants tended to compare themselves and their families to an implicit norm of self-confessed active Christians with an outspoken Christian identity. This type of Christianity, which is found amongst a minority of the Lutheran Church, therefore seemed to represent an undesired Christian norm, regardless of whether the informants would say they were from a Christian or non-Christian home. Those who would refer to their homes as Christian would do so despite the lack of visible Christian attributes (which they also mentioned), resulting in negotiations and positioning responses. Those who did not refer to their homes as being Christian often did so owing to the lack of the same visible Christian attributes.

However, when CF3 attempts to establish that her home is only Christian in an ordinary sense and that she is free to decide independently on religious matters, she also indirectly also points to ways in which her parents have influenced her choices, both by placing her in Sunday school and by insisting that she be confirmed. Nonetheless, she does not seem to acknowledge that this type of parental behavior is a form of socialization into a Christian setting. She also does not seem to be aware that her childhood has incorporated Christian elements, since these are regarded as being part of what is normal and prevents her from being deviant from others. Such response patterns characterized other majority members as well.

One of the most prevalent themes of this chapter has been the difficulties that the informants experienced when they tried to describe who their parents were as members of the Church. The informants seemed to have encountered few situations that had given them information that they could base their responses on. For the most part, majority membership does not appear to entail verbal conversations about faith or religion in the home environment. The stages of life where these situations could have occurred, for example, at the time of the informants' confirmation, had not resulted in the family conducting discussions because the informants' participation had been so self-evident to everyone. However, this did not mean that informants had no conception of their parents' religious attitudes at all. Yet the informants' responses were based on hunches. Even though their parents had seldom verbalized any preferences in their children's religion, many informants seem to have adopted their parents' approach to church membership as something that is enacted "*to a certain degree.*" In many ways, the accounts given here confirm the previous research on religious socialization in the Finnish context, which I will discuss further in the final chapter.

The questions that inquired as to whether or not the informants' parents would call themselves Christian and whether or not the informants considered themselves as having been raised in a Christian home nevertheless provided insights into the social context in which membership takes place. One of the main reasons that these questions led to lengthy discussions and different negotiations on the matter relates to the lack of consensus on what being Christian means. Informants could therefore identify some features that would make a Christian label appropriate for their parents and their homes, yet drawing these conclusions seemed to not suit their images of their parents from a social perspective. These results highlight how the informants made comparisons to "real Christians" or "religious people" and how their responses often conveyed a need to characterize their parents and families as not belonging to this group. Moreover, the informants' grandparents would sometimes be described as being much more saliently Christian and religious than the informants' parents. It could be suggested that the salient religiosity of grandparents in combination with parental silence on religious matters accounts for the certainty by some of these informants as to how their parents were characterized as being "non-Christian."

However, the various descriptions that the informants provided of their families as being something other than "active," "religious," and "totally Christian," also suggest that parents and families are compared to other families and parents whom the informants have encountered. Thus far, the accounts described in this chapter have not included the response patterns from one of the informants who came from a church-member family, because the way in which she described her family stood in such stark contrast to the others in the chapter. In fact, in many ways she could be said to represent the category of "active," "religious," and "totally Christian" families that the other informants tended to refer to. In the beginning of the interview when I asked her to introduce herself, she described herself as a Christian. Later, she referred to how she had been raised in a Christian family and described her parents as

Christians. This informant had been involved in a number of different religious activities as a child, both in terms of the more regular activities as well as the more occasional activities such as camps, and she could articulate what she had learned from these activities. She was a regular church-goer from an early age along with her family, and as a child she had also said evening prayers with her parents. When I inquired as to how her parents would have reacted if she had chosen not to be confirmed, she described how they clearly would have been disappointed with her decision, but nevertheless hoped that she would be confirmed at a later stage. It was clear that parental expectations in this matter did not relate to what was regarded as the common and normal thing to do, but in her case, her parents' wishes were related to the religious meaning of confirmation. This informant also had no need to establish her own position when describing her parents' Christian identity and their home because these issues had been so and openly communicated and enacted throughout her life. The majority pattern of participating occasionally and downplaying the religious meaning of this practice becomes distinct, particularly in comparison to how this Christian, active informant would describe her life.

This informant therefore does not only represent an alternative response pattern in terms of how she explains her church membership and what it entails. Her salient Christian identity also establishes that the social category that many majority members tend to position themselves against when trying to describe their own church membership is not an ideal type. Rather, young people who could be described as "active," "religious," and "totally Christian" are part of the church member majority and as well as the informants' peer group. In this respect, this example further illuminates how the discussions in this chapter are influenced by the social context in which they take place. It is to the peer context that I now turn.

5. SCHOOL AND THE CHURCH IN THE PEER CONTEXT

5.1 Religion and friends

When young people described their everyday lives, they made it apparent that their social life played a central part. Friends were described as essential support figures and a key element in the understanding of what a good life entailed. Correspondingly, the informants' fears and

worries often were connected to betrayal and bad relationships. In order to provide a background as to how religious and existential questions were approached amongst friends, this chapter begins with a description of the central themes inherent in the discussion of the social environment that the informants were involved in. Next, I examine how existential and religious matters were addressed in their close peer relationships. This section includes all the informants, because personal religious affiliation was not an evident dividing factor for how peer relationships were described. The following discussion thereby provides a framework for the following sections, which describe the informants' experiences of encounters with religious issues, both through their religious education at school, and in the Church context. Since peers provided regular company at school and in free time, these institutions were encountered collectively, and the informants' experiences were clearly influenced by the peer setting in which they took place. The section on religious education includes all informants who had participated in Lutheran religious education at school, regardless of their personal religious affiliation. When the minority members voiced having different experiences and observations of religious education than the majority members, which stemmed from their minority position, these experiences will be further discussed in Section 7.1, as will those who had not attended Lutheran religious education. The third and last section of the chapter is more specifically devoted to the experiences of majority members, because it concerns how informants describe their encounters with the church activities that are intended for children and adolescents.

The informants emphasized friends as a central factor for a good life, for example, they were an inherent part of those situations that made the informants feel most happy. For example, BM4 described the presence of friends as a common denominator for these happy moments: *"as long as I get to be with my friends, that gives me… happiness."* BF7 described that when something positive happened to her, sharing that with a friend gave it all an additional value, since their reactions doubled her own excitement. Friends also came across as central figures when describing the fun and exciting dimensions of life. For CF1, her happiest moments occurred when *"I get to have a real fun time with my friends and get to feel that I am really free. (…) when I get to be really spontaneous and crazy with my friends and… see a lot of other people, then I feel really happy."* Friends also seemed to be the counterweight to the more demanding aspects of life where informants needed to take on responsibility or perform duties. Whereas their families were portrayed as a stable dimension of life, their friends made their life dynamic and exciting. In my conversation with MF3, she described being the happiest when everything clicked in a social situation, which caused intense feelings of being in the right place at the right time:

> ***MF3:*** *…I get to be with my friends… and (…) everyone's there and we have like nothing to do. (…) Like, you sense that everyone is in a good mood and… [people's] minds are not somewhere else.*
> ***M:*** *Mm-hmm. How do you feel in those situations?*

MF3: *Then I feel like I, I don't need to think of anything else. (...) Then (...) I feel like I can do whatever I want, really. [I'm] free.*

However, conversations also included the recurring notions of how such happiness was not a given in peer relations. The frequent references to honesty and loyalty as qualities that were appreciated in other people recurred to the extent that it became noticeable and it raised the question of the underlying cause for this high frequency. When CM3 described why he picked "security" as a value for his value circle, he remarked: *"[it's important that] you get to feel safe, that nothing burdens you or makes you feel really insecure, like, a person or something."* Just as friends were present in the experienced peaks of life, they also played a part in situations that caused feelings of insecurity.

In fact, regardless of whether the question concerned the qualities that were appreciated in other people or the points in others that were irritating, the central, recurring themes were loyalty and disloyalty. When I requested that the informants specify the situations in which these qualities arose, they often referred to intricate verbal games that the informants would be both involved in and be subjected to. According to the informants, the true nature of friendship was revealed through how peers handled sensitive information. When confidential information both about oneself and other people would be traded in secrecy, the outcome was not always a given, since trust sometimes would be betrayed. CF2 mentioned honesty as a quality she appreciated in others, and stated:

I don't like false people, I want [my friends] to tell me exactly [what they think]. I mean, you can say things in many different ways, [you don't] directly [need to] go and, like say ugly things, but [still] say [something] and, not lie about stuff.

My interview with CF2 occurred at a point where I had conducted a number of interviews and had listened to similar statements from others. I therefore tried to gain a fuller understanding of the behavioral patterns CF2 referred to here and asked:

M: *Have you met a lot of dishonest people?*
CF2: *Yes. I think I have.*
M: *OK. How, how is that expressed? How, how can you tell? How do you identify a dishonest person…?*
CF2: *I... don't notice immediately. 'Cause I want to believe the best of everyone, so I won't notice immediately. But then time passes, and then you start noticing like, what they actually do and say about you to other people. So then stuff will come up to the surface. Perhaps things are not quite… as good as you thought.*

Like the comments by CF2, the informants initially described why honesty was important, but they then concluded by describing deceptive behavior. These comments suggest that peer relationships also entailed a sense of insecurity. Whereas the feelings of betrayal were the strongest when those involved were considered to be close friends, it was apparent from the informants' responses that gossip and unkind talk were widespread practices. The arena that appeared to foster talking about others was school, and attending

school thus implied that informants had no choice but to relate to the gossip and to the talk that surrounded them. CF3 said that other people's duplicity irritated her, and she offered the following example:

> *Like, for example in our class, when* [my classmates] *first talk to me, and then they will come and say bad things about others and then you of course think that (...) then they will say things about me too… (...) Trying to befriend people through bad talk, that's not… that's not cool.*

Comments such as these suggest that gossip and talk about others seemed to be part of young people's everyday life, regardless of how strongly that behavior was condemned. Their general disapproval of gossip indicates distance from this type of behavior, but the issue was more complicated than that. The conversation I had with BM4 is a good illustration. BM4 initially remarked: *"I like when people are honest, that they can tell me what they think, and won't go – I hate it when someone talks behind your back."* However, subsequently he went on to describe how talking about others could take different forms. According to him, there was a difference between talking about others and saying very mean remarks, and talking about others generally. Whereas he strongly disapproved of the former, he admitted being occasionally involved in the latter, which he felt was more innocent. In other words, general standards regarding desired behavior were clear, and absolute honesty and loyalty were regarded as desired qualities in a friend. However, social reality involved situations where loyalty with one friend perhaps meant breaking someone else's trust, and conversations implied that the informants participated in these types of intricate social games. The place that they specifically referred to in talking about and with others was their school environment. This explains the close connection between honesty and loyalty on the one hand, and duplicity and gossip on the other. It is also noteworthy that in the question pertaining to role models, no one mentioned a friend. Friends were therefore described as participating in the informants' best moments of life, but the peer context also constituted an arena in which informants felt vulnerable owing to the frequent practices of malicious talk and gossip.

The question therefore is how existential matters and questions on belief and religion were handled in the peer context and how friends had functioned as frames of reference for these matters. These topics were discussed separately because I assumed that personal beliefs and attitudes on religion would be more sensitive issues than existential matters. However, this assumption proved to be incorrect, because those who reported discussing existential matters and those who had discussed religion with their friends were predominately the same people. Furthermore, existential and religious topics appeared to be gender-specific issues. Only a few male informants stated that they would discuss issues related to belief and meaning with their friends. The descriptions of discussions therefore reflect a female perspective, while the section on why religious and existential questions are not discussed is dominated by a male perspective.

Only a few informants displayed a genuine interest in discussing existential issues and faith matters. My interview with MF5 became a lengthy discussion and reflected her interest in exploring the supernatural and the questions on the meaning and quality of life. She also addressed these issues with friends, but remarked that her interest was not shared by all:

> *Most [people] are totally into discussing at least to a certain degree, but then they go "Oh no, did you come up with something new again…" [Both laugh]. But there are some [friends] who I know that I can discuss with, I have two friends who are really into discussing these things. They [are the kind of people] you can sit and share ideas with (...), ask one question after another and never come up with an answer, but then when you think things over with someone else, you discover new angles on it [things].*

However, for the most part, existential and religious matters were not described as typical topics of discussion. Indeed, MF5's interest in open-ended existential questions was rare, which she also partly acknowledges. Instead, comments such as the one from MF3 were more common. She discussed existential matters with her friends "*occasionally*", adding: "*mostly if something has happened.*" When life took unexpected or dramatic turns, matters not talked about in the everyday had also been discussed. As confirmation training was a shared experience, it had also functioned as a catalyst for these types of discussions. BF3 names the time after confirmation training as a time when she and her friends had discussed matters of faith and religion more frequently: *"The way many thought about different things changed then, and then we had discussions, like '*Is this the way it is?*', and '*Is that right, and what's this all about*?'"* At present, BF3 stated that these forms of discussions took place fairly infrequently, which concurred with the general notions in the data.

Why, then, would existential matters not be discussed with others? Some would refer to the sensitive nature of existential and religious matters and how the risk of disagreement that was inherent in discussing existential matters meant that they were risky topics. When I asked CF4 why she and her friends did not discuss existential matters, she stated:

> *Well sometimes maybe you do, but then it's [about] what you're going to do and what you think you should do [in the future], but those are not deeper discussions, really. I don't know why [I don't], but, when you don't know maybe, then (…) maybe you don't really dare.*

BF5 also addressed the challenge of initiating deeper discussions in her peer group. BF5 remarked that she often reflected on the meaning of life and she had also tried discussing this with her friends, but she had not experienced these conversations as being helpful. When expressing her beliefs, I asked whether she had ever discussed them with her friends. BF5 responded that she had not and she explained: *"You know, when everyone has a completely different opinion, you can't really talk about just anything. After all, this is rather personal stuff."* Even some of those whose beliefs played a central part in their life were reluctant to address these matters with others. For example, CF2 explained that her beliefs had helped her and they provided a source of strength in her everyday life, but she had never discussed this

with her friends. Instead, some informants opted to talk with their parents about these matters. The stable and unconditional support of the family seemed to make parents more trustworthy as discussion partners on topics that informants regarded as being sensitive. These findings therefore strengthen the notion that friends and family seem to play different roles in a young person's life.

It was apparent that addressing sensitive matters amongst friends demanded courage, and some described existential issues as being serious to the extent that they were avoided. For example, CM5 commented: *"It's more like we joke about [existential questions]. (...) [We have] no serious discussions."* Joking about potentially serious issues seemed to be one way of addressing them, but it could be argued that this practice further established an understanding of what should not be addressed in their peer settings. Even CF5, who gave the impression of being rather assertive and open with her Christian identity, expressed hesitancy about discussing existential matters when noting that she had discussed them: *"As much as I can. And dare. More with some and less with some."* Another reason for these matters being understood as potentially risky to address was that friends would not necessarily agree on these topics. For instance, BM4 explained that he did not discuss existential matters with his friends because everyone had their own opinion on these topics, and he continued: *"It just turns into a debate, a discussion, and then it turns into a fight."* It seemed as if issues that could potentially cause disagreement were avoided, but BM4's comment also alludes to the sensitive and delicate nature of the issue by making the observation that disagreement potentially could result in discord.

For BM1, the main reason for why he did not approach existential matters with friends was his lack of interest, but he also highlighted another aspect of why the issues of "*life and death*", as he characterized them, were difficult: *"(...) I don't think that there is that much to talk about, since you don't know anything about it. It's just what you think. [Therefore] I haven't really ever talked about this with anyone."* Thus, to BM1, the fuzzy nature of existential questions made them difficult to discuss. These views are in stark contrast to MF5, who was cited earlier: to her, the fuzzy nature of these issues was what made them intriguing to talk about. However, the underlying assumption of all was that existential matters as philosophical, and the informants' varied interest in philosophical matters therefore determined whether or not they were discussed. BF7 also thought that existential matters were fuzzy, but would ponder them regardless, and she also expressed that she had a few friends she could share her reflections with. She described how the sensitive nature of existential matters made her select her discussion partners with care: "*If you think about such things, and then you talk to someone else, and they say* 'I haven't ever even thought about that'; *that's kind of an odd feeling.*" Introducing existential topics in conversation thus had the potential of causing personal discomfort, since the reactions of the other were difficult to predict. BF7's description highlights the paradoxes inherent in many statements: on the one hand, existential questions were described as being unnecessary, but on the other, they were loaded with

meaning so that discussion partners had to be selected carefully. These comments also illustrate the somewhat contradictory nature of peer relationships.

However, the sensitive nature of these issues does not fully account for why the informants were reluctant to discuss religious and existential issues with their friends. Another reason that was equal, if not more important, was the fact that these matters were not regarded as being interesting. For example, when I asked MM3 a specific question about whether he and his friends ever spoke about death and beyond, he replied: *"No. I don't think that we actually thought about that much at all."* When MF2 explained why she did not speak with her friends about existential matters, her concluding comment was: "*I suppose death isn't something you bring up every day*." I suggest that the most important factor for why existential and religious matters were not discussed pertained to a lack of interest, even though it was not explicitly communicated at all times.

In the previous citation, MM3 describes himself and his friends as being uninterested in existential matters. MM3 was not the only informant who referred to how discussing existential matters was not "*their thing.*" For example, when I asked CM3 if he discussed religious matters with his friends, he said this never occurred and his comment was "*we're not, like, top-religious.*" This comment was expressed after a lengthy discussion on his own faith, which he spent some time reflecting on. CM3's reflections on his faith also reflected how he would not refer to himself as super-religious, but still alluded to how he was indifferent to existential and religious matters by no means. Nonetheless, he seemed to be rather clear as to how he would characterize his group of friends, and how "they" were in terms of religion, which suggests that subject matters of faith and religion seemed to be incompatible with the social settings of some informants. The same type of discrepancy was reported by BF5: "*You don't talk much about your religion with your friends,"* and when I asked her why, she responded: "*It's simply a subject that no one is that interested in, really*." However, BF5 had reflected rather deeply on her faith, but she was convinced that her friends lacked interest even though she had never spoken to them about it. In other words, she did not use herself as a benchmark for what others think. Instead, she seemed to draw conclusions based on the general discourse on religion amongst her peers, in which matters such as these are never discussed. Likewise, even though many described their current life situation as challenging and one that evoked existential reflections, these reflections were still not shared in their peer setting. Furthermore, others' silence was interpreted as a lack of interest, which seemed to make some informants inclined to believe that they were the only ones who reflected on death, the meaning of life, or on matters of faith.

This discussion has alluded to how religious and existential matters were described as a high-risk subject in the informants' peer settings. Existential and religious topics were described as being delicate, potential sources of disagreement and fuzzy in character. Furthermore, existential and religious issues also seemed to be associated with certain groups of people rather than others. For this reason, some were unwilling to address these issues with

their friends, regardless of their personal interest. It could be suggested that an interest in the more profound dimensions of life could potentially be interpreted as being an indicator of being "religious", and was therefore avoided.

Considering the previous discussion on loyalty and disloyalty, it could be suggested that some informants did not entrust their friends with the confidence that these issues entailed. Whereas some would portray these topics as being uninteresting for them personally, others would assume that their friends were unbothered not highly interested in these issues and would therefore not address them, despite their personal interest. It could be argued that the overarching understanding of the private matter of existential and religious matters therefore present some drawbacks in how young people sometimes find themselves to be solitary in their reflections. Whereas some would still address these issues with friends out of personal interest, or at least were willing to speak about these topics if needed, most were therefore hesitant to approach them.

However, even when informants conveyed that religion and existential matters were "not their thing", it was still apparent that they were affected by how their friends related to these questions. Evidence for this is found in the informants' references to others' opinions that arose during other parts of their conversation, most often when an informant wanted to point out that the personal view expressed was shared with friends. By referring to how *"we think that…,"* informants would express opinions, for example, on religious education and confirmation. Even though religion and existential matters were rarely discussed, the attitudes of peers nevertheless seemed to have an impact. This highlights an important dimension of the peer relationships in the data. The issues people are expected to agree on are most likely to be discussed, which also explains how existential and religious matters are approached.

When we now turn to describe the arenas in which young people encounter religious issues as a consequence of their church membership, it is important to remember that they do not encounter these arenas individually, but together with their peers and friends.

5.2 School as a religious socialization agent

Religious education (RE) is a mandatory subject at school, yet it addresses existential and religious matters, which makes it a potential arena for the formation of personal attitudes about religion. As stated in the first chapter, RE is organized according to religious affiliation, which means that it is a subject concerning "our religion," yet the curriculum aims at objectivity and neutrality. In this chapter, the purpose is to examine the comments on RE in order to analyze RE as a socialization agent. In other words, what do the informants describe the purpose of RE to be? How is the nature of RE understood – is it thought to be a special issue, or is it regarded as merely one of the other subjects taught at school? Furthermore, is RE recognized as an arena for their personal reflections on existential and religious questions? And finally, could RE be understood as a religious socialization agent, and if so, what is the nature of the religion mediated?

Informants were asked about their perceptions of RE immediately after they answered questions on religious membership. In contrast to how church membership seemed to be difficult to talk about, RE was a more neutral and familiar subject that informants had clear views on. The responses displayed no gender differences, which is interesting, considering earlier research on attitudes towards RE.[305] The discussions and comments implied that for the most part, RE was considered to be one of many school subjects. When informants were to describe what they thought of RE, comments primarily concerned different subject matters, which were evaluated according to their preferences. For example, those who described that their opinions of RE had shifted as they got older would refer to how this change was influenced by the changes in curriculum and teaching methods. When opinions had become more negative over the years, primary school RE was described in terms of exciting stories and fun assignments, whereas the teaching in the higher grades were described as more traditional and dull. Those whose attitudes had become more positive over the years referred to how RE had become more universal and that they appreciated the inclusions of religions other than Christianity into the curriculum. Changes in attitudes therefore seemed to relate to preferences for theoretical, fact-based knowledge, rather than the specific subject content that was offered in RE. The referrals to subject content also recurred in MM4's account of his opinion of RE:

> *Both good and bad. Good when it's been about other religions than Christianity (...) from a scientific perspective, but it's, it's bothered me a little that so much has been about the Christian faith and Jesus and all kinds of details, what he's done and hasn't done and... (...)*

MM4 bases his evaluation on how relevant he considered the subject matters that were being taught. Many informants referred to the teachings on Christianity as a dull and too time-consuming aspect of RE. Some also interpreted the in-depth instruction on Christianity as an indication of their school having an underlying agenda, which I will return to later. Other comments that also reflected a divided position on RE were more contradictory. For example, BM1 appeared to change his mind while in the midst of expressing his thoughts:

> *Well... [...] To me it's always been boring. It's always been a little bit like, I've felt like it's been quite unnecessary. It's, I guess you know, I guess you know something about the Bible now, it's been alright that way, but I don't know if that's something that I, maybe it's good that you know something about it because everyone else does, so you should read something about it. In that way I guess it's pretty good. I mean, you learn stuff.*

BM1's initial negative evaluation became more positive as he spoke and he concluded by providing a rather positive assessment of RE. These forms of evaluations, where subject matters are described as being dull, yet necessary, might likewise occur in the informants' assessments of other subjects at school. In this sense, BM1's comment exemplifies how RE

[305] For example, see Sysiharju (1970), Seppo (1971) and Kuikka (1979).

was understood as "a necessary evil." The comments that expressed positive attitudes towards RE also referred to the necessity of the subject matters taught rather than RE having a special character. In general, the responses suggest that RE is a mediator of knowledge like any other school subject. This is further supported by the general agreement that RE had a place in the school curriculum, regardless of an informant's opinion of the course content of RE. Those who expressed negative and indifferent views on RE were for the most part vocational school students. It remained unclear whether the dullness of RE was related to the religious content or whether RE was only one of many disliked subjects at school. Regardless of such opinions, these informants nevertheless supported RE being taught at school, although it remained unclear as to why. It could be suggested that the evaluations of RE were perhaps no different than their opinions of their other school subjects. In brief, all subjects are not equally appealing, but their status as school subjects is not questioned. Even though some informants thought that the proportion of the mandatory RE courses was considered to be too high in comparison to the other school subjects, or some called for a greater freedom of choice for students to better address their personal interests, the general notion of RE as a self-evident and non-questioned school subject was maintained.

However, the understandings of what the purpose of RE should be, varied. These understandings, which I will describe here, could be summed up as "RE as a tool-kit,[306]" "RE about Finland," and "RE about the Other."

CF1 echoed the notion that RE serves as a personal tool-kit for pupils to draw on in understanding existential and religious matters when saying: *"you have to gain insights into [religion/s] in order to take a stance on what you personally think."* The mediation of knowledge about religion provided by RE therefore seemed to serve a higher purpose – it was not only learned in order to better understand their surrounding world, but was seen as a way to address the existential matters of the students. CF3 seems to suggest similar notions when stating: "*I think the point of religious education is to learn what it's all about (...). Then you have to make a choice about whether this is something that concerns you [personally] or not."* Even though these informants did not specify the content of this religious tool-kit, their reasoning implied that the purpose of RE was to be a neutral mediator of knowledge.

For some, predominantly female informants, RE also seemed to have triggered personal reflections, even though all were not able to articulate specifically when this had occurred. However, those who could refer to specific situations when this had occurred, RE seemed to have evoked reflections that confirmed the informants' previous notions or had contributed to current attitudes. This was especially prevalent regarding Christian beliefs and morals. While some had been affirmed in their Christian identity, others stated that RE had affirmed their distant attitude towards Christianity. For example, MF2 associated RE with beliefs that she currently regarded as naïve and unlikely:

[306] This concept is borrowed from Ann Swidler (1986).

[When you were younger,] you had religious education at school, and then it was like, they talked about heaven, but [now] you have different… ideas, like, about that… (…) it's not that fun to sit on a cloud like some people say and, look down on what goes on around here and stuff like that and… or [believe] that someone's ghost still walks somewhere or stuff like that, that's a little, I find it hard to believe in that.

Those who referred to how RE had resulted in a change in personal beliefs and attitudes were rather specific in their descriptions. For example, BM4 described how he had become instantly attracted to the concept of reincarnation when learning about it in RE, and this still corresponded to how he envisioned an after-life. Another indication of RE being understood as providing the necessary tools was how informants would refer to RE when discussing their own beliefs, even though these comments tended to be rather vague at times. When I asked MM1 what he thought happened after death, he said he did not know: "*Don't really know whether you should believe in the stuff they said in [RE]*." Even though MM1's comments are inconclusive as to what he specifically refers to, it nevertheless implies that he considered RE as a potential source to draw from in formulating discussion about personal belief.

Those who regarded RE as a mediator of knowledge regarding Finnish culture and society understood Christianity as the central subject matter of RE. For example, MF1 emphasized that "*being Christian and stuff is, like, a part of... the Finnish culture."* The acknowledgment of the societal role of religion in Finland therefore served as a justification for RE being a part of the school curriculum. CM3 expressed a similar opinion about the role of Christianity in Finnish society when expressing his attitudes towards RE: *"[I thought RE was] Really interesting, because it's something that you've thought about a lot, and you learn stuff you don't know, you know how it works and, like at church for example. I think it's useful to know, everyone should have some kind of clue."* Those who held these views did not necessarily express a strong personal affiliation with Christianity. Instead, their comments referred to the collective and cultural dimensions of Christianity and the church. For example, even though MM1 distanced himself from religion several times during our conversation, he nevertheless thought RE needed to educate pupils "*about Jesus I guess, what he did, or, I don't know what to say – everything. I can't think of something in particular*." Some informants also commented on how RE had made them more aware of their own tradition, for example, MF4:

In Finland it's a pretty automatic thing that you, like, become Christian. And I think about why you couldn't become Hindu, for example. (…) Then there was this, in one of the religious education books there was this, like explanation on what different, different religious were about. Then [after reading these] I thought that the explanation on Christianity was quite good, it was, it said something about that it was OK to experiment and make your mistakes and, that kind of stuff, it's not that conservative after all. And I thought that was pretty good. But then I don't know, are these my own thoughts or have I been raised like this, I thought about that too.

MF4's comment concurs with the previous citations in their understanding of the main characteristics of Finnish society, but also mentions how her RE made her reflect on her own relation towards her religious affiliation.

The third understanding of the purpose of RE concerned the mediation of essential and generic knowledge about the surrounding world at large. Subject matters such as world religions or the history of religion were considered to be relevant, and in addressing such topics, RE was considered to be an essential promoter of tolerance and understanding. According to BM4, RE had a place in the school curriculum because *"(...) it's necessary for you to (...) understand all the other religions, and why people act the way they do in different parts of the world."* These perspectives attest to how RE was not primarily understood by these informants as a tool for their personal existential questions or for understanding their own religious tradition. Instead, RE was appreciated for offering insights into other people's lives: the comments reflected that religion primarily seemed to concern people other than the informants and the people around them. Likewise, when these informants reported that RE had evoked reflections, these reflections displayed a lack of understanding of religious phenomena: religion and belief were seen as strange and religious people were seen as unquestioning and difficult to relate to. As an example, MM4 remembered how RE had made him think about the following:

> ***MM4:****(...) the way everyone believes without reflection – someone would find some old texts that (...), that were translated from a language that you first of all had to relearn, like a forgotten language, virtually (...) and then they've translated it and then, they say that "this is most likely translated in the right way", and then you believe it, and the whole world believes it.*
> ***M:*** *Do you think that blind faith is common in our society?*
> ***MM4:*** *Yes. I'd say so.*

This was not the only time during the interview that MM4 expressed difficulties understanding religious belief, and his experience in RE seemed to have confirmed his perceptions. Others mentioned harboring similar opinions toward sect engagement and beliefs in religious miracles. It is possible that RE had clearly not resulted in the informants identifying with any specific religious tradition or with religion more generally, but it seemed to have also contributed to their negative attitudes towards religious people and their behavior.

The informants' understandings of the purpose and aim of RE, i.e., what kind of religious socialization agent RE ought to be, therefore also seemed to reflect their conception of the place and role of religion more generally. Their responses revealed a tension concerning how much Christianity and foreign religions should be taught respectively. There was a general consensus that the topics of foreign religions and religion from a historical and contemporary perspective were essential subject matters in RE. However, the extent to which Christianity should be taught created division. For example, those who acknowledged the

Christian tradition as "our" religion on a collective level also considered it to be legitimate to emphasize Christianity during RE. However, those who regarded RE as being relevant because it offered knowledge of foreign religions and "the Other" in terms of religion also tended to comment on that they thought that the teaching of Christianity was redundant. This further supports the notion that shared religious affiliation does not result in a consensus as to the purpose of RE.

It is interesting to note that the informants' different conceptions of religion in Finnish society could be divided along regional lines. Whereas the Countryside informants tended to conceive of Christianity as constituting "our" religion, the Bigcity informants tended to emphasize foreign religions as the focus of RE, and the informants from Middletown expressed opinions that were between these viewpoints. This implies that the informants' differences in whether or not they understood Finnish society as being Christian partly corresponded to regional differences. However, these results should not necessarily be interpreted as a consequence of the more multicultural surroundings of the Bigcity informants. As evidence, no informant reported being eager to learn about what the informants generally referred to as "*foreign religions*", because they wanted to learn more about people they knew or encountered regularly. Their education on religions other than Christianity therefore seemed to concern the more distant "foreign", rather than something that tapped into their life of here and now.

The informants' remarks on the orientation to Christianity that had been presented to them in school also included another type of ambivalence. This concerned the question of RE being an objective school subject. The informants shared the view that RE should be impartial and objective on religious issues, but that impartiality was sometimes questioned in the instruction on Christianity and the Church. Those who held negative opinions of RE often referred to the substantial amount of time dedicated to teaching Christianity and they did not only regard this as irrelevant. To these informants, the emphasis on Christianity was also interpreted as an indicator of impartiality by the school. Especially the emphasis on Christianity in the lower classes was interpreted as being an implicit attempt to impart the Christian faith to the pupils, which implies that the design of the school curriculum indicated a hidden agenda. This means that some informants did not take impartiality for granted in RE, but they carefully monitored potential religious bias. For example, CF3 thought it was important that RE should include instruction on the different religions: *"there wasn't too much of that in the lower grades, but in the higher grades, the teacher we had there thought that we should learn about all religions (...).*" CF3 thus attributes the curriculum of the higher grades of elementary school to the will of a certain teacher. The positive remarks on RE that explicitly referred to the teaching on Christianity often pointed out that the teaching had been factual and impartial, as if this could not be taken for granted. CF1 defended RE as a school subject and added: *"I never had a teacher that like, said that "you should believe in God and you should believe in Jesus", rather, it's been more like, they've told you about it (...)."*

CF1's comment suggests that even though she personally had never encountered the type of teacher she described, she did not regard that scenario as being unlikely. Very few informants described their teachers in a negative manner or referred to how RE explicitly had expressed a preference in terms of religion. Nonetheless, comments such as these suggest that RE seemed to be viewed differently from other school subjects.

Even though the curricular emphasis on Christianity had been noted, the connection between religious affiliation and RE was still not commented on by the Lutheran informants. The only references to the organization of the RE curriculum along the lines of religious affiliation were in their expressing a need for the freedom to select between RE and Ethics. Those who called for greater freedom seemed to make this argument as a matter of principle rather than an expression of personal preference. These opinions were expressed in Bigcity only. Since Ethics is a more common school subject in the big cities than in rural Finland,[307] it could be suggested that these demands for freedom reflect an awareness of and curiosity towards the alternatives to Lutheran RE. Correspondingly, it could be argued that the lack of references to Ethics in Middletown and Countryside stem from the frequent choice of Lutheran RE in these areas. These patterns suggest that the organizing principle for RE does not become salient in the settings where all attend Lutheran RE. I suggest that this might be one factor to explain the criticism of the emphasis on Christianity in the curriculum. Since RE is not recognized as the teaching of "our" religion by the Lutheran informants, the reason for the focus on Christianity remains unclear. In this sense, most Lutherans might have harbored illusions of RE as a subject that is common to all pupils and this in turn has caused uncertainty in terms of what type of a religious socialization agent that RE really is.

However, apart from the explicit teaching, the data also indicated that school had additional functions as a religious socialization agent. First, the informants' comments on RE included several references to the opinions of friends and fellow classmates and to the discussions held in the classroom, and point to how RE occurs in a context where not only the teacher had played an active part. These views all expressed how RE was regarded as an unpopular subject at school. When CM2 described RE as *"boring"*, he added that his opinion was shared by others: "*Few [in class] cared enough to pay attention.*" When MF2 began to respond to my question on whether RE had a place at school with the observation: "*I think a growing number of people find RE uninteresting."* The references to general opinion about RE functioned both as a support of personal views and as a position to oppose. For instance, MF4 regarded RE as an essential arena for existential reflections, and added: *"it's popular in upper elementary school to nag at RE, but I still think it's needed."* These comments not only point to how RE was generally regarded by peers, but also to how personal opinions often were expressed in relation to the opinions of others. In fact, it could be suggested that the reason as to why RE did not evoke existential reflections to a higher extent could be related to the tendency to avoid existential and religious matters in the peer context that was reported in

[307] Salmenkivi 2007, 95-96.

the previous section. If these matters are avoided amongst friends because they are sensitive in nature and may result in disagreement, it is unlikely that they will be raised as topics for discussion in a classroom setting which is characterized by negative sentiments towards RE.

Second, the impact of RE seemed to vary depending on how extensively informants have encountered religion in other settings. This was especially apparent for some of the informants from families who upheld few connections to the church context. Conversations with these informants revealed that they had no other experiences of church activities than the school services at Christmas or at Easter. This indicates that the role of school as a religious socialization agent was acknowledged in different ways, depending on other experiences. Whereas some informants had many other sources to draw from in their opinions and attitudes towards religion and the Church, others would primarily base their views on what they were taught and had experienced at school. For some informants, school stood out as a religious socialization agent because it was the only context that had provided them with experiences to draw from when discussing their religious affiliation.

These results therefore suggest that RE has various functions as a religious socialization agent. Primarily, the informants understood RE to be a fairly trusted mediator of necessary knowledge about religion, which contributes to the informants' knowledge both of Christianity and of other world religions. However, even though some informants stated that Christianity was an important subject matter in RE, since Christianity was considered to be one's own religion and an inherent part of their surrounding culture, the informants did not consider RE to be a socialization agent for the Lutheran Church. Furthermore, the discussion on the proportion of teaching that was dedicated to Christianity and to foreign religions revealed that the emphasis on Christianity in the syllabus caused uncertainty as to whether RE was understood as being a neutral socialization agent. Whereas the support for a varied and multi-faceted RE was strong, the emphasis on Christianity was far more debated and seemed to relate to personal conceptions of the role of Christianity in the Finnish society.

Some informants also acknowledged that RE had functioned as a trigger for their personal existential and religious reflections, and some considered this to be the main function of RE generally. However, the discussions in RE rarely seem to have led to new ideas or insights: instead, the reflections mentioned were often in agreement with how the informant described his or her attitudes towards religion on a more general note. Furthermore, most of the informants did not acknowledge RE as an arena for personal reflections. The reason that RE was rather rarely acknowledged as a tool-kit for personal reflections and beliefs may in part be explained by the social context in which it took place. The references to how RE generally was regarded as being boring in the peer group could be understood as a factor that has established the patterns of silence further concerning their personal attitudes and this maintained their opinion that matters regarding religion as not being "our thing."

However, school and RE also seem to have contributed further to the image that the informants had of what they considered to be normal with regards to religion. The majority setting in which RE takes place seems to have made informants unaware of their own church membership, both as an organizing underlying factor of RE and in how the majority setting also was visible in the school settings through school assemblies and school services. These Christian manifestations in the school setting were mentioned only occasionally, and were hardly ever identified as having a religious character. These notions imply that the majority setting has created an understanding in which "our religion" is not considered to be religious, but "normal", especially in comparison to "other religions" and "religious people" as social categories. It was also evident that even if the informants did not articulate it themselves, RE had contributed to their becoming familiar with a Christian tradition and RE also provided knowledge about this tradition to the extent that informants were able to both discuss and relate to it. This familiarity was also a result of their encounters with the Church context during their leisure time activities, and I will now analyze the impact that these activities had on the informants.

5.3 The Church as a socialization agent

5.3.1 Activities for children

While church membership thus far has been analyzed through the more broad social settings that the informants were anchored in, this chapter will more specifically focus on how the church members described their encounters with the church context specifically. The Lutheran Church arranges a wide range of activities for children and the local congregations are free to arrange these activities according to their own preferences. The confessional character of the activities varies from being the central point of the activity to being rather downplayed, especially in the case of afternoon activities.[308] Just like RE, church activities may establish a relation to the Church and shape attitudes towards the Church. Furthermore, I suggest that regular participation in the church activities for children may also be an indicator of the parental approval of church involvement, be this approval direct or indirect. Parents still exert some influence on which activities their children participate in, especially when practical arrangements, such as getting to and from the activity in question, may require parental assistance. From such a perspective, the experiences of church activities may be understood as indicators of parental influence as well – the question is whether the informants acknowledge it as such.

Not surprisingly, the number of contacts with the Church varied in the data, and I will now describe to which extent the informants had experienced activities in the Lutheran Church as children and how they described these experiences. Since the informants were not

[308] Afternoon activities are for school children aged 7-8 who need care after school while their parents are still at work. These activities are often arranged in collaboration with municipalities. Kääriäinen et al. 2009, 70; Statistisk årsbok för kyrkan 2010, 88.

prepared to recall church-related children's activities, it is very likely that some activities did not come to mind during the interview. On the other hand, these results display the types of activities the informants remember having participated in, which in some respects might be more important than a faultless account of participation.

Most informants recalled taking part of church activities as children, but these experiences were much more common in Countryside and Middletown, where almost all informants had participated at one time or another. Apart for the activities I specifically inquired about, the informants also mentioned participating in summer camps, girl or boy-scout activities and in afternoon activities. In contrast, few Bigcity informants would recall participating in church activities, and those who had participated had for the most part been enrolled in afternoon activities. These patterns are likely due to several coinciding factors. In an urban setting, the range of activities for children is much larger than in rural settings, which may affect the place of church activities in this larger pattern. It is also likely that children from the smaller localities do not need their parents' transport to and from certain activities, and the freedom to independently choose from the available activities has resulted in them having diverse experiences from different settings. However, it could also be suggested that the Church has a more natural role in the local community in the smaller locations and has a more established role as a trusted organizer of children's activities, and this lowers the threshold for participation. Another possible factor is that the regional patterns here in part reflect the differences in terms of what is socially sanctioned and regarded as "normal" activities for children to participate in. Perhaps enrolment in church activities is interpreted as a more personal stance in the Bigcity setting than in the Middletown or Countryside communities. This suggestion is also supported by the fact that those participating in these activities in the two smaller locations did not always belong to the Church themselves. As for gender patterns, those who reported attending evening activities and Sunday school were predominately female.

The informants who had participated in church activities were also asked whether they could recall any memories from them. However, from the informants' point of view, these activities seemed difficult to remember. The informants considered them to be distant in time and therefore remote and peripheral to their current reality. The informants had particular difficulty in remembering the activities they participated in at a young age. Those who referred to specific memories mentioned crafts, music and good food. They reported memories such as receiving stickers or making pancakes, and these reflected that many responses were from a child's perspective. There was also a group of informants who recalled the Christian elements of the activities they were enrolled in, such as small items with religious motives, Bibles or other religious literature or prayers taught. They also depicted church activities as a part of childhood and these activities did not seem to stand out from other childhood memories or activities.

The everyday nature of church activities was also reflected in how it was also fairly common for the informants to be rather uncertain as to whether or not a specific form of activity actually had been arranged by the Church. These comments primarily concerned the activities that were arranged for older children. For example, MF5's response to whether she had participated in any church activities as a child was: "*No, nothing like that. But during scout, we always prayed a prayer. That was maybe [a church activity], yeah."* It seemed as if informants began to recognize the religious elements in some activities only when they were asked about them specifically. Others expressed that religious elements were not emphasized. For example, MM3 had to draw conclusions about the nature of an activity on his own:

> *No, I don't think, or wait, yes, there was this [name of activity] when I was quite young (…) I don't know, I would maybe never have thought that it had anything to do with the Church but we went to this church and (…) drove some cars, and then I kind of thought that since we get to come here and drive, [this activity] probably has something to do with the Church…*

Compared to the informants who explicitly recollected religious themes from the church activities that they participated in, these citations were characterized by how religious experiences and attributes were vague or understated.

Those who had reflected on their childhood experiences from a more mature perspective were exceptional in this respect when compared to other informants. A sign of how childhood experiences were put into a larger perspective was how CM1 concluded that his memories of an activity consisted of "*kid stuff*" that were of secondary importance to his current opinions. However, MM3 responded that his current views of the Church related to his childhood experiences of his church activities:

> *MM3: At [activity] it was like, everyone just drew lots of pictures of Jesus and… like, you sang religious songs all the time…*
> *M: So from that on, you did not really…*
> *MM3: M-hm. Even then I got a flat taste, when they forced [the Christian message] down your throat.*

However, for the most part, the informants rarely related their childhood experiences of the Church to their current views. For most, it appeared unclear to them as to why these experiences could have relevance for the other questions that I asked. This raises the question of how 19-year olds generally relate to their childhood experiences, regardless of whether or not they are related to religious matters: such conclusions cannot be drawn from this data. However, the main finding here is that children's activities in church are not described so that they suggest an understanding of church as a significant religious socialization agent.

It could nevertheless be argued that these types of activities had contributed to conceiving of the Church as an unquestioned part of the conventional behavior patterns in society, and this was especially the case for the Countryside and Middletown informants. Just

as the discussions on RE reflected that religious affiliation had remained a tacit factor in its manifestation, the difficulties in establishing whether or not a children's activity had been arranged by the Church also attest to the self-evident role of the Church in everyday settings. These blurry boundaries between different social arenas could be interpreted as indicators of how the majority religion blends into conventional behavior and how the majority position allows for this behavior to remain unobserved. The findings therefore point to how church membership has resulted in young people exhibiting certain behavioral patterns, both through religious education and church activities. However, due to their conventional character, these manifestations of religious affiliation have remained tacit and unreflected upon. Neither were they considered to be significant by the informants for the formation of their current attitudes or beliefs related to the Church context.

5.3.2 Confirmation training and beyond

The last section of this chapter will address the informants' descriptions of their memories of confirmation training and what type of experiences they reported that particular church activity to have entailed. As those experiences were relatively recent, this was discussed to some length during the interview. The pervasive participation in confirmation training in Finland was evident in how all church member informants and two formerly unaffiliated informants had chosen to attend the confirmation camp. Only one of the church members I interviewed decided not to attend confirmation training, and this was due to other engagements rather than a lack of interest. The informants described their confirmation experience in fairly similar terms, regardless of location. The present analysis will focus on the most central themes that arose during those discussions.

Even though I inquired about the informants' personal experiences, their responses conveyed that confirmation was a shared experience and they emphasized the crucial role of their fellow confirmands. Most informants took part with their close friends, and most confirmands attending were from the same school. Their expectations on confirmation camp concerned the opportunity to be with their friends and to get to know people better. Furthermore, the informants' descriptions of their positive experiences referred to the sense of community they experienced with their friends and fellow confirmands. Their positive experiences therefore stemmed from how their social expectations on confirmation training were met. The central role of the social dimension was also apparent when the informants described their reasons for attending. By far the most frequent reason cited was: "*because my friends were going.*" Even though the question I posed was expressed in a manner that presupposed the informant's agency, the responses indicated a lack of reflection and that confirmation was not assumed to be a deliberate choice. On the contrary, attending confirmation was described as being self-evident from a social point of view:

> *It was just something you do, all my friends went and (...) you wanted to go to that camp and… [you] wanted to get gifts… (laughs) and be confirmed (...) – I didn't go*

there to learn about God, like some, many others, but, it was just somehow something you did (...) I didn't even reflect on whether I would go or not, it just happened. (BF3)

Confirmation was described as the normal thing to do: MF2 described "choosing" to attend confirmation camp as "*going with the flow*." The notion of it being a socially sanctioned activity also recurred in the description of the informants from non-member families as to why they had chosen to attend. For example, CM5 stated that his friends had asked him to join them, and when I asked him to name something positive about attending, he responded "*you got to be with friends.*" Even though he did not consider confirmation to be a significant experience for him, he still remarked that attending had been good for him at the time because "*you didn't feel so left out.*" Confirmation camp had therefore enhanced their everyday peer setting rather than having introduced informants to a new social context, and the social dimension of this type of experience permeated the responses. According to BF4, the most rewarding aspect of confirmation camp was: "*(...) that the sense of community was so great (...), you had really good friends around and everyone was good friends, [and] the atmosphere was good. That was what (...) I remember the most."* The only time an informant mentioned that his or her confirmation training had resulted in new social relations, it was in the form of rediscovering relations with old friends or classmates.

In comparison, what parents expected of or wanted for their children did not emerge as an important factor in the informants' decisions to be confirmed. Whereas their references to friends were expressed spontaneously, the influence of their parents was something I addressed and inquired about. Descriptions of confirmation as *"going with the flow"* referred to their peer setting, and when confirmation was described as a thing you "had" to do, this related to what was socially expected. For example, BM1 knew stated that he knew very little about confirmation when confirmation training began, and added: *"I just thought that it is something you do when you are [a member] in church, then you become confirmed. It's just like doing military service, it's one of the things you should do."* Confirmation came across as socially expected more generally rather than something their parents were imposing on them. Only a few informants explicitly mentioned their parents' expectations when asked why they had attended. For instance, BM3 stated that he was confirmed because he was forced to, and when I asked why his parents considered it important for him to go, he replied with a curt "*No idea.*" Informants who described having been forced into confirmation training described confirmation as being a negative experience. For example, CM2 stated the following:

CM2: *I don't know. [Confirmation] didn't amount to much. I was just there because others were [too]. I was forced to be there.*
M: *Yes. Do you think your parents…*
CM2: *I think they would have… forced me if I had not gone. [indistinct]*
M: *Why do you think that?*
CM2: *Cause, everyone else went. Although we boys, we then said that this is mostly, it's just because our parents are [confirmed], that's why we are also [attending]. So they forced us to go.*

The discussions that CM2 recollected having with his friends about confirmation seemed to have helped him realize that attending confirmation was done more for the sake of others and it was not necessarily a good experience. According to his account, parental expectations were also linked to social pressures. In other words, to CM2, young people were not the only ones who considered it important to conform to social norms regarding confirmation.

The impact of the social setting was also inherent in how the comments on personal experience included reference to the reactions and behavior of others. MF4 reported that confirmation camp had introduced questions that had not occurred to her previously, but also stated that: "*there were probably people there who didn't get anything out of it and just enjoyed themselves, I think so."* Furthermore, when informants described their expectations before confirmation and expressed their opinions and experiences of confirmation, they often alluded to their discussions with others in an attempt to give them more credibility. Especially the female informants seem to have been rather perceptive of others and like MF4, and particularly so when they perceived their personal experiences as being different from others. These types of remarks also illustrate that confirmation was integrated in their everyday social setting rather than having introduced a new one.

Confirmation and confirmation camp were mostly spoken of as being one and the same event. According to general guidelines, confirmation training should take place over a period of at least six months and includes several other elements.[309] However, the informants primarily discussed their experiences of confirmation camp. When BF5 mentioned how she thought "*the services and that kind of stuff*" made confirmation boring at that point, I asked "*You mean [the services] you needed to go to before [the camp]?*"; BF5 giggled and responded "*Oh yeah, that, too*." Three years after being confirmed, BF5 appears to have forgotten that confirmation camp was only part of the confirmation training she had participated in, which was also reflected in the accounts by others. However, when I inquired explicitly about the confirmation service that completed confirmation training, most were able to articulate their perceptions of this event. Many commented on the solemn atmosphere during their confirmation, the white robes they wore, and how it was the first time that they received communion. The level of detail in these descriptions conveyed that the confirmation service was remembered and for most informants, it was a positive memory, but when confirmation was discussed on a more general note, these memories were seldom referred to spontaneously.

The informants' confirmation experiences resembled their comments on religious education in that they included both positive and the negative points, but their descriptions of confirmation tended to end with an appreciative tone, which cast the negative parts in a

[309] Cf. Niemelä & Pruuki 2009, 82.

redeeming light. For example, MM1 was asked whether he remembered confirmation training as being positive or negative and he responded: "*I guess it was quite OK, quite OK. It was tiring at times, but it was quite OK (...) I was there with good friends."* Positive evaluations were often expressed spontaneously. For example, CM4, who spoke very little during the interview, reported that he did not recollect much from confirmation, and then added: "*but it was fun*." In fact, not one informant stated that they regretted taking part. Regardless of how they expressed their memories from confirmation camp, the informants always mentioned positive aspects that justified their participation. With one exception, prior expectations of confirmation were described as having been met or exceeded, which also indicates that confirmation had generally been a positive experience.

One reason that was mentioned for attending confirmation which was in no way related to social experiences, was that confirmation enabled young people to be entitled to certain rights, such as a church wedding, to become a godparent and to partake of communion. Informants mentioned these matters when explaining what being confirmed implied and then stated that it was both a motivation for them to participate in and to commit to confirmation. Confirmation was therefore acknowledged as a way to become a full member of the Church. MF2 observed: *"maybe I need it later as I get older, I guess you have to be confirmed in order to be a godparent (...). That's probably what I thought, that I might regret it later if I am not confirmed, so I might as well go through with it, it wasn't that big of a deal."* Participating in confirmation training was therefore described as a reasonable choice for future prospects. On the other hand, CF4 remembered how she had watched her older peers take communion before being confirmed and how confirmation meant she, too, would be able to take communion. The concept of confirmation as an age marker also recurred in other conversations. For example, MF4 recounted how confirmation was a milestone because it was the first rite of passage that she had experienced: "*somehow [confirmation] was a step into the adult world. It's not like you turned into an adult, but you weren't as little as you used to be either."*

The informants' discussions of the confirmation experience focused on a few central themes. One prevalent theme was to discuss confirmation as a camp experience. For instance, CM5 described confirmation camp as an opportunity for camp life "*like [any] ordinary camp.*" Some of their memories concerned their participation in camp activities, such as taking a sauna, eating together, going swimming and socializing with school friends in the middle of the summer. Being at camp was also described as positive and fun, especially because it was shared with friends. In contrast, the more educative aspects of confirmation seemed to have had little significance. The informants only spontaneously referred to confirmation education when they described their negative expectations or when they named the aspects they thought were dull. My specific question on confirmation education confirmed these notions. Although BM1 thought that the confirmation camp lessons were made tolerable because confirmation camp was generally so much fun, CM2 recalled that he remembered

lessons being "*just like school,*", which was not a positive remark for him. MF1 expressed similar notions:

> ***M:*** *What about the teaching at camp then, what did you get out of that?*
> ***MF1:*** *Well that was tough (...) When [we] all were up until really late at night – you went to sleep at three and woke up at seven, and at seven or eight in the morning there would immediately be some kind of (...) talk about God and Jesus, you had no energy listening to what they said. Like everyone was asleep, when they held devotion, someone would snore and stuff. (laughs a little)*
> ***M:*** *So that's not where the focus lay?*
> ***MF1****: No, not really, nearly no one listened to the instruction, it was like everyone sat and did their own thing, more or less.*

CF3 referred to how her older sibling had described confirmation camp as *"really fun and (...) religious, yes, but you don't need to take that too seriously."* This also resembled how she and her friends had decided to relate to confirmation. This indicates that some informants not only shared their confirmation experience with their friends, but also shared an understanding of how the confirmation experience should be approached.

However, others explicitly referred to their expectations that confirmation camp would be something different than any other camp. For example, MF4 expected confirmation camp to be fun, and added *"it's not a regular camp after all, maybe [I expected] that you [would] become more… close with the people who are there."* An indirect referral to confirmation camp being different than other camps likewise recurred in my conversation with BF6:

> ***M:*** *What made you attend confirmation training?*
> ***BF6:*** *Eh, mostly, at the time it was basically that you would get gifts and that you would get money if you attend confirmation training but it was – I thought it was a lot of fun to go there. And afterwards I thought it was like good for you to go (...) maybe it was somewhat imposing but, but it got you thinking.*
> ***M:*** *What did [confirmation training] make you reflect on, then?*
> ***BF6:*** *Is there a God? If there is a God, is it a Christian God? Like, what's the meaning of life? And so on.*

The informants' notions of how confirmation camp was not only "*a lot a fun,*" but also "*good for you,*" were also reflected in their memories being related to the discussions they had at camp and how the more informal discussions had made informants reflect on religious and existential matters. The organized teaching lessons undoubtedly had a minor role in their memories of confirmation, but they appreciated the opportunities to discuss different matters with representatives of the Church. MF5 stated she had been rather critical and questioning during the organized teaching sessions at camp and stated that the minister who was subjected to her questions and interrogations handled it well. Moreover, MF3 recalled that the critical discussions displayed how the Church representatives at the camp "*could defend their views… although I didn't perhaps agree [with them]*." The topics that most frequently mentioned that they recollected discussing were ethical matters and particularly homosexuality and sexual

relations. The outcome of these discussions reflected the two different sides inherent in MF3's response. On the one hand, the informants displayed respect for the representatives of the Church who represented the opposing part of the discussion and commented on the counterpart's ability to justify his or her opinions. On the other hand, the Church remained an opposing party because informants could not personally agree with the positions they presented. For instance, MM3 offered the following account of a discussion on homosexuality at his confirmation camp, and when I asked him what he thought of the opinions expressed, he responded: *"Well I don't know, it kind of became, it felt, you know weird that the Church [is like]: 'Yes, God loves everyone except homosexuals and other religions and... women and...' that's about what it felt like."* In this respect, confirmation training seemed to have confirmed pre-existing views in ethical matters rather than changed them.

Confirmation camps had also introduced informants to peers who were religiously engaged. YCVs (young confirmed volunteers), who function as leader assistants at Finnish confirmation camps, were occasionally mentioned when informants recalled their experiences. Discussions on the role of YCVs were characterized by a dichotomy. On the one hand, the YCVs had created a pleasurable camp experience and were remembered for, in CF2's words, "*taking care of*" the confirmands. In CF1's account of her camp experience, she mentioned the personal stories from the YCVs about what it meant to have a personal Christian faith. For her, this way of thinking made her reflect of her own Christian identity. On the other hand, there was also mention of the immature behavior of YCVs and attitudes toward other confirmands who were described as imposing. The following excerpt is from my discussion with CF2, who previously described how she had been taken care of by the YCVs:

> ***M:*** *Do you remember anything bad [from your confirmation]? Or something which you perceived as negative?*
> ***CF2:*** *Often I had the feeling that they pushed (...) you, to believe more… I had that feeling. (...) I think you should be allowed to believe as much as you want and that you shouldn't impose [that] on anyone.*

In this respect, confirmation camp was also portrayed as a meeting place to encounter people who expressed different views and lifestyles in terms of religion and faith: this came across as an unexpected dimension of the confirmation experience. Even though some expressed having respect towards the people they had encountered and thought that they had presented their views in a way that made them comprehensible, these people and views still seemed foreign.

Many young Finns enroll in confirmation training to become an YCV after confirmation training. A small number of these informants also reported participating in some type of church activity after confirmation training, including having functioned as YCVs. However, that participation was for the most part described as being sporadic in nature and had not resulted in a strong commitment to the Church context. For most informants, confirmation training had entailed a short period of regular encounters with the Church. In the

same manner as confirmation training was expressed as something that was self-evident, it seemed equally self-evident that confirmation put an end to this church engagement. MM1 was one informant who explicitly referred to the religious nature of church activities as a reason for not considering YCV training: "*It's not my thing, like, the Church and stuff.*" However, many also reported that they had intentions of participating, but that these plans had not been implemented for a number of reasons. Such notions provide further support to how confirmation training had been a positive experience. However, participating in church activities after confirmation also seemed to signify personal religious interest to a much greater extent than confirmation, which may have contributed to the reasons that these informants eventually decided not to become YCVs. After confirmation training, most informants therefore continued to encounter the Church only in their school setting and in relation to family events, just like before.

These findings point to the social character of confirmation training. Participating was legitimate because it meant following the example of others. This was also in part described as a form of social pressure. MF2's description of confirmation as "*going with the flow*" captures how confirmation training was depicted as a collective practice rather than one of personal agency. Discussions on RE and church activities also included referrals to the attitudes of others, but these notions were undoubtedly the strongest in relation to confirmation. Furthermore, the majority setting for the confirmation training had further contributed to church membership remaining an invisible factor, and that *"going with the flow"* actually entailed going in one particular direction rather than another.

It was previously stated that the informants oriented to existential and religious matters with caution in their peer setting: here, it could be suggested that the peer setting did not only influence their decisions to participate, but also how the confirmation setting was approached. As confirmation training was organized in a familiar social setting that was characterized by pre-established social identities, it could be suggested that it was approached in accordance with how the informants would orient to religious matters with their peers. In this respect, the tendency to understate the religious dimension of confirmation camp and to highlight activity-related dimensions may partly reflect a peer-group discourse on confirmation training.

However, confirmation training had also resulted in the informants becoming acquainted with church workers and YCVs and reflecting on their faith and religion. Confirmation camp was described as a positive encounter with the Church. Confirmation therefore functioned as a means to further socialize young people into church membership by familiarizing them with a church setting. Yet, despite the pleasant setting in which Christianity was presented, the experiences tended to affirm previous views rather than changing them. The references to confirmation training resulting in the rights to take part in certain church activities nevertheless support the notions reported in the previous chapter

about the informants regarding church membership as part of their future, and their approach to confirmation training also revealed this perspective.

The results that have been reported in this chapter have therefore provided a fairly unified picture that serves as evidence for the great impact that the peer setting has on how religious and existential matters are approached at school and in the Church context. The informants' notion of religious and existential matters as being delicate and difficult establishes boundaries in their conversation with their friends, sometimes to the extent that these topics are avoided. In addition, religious and existential matters are regarded as being incompatible with the social identity of one's peer group. As a consequence, religious and existential matters are not discussed, despite the informants expressing a personal interest in these issues and even a need to address them with others. The peer context therefore seems to contribute to certain patterns in approaching religion, where some practices are regarded as being part of "normal behavior" and therefore endorsed, whereas others are avoided. These patterns are sometimes articulated explicitly by the informants, but for the most part, the patterns emerged in their regular indirect reference to how personal attitudes and reflections related to what was perceived as "normal" within their peer context. In this respect, the informants seemed to be in their tendency to maintain that normalcy. The relation between personal and social identities will be further explored in the next chapter, which addresses religious affiliation in relation to personal religious identity.

6. RELIGIOUS ROLE IDENTITIES

6.1 Being Christian

This chapter explores how the informants described themselves in relation to Christianity and their beliefs and how these descriptions reflect their church membership. The discussions on parents, friends and encounters with respect to religion in institutional settings had occasionally resulted in the informants providing spontaneous accounts of their personal views and attitudes. However, at the end of the interview, the informants were also offered the opportunity to explicitly address the question of their position in relation to their faith and Christian identity. The previous questions may have prepared the informants for some of the questions asked. For example, the question regarding a Christian identification had previously been asked regarding other people. In the last section of this chapter, I will present how the informants' responses illustrated four categories of members that reflected different conceptions of membership that are in line with how religious matters had been addressed at home, amongst friends and in relation to their personal religious identity. However, I will begin by addressing how informants understood themselves in relation to being Christian.

On the one hand, some young people would refer to "Christians" spontaneously as a group with a salient religious identity. Those who spontaneously defined themselves as Christians used that label in a similar way. For them, being Christian reflected who they were as individuals and in a social setting. For example, CM1 used the act of being saved and being Christian as synonyms. On the other hand, the label also had a wider meaning which allowed for the inclusion of a larger group of people. This lack of consensus as to who the "Christians" were gave the label an ambiguous, contradictory character. Some informants would therefore problematize the label "Christian" or ask me what being Christian meant, or exhibit different reasoning that depended on whose "Christian" identity they discussed. Some informants would also use the label to refer to a certain category of people at one point and assign it a somewhat wider and different meaning at another.

For most informants, being Christian served as a catalyst for discussing their personal faith in different ways. Faith seemed to constitute a bottom line, or at least a major factor for a Christian self-identification. CF3 spontaneously stated that she was not Christian because she did not believe "*at all,*" and BM2 also clearly stated that for him, personal faith was the fundamental reason that determined whether or not he would describe himself as Christian:

> *Well, really at least not now. (...) I'm not saying directly that I'm an atheist, I'm not saying that I don't believe that all [the content of Christian faith] doesn't exist, cause it's possible. But I don't believe (...) on the teachings of the Church because… (...) I don't completely buy the way of thinking that (...) you have to choose between this sinful [way of life], and (...) that some go to the eternal fire and stuff like that, I don't buy completely buy that but, maybe one day (...) some things are true to me , (...) but (...) I can't say that I would feel like, directly Christian [right now]. No.*

This suggests that BM2 regards being Christian as an all-encompassing identity marker. Others did not seem to draw the line as distinctly, but would still imply that being Christian would at least require some faith. Like the descriptions of their parents' faith, these descriptions were not rigorous and referred to Christian dogmas implicitly. The informants would remark that being Christian was related to "*having faith*" or "*believing.*" Here, faith was described as an implicit dimension of life. Likewise, those who said they were Christian "*sometimes*" also conceived of being Christian as a matter of faith. BF6 described the challenge in maintaining her belief in God when she reflected on injustice or when she went through trying personal experiences. The perceived conflict between religious and scientific belief was also mentioned as a reason for being Christian only occasionally. Associating a Christian label with personal belief therefore attributed the Christian label a fluctuating character rather than a stable one. Being Christian was portrayed as a fragile state of mind.

Others would also refer to personal faith, but did not specify this as the only relevant matter:

> ***M:*** *Would you describe yourself as Christian?*
> ***BF3:*** *(Silence) No… No, I'm not…*
> ***M:*** *Why not? I mean, how do you reason about this, being Christian or not being Christian? What does it mean?*
> ***BF3:*** *Well [being Christian] means that you… pray I guess and… not that you need to go to church that much in order to be Christian, but , well you pray and you… believe in that kind of stuff, and… you think about it a lot, and…*
> ***M:*** *… And you're not like that?*
> ***BF3:*** *No.*

Many informants tended to adopt the same reasoning as BF3 and they described being Christian as a composite of several characteristics. Another important factor in this composite was involvement in church activities, which was never mentioned alone but instead recurred along with other factors. BF1 described that she regarded herself as being Christian *"not only because I belong to the Church: I'm also busy [doing things] in church and also, to some extent, try to believe and help and… understand."* The informants did not often mention church activity as a reason for being Christian, which is understandable considering the modest religious participation in the Finnish population. On a similar note, those who would not refer to themselves as being Christian referred to their lack of church involvement. The way BF3 indirectly associates Christians with church-goers therefore describes a more general notion that arises in the data.

A third dimension of the Christian self-identification in the data concerned values and morals. This theme was also discussed as the grounds for describing one's home as being Christian. The transmission of Christian values at home referred to traditional Finnish values rather than salient religious transmission. When informants referred to values and morals in relation to Christian self-identification, their responses were similar, but they were expressed in a more pensive and reasoning manner. In other words, a Christian self-identification

stemmed from a willingness to identify with what one informant described as "*basic virtues,*" such as being good to people. However, these informants would also distance themselves from a moralistic type of Christianity, described by CF1 as *"a set of rules."* Being Christian thus was characterized as the willingness to "*try to do what's right*" (MF4) in a moral sense without condemning other people's way of living,[310] as "moralistic Christians" would. MF4 expressed this as the following: *"Leading a Christian life doesn't mean (...) that you don't drink beer or banal things like that – I think "Christian" and "good" are quite, they aren't synonyms but they go hand in hand pretty much."* I suggest that the type of Christian moralism that MF4 describes as banal was what MF5 implicitly alluded to when saying that she would not describe herself as Christian, *"since much of my way of thinking and my values are opposed to [a] Christian [framework]."* It could be suggested that the "Christian" dimensions that MF5 felt estranged from referred to a rule-based and a narrow interpretation of Christianity.

References to faith, church involvement and values all concern personal identity rather than dimensions of collective belonging. Whereas families were often mentioned in relation to religious affiliation, they were never explicitly mentioned when the informants described whether or not they would refer to themselves as Christian. The only exception to such a rule was when being Christian was understood as a consequence of church membership. Church membership was rather seldom referred to in relation to a Christian self-identification, and when it was mentioned, it was problematized or mentioned along with other factors. Just as in the discussions of a Christian home, church membership did not seem to have sufficient weight as the sole factor for Christian self-identification, but it still played some part in the matter. When I asked MM5 whether he would describe himself as Christian, he replied:

> ***MM5:*** *Well… not really, like, it's not like I attend… services and stuff. Although I'm [a] Church [member] so I don't know, [mumbles].*
> ***M:*** *Mm-hmm. So it's a bit of both, or…?*
> ***MM5:*** *Yes, I'm a bit of both. But if someone asks me "Are you Christian", then no, then I first say no, like directly, 'cause I'm not that [Christian]. Then when you start to listen more closely, then, after all you belong to the Church and those things. [But] it's not like you're active.*

Just like MM5, other informants also meant that church membership functioned as a reason for being at least somewhat Christian, but the argument was not perceived as a very convincing one. The way in which MM5 discussed how a Christian self-identification would be interpreted by others recurred in other responses as well. For example, MF3 said: *"Well if someone asks like, do you have [religious] beliefs or do [you] belong to a church, then I would say that I'm Christian. But it's not like I'm introducing myself like "Hi, I'm [name] and I'm that and that and I'm a Christian."* MF3 makes a distinction between her personal sentiments and how she would present herself in public. Her response implies that if she

[310] This reflects the tension between religious hypocrisy and (moral) spirituality in everyday life that Ammerman (2010) identifies in her data.

would openly refer to herself as Christian, it would communicate a different message than she intended. Her references to "*If someone asks…*" and these negotiations illustrate that although church membership seemed to function as a reason for Christian self-identification, expressing one's Christian identity would ascribe her characteristics besides church membership that she did not identify with.

These responses suggest that for those who would call themselves Christian, being Christian was interpreted to be a package deal where personal faith played a central role. In short, one's Christian identity was validated by faith, church involvement, values and morals and church membership, but the informants' responses were also characterized by ambiguity and negotiation. For example, CF2 depicted herself and her family as "*Christian to a certain degree*" but thought that the question was difficult, because "*it depends on where you draw the line.*" In contrast, BM4 did not mention his family and he did not consider himself to be Christian because he had no contact with the church context. For him, the question seemed easy, despite his church membership. In brief, being Christian was therefore expressed with more ambiguity than not being Christian. The question at stake seemed to be whether informants would regard themselves as being "Christian enough." There was no consensus on how much faith and what type of faith was needed to refer to oneself as Christian, and this caused negotiations to occur. For this reason, being Christian was also described as a scale with many degrees.

The perceived conflict between personal and social identities was also expressed in other ways. Despite the presence of collective characteristics that would justify a Christian label, some informants still struggled with arriving at such conclusion because of the notion "still, this is not who I am." Some would also refer to how they had been ascribed a Christian identity by others previously and therefore had adopted that image of themselves. For example, BF1 remarked that "*from you were young, you are taught that 'yes, you are Christian, you belong to the Church.'"* Still, BF1's response implied that this identification did not fit her perception of herself. Similarly, others recognized that they certainly were Christian on a collective level, yet when this label was applied to them as individuals, it did not seem to match their conception of their personal identity. Here, the dividing line referred to, that made the label "Christian" more appropriate for others than themselves, was faith:

> ***M:*** *Would you describe yourself as Christian?*
> ***MM2:*** *Well… not really in that sense, Christian. Hmm. Yes… Hmm.*
> ***M:*** *What is it that – tell me how you think, you seem to…*
> ***MM2:*** *Well I don't know really, it's not that believe in Jesus in that sense, but… Hmm. [On the other hand] you've been counted as Christian… maybe [Jesus] existed but I don't know if he performed [miracles], could walk on water and stuff, the way the Bible says*[311].

[311] As the interview had neither contained faith-related questions nor were there such types of references at the time of his response, the allusion that MM2 makes to Jesus had not been prompted by previous questions.

MM2 also acknowledges how he was accustomed to thinking that he was Christian because others had assigned that label to him, but it did not correspond well to his understanding of who he was as an individual. These results support the notion in Section 4.3.3 regarding how the discussion of "Christians" in an everyday context seem to refer to a social category that the informants did not envision themselves as belonging to. Those who would refer to themselves as Christian would therefore also point to how they differed from "real Christians." Furthermore, their references to other people's understanding of a Christian label indicate that their responses were made in relation to how a Christian self-categorization would be understood in their social setting. It seemed as if identifying as a Christian would entail a risk of being misunderstood in an undesired manner. The eagerness to position oneself as something other than a "typical Christian" implies that being part of that group was not a desired social position to attain.

Furthermore, the notions of the Christian label being context-dependent also recurred here. Some informants directly referred to how the multiple meanings of the Christian label made it difficult for them to answer this question. For instance, BF4 negotiated her way through the interview using this label, and when I asked her whether she would personally refer to herself as Christian, she replied:

> *Again… it depends on how you… (laughs) – I think the definition [of a Christian] is really difficult because I think people have so many different understandings. But I would say that I am Christian, but I'm not religious, I wouldn't say that I am religious or a believer, but I would say that I am Christian.*

The comments by BF4 expresses a shared conception that occurs in the data that besides faith, the other fundamental division in terms of being Christian was whether that category referred to a personal or to a collective identity. The extensive negotiations in relation to this label therefore concerned the discrepancy between being Christian on one level, but not on the other. MM2 previously remarked that whereas he was used to categorizing himself as being Christian, this categorization referred to the collective rather than personal aspects of his identity. In contrast to MM2, MF3 stated that she considered herself to be Christian on a personal level, but not in a social context, because the commonly held conception of a Christian person did not correspond to who she was. Negotiating between the personal and the social therefore resulted in various conclusions depending on the informant.

Since interviews contained repeated positioning and negotiations on this matter, I also began to examine the data to determine exactly who were the "Christians" so frequently referred to and positioned against. On occasion, I would also pose questions about this during the interview and urge informants to specify what they meant when they used the terms "Christians," "religious people," or "believers." As a point of interest, the female informants were much more informative on this matter and became more engaged in these questions, and for these reasons, the account provided below predominantly represents a female perspective.

I discovered four recurring characteristics that characterized Christians. First, Christians were described as people who attend church, and the informants sometimes stated that they attended "regularly." For instance, CF2 was previously cited for her portrayal of Christians as being defined differently depending on "*where you draw the line."* I asked her where she personally thought the line should be drawn between being Christian and non-Christian, and she replied "*If you don't go to church, and don't believe in any higher power, then… I don't think so…*" When I asked BF5 whether her mother would refer to herself as Christian, she expressed similar notions, but also problematized her own conceptions:

> *Somehow I associate a Christian with someone who… goes to church pretty regularly and have a cross around their neck. But if you think about it for a while you realize that that's not the way it needs to be. At least I don't think so. Even if you (…) attend church once a year, you can still be Christian. "*

Even though MF4 has drawn her own conclusions as to what a Christian identity entailed, her statements nevertheless resembled her other comments of regular church-going as being part of how "Christians" are generally characterized. Another feature defining Christians as a social category included the informants' observations on commitment. For example, when BF3 described how her mother would relate to the label Christian, she said: "*I don't know. If you're Christian, then you're supposed to agree with everything the Church says, and she doesn't do that*." These comments seemed to imply that Christians were people who approached faith and religion on an all-or-nothing basis.

In fact, two of the young people I interviewed introduced themselves as being Christian at an early stage in the interview, and the discussions with them revealed that they were characterized by many of the features described above. First, the salience of their Christian identity made them stand out from the other young people I met. To them, their Christian identity defined who they were and established a framework for how they wanted to lead their lives. Furthermore, these informants described their faith as a fundamental aspect of their life. Although the basic structure of their lives resembled how other informants presented their lives, the centrality of religion also recurred here through their alluding to religious engagement, both in terms of the activities they participated in and the friends who were closest to them. Even though the informants did not give the impression that values and morals were specifically salient features in their lives, it was nevertheless evident that they were unwilling to compromise their faith because it was a central aspect of their lives. The fact that these two informants explained their Christian faith openly without any knowledge of my background or values indicates that their Christian identity defined who they were socially and that this was their deliberate choice. This meant that for them, being Christian was not a matter of "drawing lines" in a context-specific manner. This further establishes what was said in section 4.3.3: these "Christians" exist in real life and are also members of the informants' peer groups.

The interviews also contained references to "religious people" and "believers". In fact, the portrayals of religious people predominantly resembled how "Christians" were described above, which is further evidence that Christianity dominates the image of what religion is in Finnish society. For example, when grandparents were spontaneously depicted as being "religious", it was mentioned that they attended church. In the same manner, the informants portrayed "religious people" as those who considered God to be the most important aspect of their life. The referrals to "believers" were rarer and somewhat differed from how Christians and religious people were depicted. When "believers" were profiled, the informants' comments focused on belief more specifically and this was expressed in a rather negative tone. "Believers" were portrayed as being naïve, weak and insecure people who needed faith because they were unable to either think for themselves or lacked strength.

The young people interviewed for the study provided rich and detailed accounts of reflections concerning "Christians" and a Christian identity. On a general note, it was much easier for those to respond who did not consider themselves to be Christian. For them, the boundaries between being Christian and non-Christian appeared to be rather salient. However, those who identified themselves as Christians found this question to pose more of a challenge. The complexity of this issue seemed to concern how being Christian was something experienced as both close and distant. On the one hand, their personal beliefs and values related to Christian frames of reference and to their spontaneous self-understanding, yet socially, they did not regard themselves as being defined by their Christian identity. Difficulties also seemed to arise from there being no clear conception of how much faith and how much activity a Christian identity required, which meant that the informant had to decide whether or not a Christian label was appropriate. As a result, this question tended to require the informants to have some agency and this forced them to take a stand on an issue that they perhaps would rather have not taken. The third aspect that might make this question complex was the parallel notion of "real Christians," who were referred to as an existing group of people. These people were described in a rather uncomplicated manner, as they were characterized by being Christian both in terms of personal disposition (faith, activity) and their salient social Christian identity. The positions and negotiations expressed in relation to this category of "real Christians" therefore seemed to function as a means to distance themselves from this group of people. In this respect, the ways in which the informants described themselves carried much resemblance to how they described their parents and families.

6.2 Beliefs

The aim of this section is to discern how the informants' beliefs in relation to God and an after-life were expressed during the interviews, what these beliefs were described in relation to, and what young people's styles of expressing their beliefs and non-beliefs reveal about the role that their beliefs play both in relation to church affiliation and personal religious identity.

In this context, the notions of "religious faith" and "beliefs" refer to theistic beliefs and beliefs in an after-life, regardless of how these types of beliefs were expressed by the informants.

Based on previous quantitative research, it could be assumed that most of my informants would express belief rather than unbelief. After all, in the World Values Study conducted in 2005, over 70% expressed some type of theistic belief and almost half of the Finnish survey population considered God to be important or very important.[312] The interviews confirmed such assumptions. The responses to questions about "God" and an after-life conveyed notions of belief rather than their non-belief, although one group of informants were not able to commit as to whether they believed or did not believe, which is an issue that I will return to later. Moreover, clear lines of theistic belief arose in relation to their belief in an after-life, and vice versa. For example, those who lacked a belief in God generally lacked a belief in an after-life.

First, it is important to point out that the young people interviewed seemed to be somewhat uncomfortable discussing their beliefs. Some discomfort seemed to have been caused by the frustration they encountered in attempting to express their thoughts. Others seemed to have regarded the questions as bordering on being too personal. I acknowledged such reactions by proceeding with caution through this part of the interview, and paid close attention to when it seemed appropriate to stop asking questions on the matter and to change the subject. On the other hand, others did not seem to be uncomfortable by the questions pertaining to belief, but would take little interest in discussing these matters.

The descriptions of personal faith and non-faith in the data could be divided into four categories. The differences between these categories consisted of a) whether statements referred to belief or non-belief, and/or b) the manner in which beliefs and non-beliefs were expressed. This chapter will present the characteristics of these four groups and conclude with a discussion of the implications of the results. When these categories are reviewed to determine possible background factors for how belief was described, the informants' regional background did not appear to be a decisive factor. However, there was some variation in terms of gender: non-belief was predominantly expressed by male informants, and those holding belief were for the most part female. However, these patterns were neither very salient nor strong.

The first category is referred to as "Belief in something else." What distinguished these statements from other means of expressing faith was that they expressed belief, but also made it clear that these beliefs differed from the conventional Christian doctrine. BM1 expressed that he had beliefs when I asked him what came to his mind when he heard the word "God," but he responded with some reservation:

[312] Ketola, Kääriäinen & Niemelä 2007, 49, 56.

BM1: *Well, I think that it's fully possible that some God exists, but, the stuff which is described in the Bible… [I] maybe don't believe in like Jesus or something, but maybe I think that there is something divine. There has to be something [out there]. From which everything began or something. But I don't believe in the God of the Bible.*
M: *So, it's like, to you it's like, some creational, some…*
BM1: *Yes. Or some, some power which exists. There has to be something.*

BM1 clearly associated the word "God" with a Christian framework and he uses his knowledge about this framework to express what he did not believe in. Those who expressed "Belief in something else" often had some difficulties when attempting to express alternative theistic images or beliefs in an after-life. This is reflected in BF3's response to what she associated with the word "God": *"then I think about the, the God of Christianity, but, well I don't know… actually I do think that there is something, like something else, but like I don't believe in like, that [specific image of] God."* Even though BF3 actually expressed belief in some type of higher power, her response reflected uncertainty, and she predominantly reported on what she did not believe in. MF3 expressed similar notions: *"there is something else which is involved in stuff (...) not destiny or something, I believe more in some… that there is someone who drives it all. Yes. (Pauses) But I wouldn't say that I believe in an almighty God and this and that* – that *I don't believe."* Both BF3 and MF3 alternated between explaining their own beliefs and the type of beliefs they opposed, and both concluded that their beliefs were not Christian in a traditional sense. My initial impression was that the difficulties young people had in expressing their beliefs were due to their lack of vocabulary. However, descriptions such as the one provided by MF3 often included references to explicit concepts, and therefore implied a certain amount of religious literacy. Difficulties therefore seemed to stem from either that informants had not reached a conclusion on what their own beliefs were about, and they lacked experience in trying to express them.

Some "Beliefs in something else" differed more clearly from Christian frames of reference. One informant described being attuned to a spiritual reality and referred to having several experiences of sensing a spiritual presence. She also believed in spirits and thought that unknown realms could be accessed through practices that are usually found within an alternative religious setting. In comparison to these beliefs, concepts such as God and an after-life appeared to be much less central to her.

When the responses included positioning, sometimes this primarily seemed to relate to the role of these beliefs rather than to their content. This was perhaps most evident in how BF4 expressed her associations with the word "God":

Hmm… Yes… I can't say that I'm a believer, but I think that there is like something supernatural (...) and something which directs what happens at earth. And... [is interrupted by noise, both BF4 and M laugh] And… But… like Christian faith is not, I don't read the Bible regularly or like pray regularly, I do pray but it's not like, something I do regularly every day and stuff.

"Belief in something else" would at times be described in a similar manner as conventional Christian beliefs, but was at the same time expressed with explicit distance from conventional Christianity. BF4's primary concern did not seem to be to convey the content of her beliefs, but rather, to express the function that her beliefs had. Despite her faith in a God who had power to intervene in the world, her life was not characterized by her Christian faith. CF4's response to a question as to whether she would say that she had a faith in God was "*I believe, I believe that he exists, but not more than that."* In a similar manner, MM1's reply to whether he had a faith conveyed a similar stance: "*Surely somewhere far, far away."*

Having "Belief in something else" therefore implied that one's beliefs did not function as a compass for one's life, but had a more subordinate role. Those who had "Belief in something else" emphasized that at any rate, their beliefs did not separate them socially from their peers. The notion of beliefs as something merely cognitive was prevalent in some responses: BM1, for example, commented that belief was rarely actualized: *"if someone comes and asks, I tell them."* Those who thought that their faith influenced their lives portrayed this influence in terms of a moral framework and ethical guidelines, but there was also mention of how God was perceived as an intimidating judge whose presence was not welcome.

Who, then, was the group of "believers" that those who expressed "Belief in something else" did not want to be associated with? These "believers" were described as a group of people found both inside and outside organized Christian settings, and varied from being an abstract category to close friends. The descriptions conveyed feelings of distance. Those who described the "*believers*" they knew with warmth would still express that they thought that the way in which *"believers"* expressed their beliefs was "too much." Others would associate "*believers*" with negative characteristics. For example, MF3 stated that she would not like to wear a cross around her neck since she associated such a visible sign of faith with hypocrisy.

The second group is simply referred to here as "Belief", because these beliefs were expressed in a rather straight-forward, non-hesitant manner. For example, BF6 shared how her beliefs in God varied. When I asked her to describe the type of God she believed in, she responded: *"I would say I believe in the Christian God."* CF1 expressed her beliefs in an after-life as the following: *"I think [people] go to heaven. I believe that. I've had my doubts too, but I still have a basic faith from when I was young. (...) I think that [the deceased] go somewhere, or that the soul ends up somewhere. I believe that."* Beliefs in reincarnation were also expressed in a similar, rather direct manner. For example, when I asked what BM4 thought happens after a person dies, he responded: *"I've always liked that you would be born once again. I don't know why but, it's just that (...) I don't want to, it sounds so boring that [life] would just end (...), it would be fun, to be born once again. Not that you remember*

anything about it, but…" BM4 would later state that the concept of "God" did not seem very plausible to him, but he found the thought of reincarnation appealing and he expressed beliefs in without hesitation, just as CF1 expressed her beliefs in heaven.

There was variation in how those who held "Belief" depicted the impact of their beliefs. Some of those who held traditional Christian beliefs described faith as being fundamental to their identity as well as to their lives in general. They attributed their faith to giving them a direction in life, that they were directed by God's will, and that their faith bound them to a social community with close friends. Others who expressed "Belief" meant that their beliefs had a more downplayed function. For instance, when MF4 was asked about whether her beliefs affected her everyday life, she became quiet for a while, and then replied: *"Well… it's there alright. But it doesn't show that much. I don't think you can … look at me and [draw the conclusion] that 'OK, she's Christian.' It's something more deep down."* MF4's beliefs gave her the feeling that she was not alone and provided support in difficult situations. Yet, MF4 also wanted to convey that the impact of her beliefs was invisible and something that did not define her in social settings. For some informants who held Beliefs, faith did not seem to have any impact. For example, BM4, who was cited above for believing in reincarnation, remarked: *"It's just what I think, I don't show it, it's not something I carry with me (…) it doesn't affect anything, really."* For him, his belief in reincarnation seemed predominantly to be an idea that he liked. Likewise, when I asked CM4 what he thought would happen when a human dies, he became reticent and then simply answered "*I'm a Christian so I guess, [I believe] like everyone else, I think.*" However, the rest of our conversation implied that beliefs and religion were not central aspects of his life. Hence, when the interviewees expressed "Belief" in a straight-forward manner, this did not imply that their beliefs played a central role in their lives or were shared in public.

Those who expressed "Belief" did not generally refer to others or to conventional conceptions in their responses. This lack of positioning seemed to relate to their beliefs either being integral to life or being personal to the extent that the informant had not reflected on how his or her personal beliefs could be perceived by others. However, responses from those who described their faith as being invisible implied a resistance towards being identified as a "believer." CF2, for example, noted that she believed in God and an after-life and she described how her faith had helped her through difficult times. She also surrounded herself with some religious symbols, which made her feel secure. CF2's described her faith as central to her, but when I asked her whether she would call herself a believer, her direct response was "*No*": *"Believing people – this is once again my opinion, but, they read the Bible… maybe not daily, but often, and they go to church, more often than at weddings and confirmations and such."* In CF2's view, "believers" had a salient religious identity, which she did not have. Having "Belief" therefore did not correspond to being a *"believer"*.

The third group of informants had difficulties deciding what to believe in terms of God or an after-life. These informants spoke of their doubts about the existence of "God" or

an after-life, but they were seldom characterized by a decided agnostic stance. Therefore, I have labeled this category "Undecided belief." Those who expressed these notions regarded questions on beliefs as being difficult. When I inquired as to what BM3 thought happens when someone dies, he responded "*No idea*" and remained quiet until I asked the next question, indicating that this was all he had to say on the matter. Some responses expressed a notion of "don't know, and don't care." In these cases, the informants were not certain about their beliefs, but the topic was not pressing to the extent that they cared to explore it further.

For CF4, the struggle between belief and non-belief regarding after-life was rooted in her not yet knowing how to personally relate to the beliefs she had been taught: "*You [tend to] think that [those who die] go up to heaven (...) that's what you heard ever since you were a child, but, I really don't know. Maybe that's what you think a little, but it's so difficult to know. It's so difficult to imagine (...), that when you die, then you don't exist anymore."* CF4's indecision seemed to be related to her struggle in coming to terms with how faith could be integrated in her more mature conceptions of the world. BF4 and MF3, who were previously cited regarding their beliefs in God, also commented on how an after-life seemed implausible from a rational point of view, but they still wanted to believe that there was something more to come. CM3 planned to pursue a career in the natural sciences and described having a dual view on what happens after death. Whereas his scientific schooling told him that *"you turn to soil again," "the spiritual part of him"* and his theistic belief made him believe that the deceased turn into other forms of life. Later he would describe himself as a skeptic, and stated: *"I know that there are things I have not yet understood that there will be an explanation to, which doesn't, doesn't have anything to do with, God. But that's an audacious thing to say too, that it has nothing to do with God (...)."* CM3 continued to explain how his growing knowledge of how things function and go together could be understood both with and without God as a creator of it all. He thought the struggle between a scientific orientation to the world on the one hand, and his persisting supernatural beliefs on the other, would remain part of his life. For him, the question of whether faith had an everyday impact was answered by his observation that in difficult times, he relied on his faith, but he thought this to be rather inconsistent and illogical. In this regard, he differed from most who expressed "Undecided belief", as they stated that these matters had no impact on their everyday lives.

The informants' reasons for their indecision varied, and their accounts and described characteristics of "*believers*" also varied in terms of whether these accounts expressed neutral or negative sentiments. MM3 thought people with profound beliefs caused most of the bad events that occur in the world and had difficulties comprehending how anyone could refer to a higher power as a cause for bad actions. When MF2 provided her reasons for why religious education was an important school subject, she explained that it was important to know *"that there are people who believe in different things, and what they believe in (...) which affect their life style and, and even how they dress."* Both MM3 and MF2 seemed to regard

"believers" as a group that was considerably different from themselves. Consequently, they felt that "believers" acted strangely and were not very easy to understand.

The fourth and last category expressed "Non-belief" through short, candid responses, and there was little to say on this matter because beliefs were a non-issue to them. For instance, when I asked what came to mind when BF5 heard the word "God," she replied: *"I don't know, I don't think of anything,"* and then simply responded *"No"* when I asked whether "God" was someone she believed in. My conversation with MM4 was also rather typical of the conversations with this group of informants:

> ***M:*** *What do you think happens when a person dies?*
> ***MM4:*** *You just die.*
> ***M:*** *No continuation?*
> ***MM4:*** *No.*
> ***M:*** *Mm-hmm. Is this the way you always have thought?*
> ***MM4:*** *As far as I can remember, yes.*
> ***M:*** *How, how… why do you think this way?*
> ***MM4:*** *That just the way it is [in life]. It's like… it's impossible to prove that there would be something after this.*

To MM4, a belief in God or in an after-life seemed to be counter-intuitive to what he regarded as reasonable and plausible. He later expressed that he believed *"more in science and the things you can prove."* This attests to how some, but not all, of those who expressed "Non-belief" would describe themselves as having faith in something, despite their lack of belief in a "God" or in an after-life. For example, when I asked BF2 to describe this type of faith, she replied: "*I believe in the goodness of people. That… you have to believe in*." CF3 said that she "*had nothing to believe in now*" as compared to earlier when she used to believe in God. She then added said that she currently tried to believe in herself and in what she was doing. Although this type of immanent belief was reported, it was not very common. Moreover, it remained unclear as to how their immanent beliefs had an impact on their lives.

Those characterized by "Non-belief" portrayed "*believers*" in a critical and negative manner. For example, when I asked MM4 whether he thought his grandparents had faith, he said that his guess was that they did not, because "*they are sensible people.*" Our further conversation strengthened the notion that MM4, who had a scientific worldview, considered people with beliefs to be ignorant. In reflections on what caused people to have faith in God or in an after-life, "believers" were depicted as weak, insecure and in need of consolation. These perceptions were expressed regardless of whether the "believers" were being described generally or they concerned people they had met. The basic, underlying theme was that people who believed were different from them in a negative way. One informant, MM3, portrayed religion as "*scary*" because of *"how people act when they believe in something. They become… [it's] crazy."*

The overall pattern regarding the beliefs that have been presented here is that the young interviewees are characterized by belief rather than non-belief, and that belief did not imply compliance to institutional dogmas. The informants' descriptions of belief express both a proximity and a distance to the Church context. When questions regarding belief in an after-life or in God were posed, the spontaneous allusions to Christian concepts imply that church membership has resulted in a certain degree of religious literacy in terms of the informants' basic knowledge of the Christian creed. Likewise, traditional Christian dogmas also functioned as points of reference that some informants would oppose. On the other hand, there were also exceptions, the most salient being belief in reincarnation. These expressions of alternative beliefs results in two observations. First, these results indicate that young people experienced freedom to express beliefs which did not correspond to the dogmas in the religious community that they were members of. Second, even though the questions on belief were not completely open in terms of content, by referring to "God" as a concept, they seemed to have been sufficiently open for the informants to express beliefs other than those found in a Christian context during the interview.

These results also demonstrate that having beliefs does not necessarily mean living by them or giving them much thought. Many reported that they had reflected on issues such as God and an after-life at some point, but generally, religious beliefs did not seem to have a great deal of impact in their everyday life. The manner in which BM4 previously described the role of his beliefs, "*it is what I think*", was illustrative of how many informants regarded matters of belief. Previous chapters clearly indicated that the interviewees rarely discussed their beliefs at home or with friends. Viewed from the perspective of these findings, informants seem to feel there are more relevant things to talk about. This might also explain why so many informants were indecisive regarding their beliefs. Most of "the Undecided" who expressed uncertainty about what to believe, did not describe their agnostic stance as a permanent position. Yet it could be argued that the high levels of agnosticism reported may be attributed to their not speaking of their beliefs in social settings. In other words, when the Undecided are left alone to reflect on their beliefs and these matters are not considered to be highly urgent, a temporary "I don't know" may well develop into a more permanent stance.

How beliefs were expressed also revealed interesting information about the group of "*believers*" that beliefs were generally associated with in the social context that the informants inhabited. People who are socially defined by their beliefs did not seem to be a very socially desirable group to belong to according to the informants, not even for those who held similar beliefs. Those who expressed belief therefore preferred to believe "invisibly." This adds a perspective on the accounts of belief in the data. The main reason for the informants' not discussing their beliefs appears to relate to a lack of interest, but a contributing factor may also be that matters of belief are associated with a social category of *"believers."* These notions indicate that the surrounding social context influences the way in which beliefs are

expressed. Beliefs are not only associated with institutional contexts, but also with the type of marker self-professed belief is in the social world that people inhabit.

The depicted distinction between "*believers*" and young people in general was illuminated in my conversation with BM2. BM2 expressed that in terms of death, he really did not know what to believe: *I have taken the position that I, I like, I don't know the answer. I neither go against or in favor of that there would be something after [death]… (…) I'm not a skeptic (…), I'm ready to believe in almost anything, but I don't know (…) I'll see later."* Later, when BM2 described his attitude towards Christianity and Christian beliefs, he said that he saw faith as being "all or nothing." He referred to people attending church during the holidays without thinking about God in between and that this was not an option for him: "*If I would believe, then I would believe fully."* BM2 regarded belief as a decision that entailed consequences, and admitted that this view of faith as an all-or-nothing position was a contributing factor to his not yet deciding. It might be suggested that some informants' willingness to emphasize their distance from the social category of "believers" relates to their reluctance to regarding belief as an all-or-nothing position. These notions of "believers" are similar to how "Christians" have been described thus far and provides support for the existence of social boundaries between those defined as being "Christian believers" in public and those who regard themselves as Christian believers, without wanting be defined publicly by self-identification. The positioning and negotiations regarding personal faith and Christian identity therefore seems to be not only a means to describe one's independent stance towards institutional religion, but also a means to describe one's social identity and how one would like to be defined publicly.

A related feature was how informants described Christians as a group characterized by a specific lifestyle. In Section 4.3.3, CF4 was cited for depicting Christians as "*those who go to church every weekend*," which made her reluctant to claim that she came from a Christian home. Later on, she maintained that: "*I'm not that Christian (…) or [a] believer [to the extent] that I would wear a cross*." I therefore asked her to describe a believer or a religious person. CF4 became quiet for a while and then stated: *"they don't like go out, they don't drink, they're kind of calm, [and] they go to different gatherings and meetings at church and stuff."* CF4 refers to a specific group of people whom she relates to when responding. Others conveyed similar notions, but also added other characteristics of "Christians", such as reading the Bible and adhering to certain values. The latter was described in a rather negative manner. Christians were described as adhering strictly to certain principles that in turn made them judgmental towards others. CF1, for example, expressed her personal Christian identity as something other than the "*rule-based*" Christianity she generally associated with the "Christians."

The fact that Non-believers also would express notions of immanent faith reflects the centrality of how questions about belief and faith are formulated. In retrospect, I could have been more intent on asking questions of the faith of Non-believers and looked closer to

understand more the role of their immanent beliefs. On the other hand, regardless of personal belief or non-belief on behalf of the informants, responses seemed to reflect similar understandings of what beliefs are and the role beliefs play in the social context. Questions on belief therefore had to work their way through the layers of the informants' shared conceptions that were used to describe "what I am not" in order to reach the layer of "what I am." This refers to the points of reference in the Finnish context regarding belief and how these conceptions reflect a Christian framework. However, this is also evidence that the questions on belief should be approached in an open-ended manner, also in a context characterized by a religious tradition shared by the majority.

6.3 The four ways of being a church member

Previous chapters have revealed the complex and multi-faceted pattern that church membership entails. The young people interviewed will on the one hand express how the church context in many ways resembles their understanding of what religion is and the context they refer to when discussing beliefs and existential matters. For the most part, the informants' church membership appeared to be a self-evident part of their lives, although their membership was seldom actualized on an everyday basis. On the other hand, the frequent positioning against "the Christians" and the informants' tendency to tone down the religious dimensions both in their family life and in their experiences of the Church indicates two conflicting associations to church membership. One is that the Church is both self-evident and familiar, but it is also associated with views and lifestyles that they distance themselves from. The complex patterns of membership as both highly collective and highly personal reflect how collective identities are rarely clear-cut and easily explained.

The informants' attitudes and opinions on membership, family context and their experiences of the Church reported here did not constitute a uniform group of young people who are characterized by the same understanding of church membership. Membership patterns in the family seemed to have an influence as to which extent church membership was considered to be self-evident. Although few informants were from families that frequently discussed religious topics, their accounts were varied of their parents' religious affinity and personal religiousness. It was also apparent that whereas some church members expressed an interest in existential and religious matters and they garnered ideas from their religious education at school, confirmation training and discussions with friends, while others simply stated that these matters were not relevant for them or their close ones. The previous section also demonstrated how church membership was not a factor that resulted in one specific understanding of Christian identity or a Christian self-understanding. This motivated me to explore the underlying patterns for these variations and differences.

I detected four different conceptions of the Church regarding present and future membership. This, in turn, coincided with Christian identity and how religious and existential matters were approached both at home and with friends. This method of categorizing the

informants did not fully remove the complexity described earlier. Some reasons for membership and some perceptions of a Christian label recurred in several groups. However, each group is characterized by at least one characteristic that is distinct.

I have decided to refer to the first group as Traditional church members,[313] since their descriptions of church membership included references to family tradition, and they also referred to religious affiliation as "*something you do,*" both in terms of present and future. It was also apparent that they had not thought extensively about their church membership, which is conveyed in this citation from MM2: "*Hmm. I don't really know. Haven't actually thought about that, at all. Hmm… (Silence) I suppose, as I said before, it's tradition, everyone else of my family members and relatives are, that's probably why."*

The informants' answers also revealed that the interview questions on meaning, belief and significant matters in life also were topics that they had little experience discussing and they commented on my questions being difficult for them to respond to. The reason that the existential and religious questions had not been addressed extensively before seemed to stem from a lack of interest, and for the same reason, they would not discuss them with friends. BM1 was a typical Traditional church member in this sense. For example, he explained that he did not discuss matters of "*life and death*" with friends because he was not interested in those questions, but also because they were fuzzy in character because they could not be responded to in a clear-cut and distinct manner.

Traditional church members mainly referred to themselves as Christians. These self-identifications stemmed from their church membership and from regarding Christianity as an inherent part of Finnish culture. Membership in the Church and Christian identity were therefore primarily understood as collective dimensions of identity, but also included notions of individual belief, yet these notions were expressed cautiously and the informants related to them as they were private matters. This group was characterized by how their description of themselves as being similar to their parents in their orientation to membership in the Church and to Christianity. It seemed important for Traditional church members to dissociate themselves and their families from active religiosity: MF1 referred to both herself and one of her parents as "*Christian, not religious,*" and in CF4's descriptions of her parents, she noted that they were not active, as if to emphasize that they should not be mistaken to be active Christians. CM2, was previously cited for describing his family by: "*We're just normal, we don't think about stuff like that, none of us do"*[314]. This is a good example of how Traditional church members would include positioning against "*religious people,*" active faith, or express how the Church was, in MM1's words, not "*his thing.*"

What seemed to be the bottom line for the Traditional church members was that they wanted to be normal and following conventions. For them, being Christian and church

[313] MM1, MF1, MM2, MM5, CM2, CM4, CF4, BM1.
[314] Chapter 5.2.3.

members meant being like everyone else in their family and around them, and for this reason, they also expressed their intentions to remain members of the Lutheran Church as adults. For the same reason, this group seemed eager to position themselves against the religious and active church members. Even though their lives included church activities, such as life rites, and some of them believed in God or an after-life, it was important for them to state that these dimensions were well within the bounds of what was considered to be normal. It could also be suggested that this explains why they spoke of both membership and confirmation as matters that they did not regard themselves as being personally accountable for. In other words, the reasons for their behavior were related to the collective and ascribed aspects of their identity rather than to reflecting on who they were socially.

To indicate how important it was not to deviate from what was considered to be normal, the response of BM1 was instructive. He had described church membership as "*something you do*" and he added that his parents also harbored beliefs. He also thought that his parents would refer to themselves as Christians by referring to the religion they belonged to. When we discussed religious education, our conversation took an unexpected turn. I inquired as to whether religious education had evoked any personal reflections about anything, and he stated:

> *No, but confirmation camp, that was… (laughs) then I almost became scared, I became so [into it] that I almost had to start going to church afterwards, but then when I got home, after two days I didn't think about it anymore. But somehow, it was so much fun [at camp] and (…) so fun to be in church and that just got you thinking. But that went away once you got home.*

Even though BM1 primarily attempted to describe that confirmation had been a good experience in his life, his comment is revealing in terms of what BM1 regards as desired and undesired regarding religious interest. Whereas he described his parents' personal beliefs in a casual tone, attending church appeared to be an undesired step away from the conventional. BM1 expressed something approaching relief by the fact that his interest in Christianity seemed to be temporary. This characterized the desired relationship to the Church amongst Traditional church members.

Almost all these informants were vocational students, they were for the most part male, and all except for one came from Countryside or Middletown.

The second group was characterized by identifying themselves as Christians and they referred to how that label reflected their faith or their fundamental values. For this reason I have named this group the Reflective Christians.[315] For this group, questions on membership, faith and existential matters were not new. These informants' responses indicated that this

[315] BF1, CF2, BF6, MF3, BF4, CF1, MF4.

group of female informants was specifically interested in existential and religious matters, and they had also discussed them with at least some of their friends.

The Reflective Christians described their membership in the Lutheran Church in multi-faceted ways. For instance, family tradition and cultural factors were acknowledged as part of this picture, and this group would also include notions of how church membership was regarded as a positive value. Church membership was described as instilling a sense of security or as imparting good values both to the informants as individuals and on a collective level. For example, BF4 described the Church as a sound counter-example to the materialistic values that permeated society. In this sense, church membership not only reflected the will of other people (their parents or grandparents), but was something they personally could justify, which demonstrates to how membership in the Church was regarded as being both ascribed and achieved.

For this group, personal accountability for church membership merged with Christian self-identification. However, identifying oneself as Christian was expressed with caution and included a tendency to problematize and to state how that label could be interpreted in various ways. Reflective Christians were rather clear on what a Christian self-identification meant to them personally. They explained how being Christian was in line with their faith and their values, but not in the conformist and rule-based style that they associated with active Christians. Reflective Christians expressed a desire for independence in faith matters, and also expressed their criticism of the conservative interpretations of Christianity. Even if this group would describe church membership as a positive value, they would also criticize the Church or certain fractions of the members of the Church for being too conservative or narrow-minded. Their membership, beliefs and Christian identity therefore entailed a proximity to the Church in several ways, yet they had an explicit willingness to distance themselves from certain dimensions of church religiousness. The Reflective Christians also did not seem to be guarded when discussing religious matters, but it was also clear that they did not define themselves socially by their Christian identity. While their Christian identity was personally significant for them, it remained personal.

Reflective Christians were not from homes that could be characterized as being highly active in religious matter, but many of these informants had a rather clear image of their parental stance on religion and would describe their parents in terms of belief rather than non-belief. Those who recalled their religious transmission during childhood, for example in the form of evening prayers, would also claim that their parents nevertheless considered themselves to be different from religious conformist Christianity, and these differences later surfaced in how the informants described themselves. For example, when I asked MF3 as to why her parents were members of the Church, she initially remarked that she thought her mother conceived of membership as being related to a form of security, but later added that she thought her mother had also considered leaving the Church. When I inquired as to why, she referred to the Church being old-fashioned and specifically mentioned the controversies

involving female clergy. This comment points to the same type of double sentiments towards the Church that others in this group stated, but it also reveals that Reflective Christians had experiences speaking of these matters at home, and some also shared that their personal religious identity was influenced by their parents. However, the defensive attitude of traditional Christians, who seemed prone to emphasize that their parents were "normal", did not recur in this group.

Many of the Reflective Christians had been enrolled in church activities after confirmation or had friends who were active Christians. For some, these relationships and experiences had contributed to their reflections on their personal Christian identity and had clarified their identity as to who they were and who they were not. The reason I refer to this group as *reflective* therefore relates to that matters of faith and personal religious identity had been approached prior to the interview. The Reflective Christians were all female and almost all of them attended an upper secondary school, but they were not characterized by any distinct patterns in terms of location.

The third group of Lutheran Church members was not large as the two former ones and this group formed a distinct response pattern mainly due to the informants' negative stance towards active religiosity combined with their criticism towards Church for being conservative. Moreover, they did not regard themselves as Christians because they did not understand their own beliefs and values as being compatible with such a label. This group would describe their church membership as an unreflected tradition relating to habit and status quo. I have chosen to call this group the Critical non-Christians.[316]

Given how conversations with this group of informants conveyed a lack of understanding towards traditional Christianity and religious belief, they display the most paradoxical patterns of church membership. MM4 is a good example of this reasoning, describing how RE triggered reflections on the commonality of blind faith and a lack of common sense in religious matters. Similar conceptions were reported concerning their regard for people who were religiously active, which is reflected in MF5's response to her views of the Church:

> *I don't really like it, or, you could put it this way: those who go to church are those who can't think for themselves, to put it boldly. If you go somewhere to listen to a sermon, (...) someone who will stand there and say what's right and wrong and say like "you have sinned" or something, then I think that [the church-goers] are weak people who actually need someone directing their lives in that way. (...) If you ask a Christian or someone who believes in God really strongly a question, they will give you a straight answer. But if you then go "motivate your answer," or "why do you think this way?," then they can't motivate anything, they will just say "that's the way it is," "this is the way I was taught," then you notice that they lack the ability to think for themselves. (...)*

[316] MF5, MM3, CF3, MM4.

These types of notions were evidently directed towards people who were open about their religious identity. However, although this group would express distanced views towards active religiosity and the Church, their own lives were not altogether characterized by that distance. For example, some of the Critical non-Christians believed in an afterlife or in higher power(s), but they described their beliefs as being different from those taught in the Church. Some also knew someone they characterized by their strong personal religiosity, and MF5 later expressed how she also regarded the Church as a reliable source of support of the people in need in Finnish society. Nevertheless, this group of informants all distanced themselves from the type of beliefs and opinions that would be prescriptive in how life was to be led and streamlined to abide by the teaching of a certain religious tradition and especially that of Christianity. Those behavioral patterns were regarded as being signs of personal weakness.

Critical non-Christians seemed to know much very little about their parents' relation to church membership and matters of faith, but their comments made it clear that church membership had had few consequences for their family life. For the most part, they would relate the church membership of their parents to family tradition. It could be suggested that this tendency to regard religiosity in a dichotomous manner was due to religiosity and matters relating to belief had primarily been encountered outside the home. The discussion and positioning of Reflective Christians and Traditional church members seemed to be related to them not regarding their parents as being religious in an open or salient way, but nevertheless they noted that their church membership also had a more personal element. In comparison, the Critical non-Christian informants would simply state that their parents were non-religious, or in the words of MM4, "w*e're not religious people who go to church and stuff."* When Critical non-Christians provided details of their church-related experiences, it was also rather common that they would emphasize how they had not been religious in character or had any existential meaning for them personally.

As previously stated, Critical non-Christian church members tended to regard membership as a result of family tradition, or as MM4 described it, "*that's just something that's there.*" In other words, their membership was a nominal and ascribed identity, distant from how they regarded themselves and their family. The question remains then why these church members continued to consider it to be meaningful to maintain their church membership, despite the critical notions that were expressed. The informants' responses implied that maintaining their membership was thought to take less effort than leaving, especially since membership did put demands of them at the present. CF3 said: "*I don't know* [whether I will still be a member of the Church in ten years], *probably – it's not something I think about, so if I just go on, nothing will change*." Indirectly, membership appeared to relate to significant relationships. Church membership meant access to the customary setting to celebrate family events, and as those involved in these life rites were significant to these informants, membership would also make sense to them. For example, MM3 said that he would remain a church member in case his future wife would like to get married in the

Church. Only after that he would reconsider the membership question. References to the will of his future partner recurred regarding whether he would have his children baptized in the future: "*that also has to do with… like, [my] wife and the mother of the child, most of all.*" It could be argued that this group intentionally referred to the will of others and described their membership as ascribed because given their opinions about religion and belief, they did not want to be personally accountable for membership. Nevertheless, membership bore meaning for them from a social perspective. One of the informants also referred to how leaving the Church would make her stand out socially in a non-desired way.

The group of Critical non-Christian members did not exhibit clear patterns that corresponded to gender or educational choice. However, none of these informants came from Bigcity – all of them were from Middletown or Countryside.

The fourth and last group is the Threshold members,[317] because the most salient feature of this group was their shared notion of church membership not being self-evident. The informants in this group did not necessarily plan to leave the Church as soon as the opportunity presented itself, but rather, had not yet decided about whether they would rather be a member or leave the Church. This indicates how they thought of themselves as personally accountable for their church membership and also valued coming to terms with their own stance on the matter. In terms of the future, the Threshold members were divided as to their religious affiliation. Whereas some foresaw that it was likely that they would not be church members in the future, others were more uncertain and argued that the outcome would be determined by their stance on the matters of their beliefs as they evolved in the years to come. Standing on the threshold of the Church therefore first and foremost seemed to be related to faith. In other words, those who were characterized by non-belief were more clearly on their way out, whereas those who did not yet know what to believe remained members, albeit on the threshold. This further established the tendency of this group to consider church membership as a personal rather than collective matter.

For the most part, the Threshold members came from mixed-pattern families who were characterized by one parent being a church member and one being non-affiliated, or both parents being non-affiliated. As stated earlier, children from mixed-pattern families were able to state clearly their reasons that their non-member parents had no religious affiliation, but they had a more diffused image of the underlying reasons for the religious affiliation of the church member parent. Furthermore, church membership had not played any significant, if any, part in their home environment, and these informants were relatively uninformed of the children's activities that were arranged by the Church. For this group, the membership patterns at home seemed to be connected to their uncertainty concerning membership and like the Critical non-Christian members, religiosity was also predominantly considered to be a feature of other people and described as a dichotomous matter. However, unlike the former

[317] BM2, BM3, BF3, BM4, MF2, CM5.

group, the Threshold members were not as inclined to express negative sentiments towards people who were open about their religious identity.

The informants in this group did not portray their parents as salient religious socialization agents, but some would refer to how grandparents, who had been important to them, also had expressed to them salient religiosity and had said evening prayers with them as children. These informants were the ones who later would refer to their indecision regarding their personal beliefs as a factor causing uncertainty about church membership and would directly refer to the role of their grandparents as the people who had made an impact on their stance towards their Christian faith.

The Threshold members had all been confirmed because they wanted to participate in the same activities as their friends, and they had also attended Lutheran RE at school. Even though church membership had made them part of the majority setting in the peer group, their questioning stance towards membership placed them some distance from those who regarded church membership as conventional and unreflected.

Most of these informants were from Bigcity but were not characterized by distinct patterns that were related to their gender or to their choice of secondary education.

These groups capture some of the central variations displayed in the discussions of church membership, but fail to account for one church member. The informant referred to earlier who initially presented herself as being Christian and whose Christian identity had permeated her life. This person's thinking did not correspond to any of the other group profiles and one person alone does not constitute a group. However, the descriptions of active "Christians" or "religious people" that have influenced discussions of church membership and Christian identity suggest that given their proportion of Finnish church members, active "Christians" have a much larger social impact than expected. The salient characteristics of the group of "Christians" functioned as a point of reference for church members when they were to describe themselves and their personal Christian identities. This is one explanation for the informants' descriptions of themselves as what type of church members they were *not* rather than what type they were. It is important to point out that while "Christians" are a point of reference, they are not conceived of as a norm that the four groups of the Lutheran Church members regard themselves as being "insufficient" in relation to.

Despite the prevalence of central themes in the conversations on church membership, the four groups therefore point to variations, for example concerning the importance ascribed to tradition and convention. Whereas traditional Christians regarded convention and tradition as important and understood low-key church membership as an indicator of normalcy, Reflective Christians simply acknowledged that tradition was one of many factors underlying membership. For Critical Church members, their mention of tradition and convention seemed to serve as a means of justifying their membership, both because tradition mattered to the

people who were important to them, and because references to tradition enabled them to refrain from discussing religious affiliation from a personal perspective. For Threshold members, tradition and convention seemed to matter the least, but the role of behaving like everyone else was apparent in their decision to participate in confirmation training. These groups also demonstrate how religious socialization at home results in different conceptions of church membership. These findings demonstrate that parents function as religious role models regardless of whether or not their church membership was verbally addressed at home.

However, these groups did not fully account for the variations in belief patterns that arose in the data. It is true that each group was characterized by predominantly belief or non-belief, but the groups of believers in the previous section did not conform to the categories so that they, for example, discriminated between "Believers" from "Believers in something else." These findings suggest the highly individualized nature of the beliefs of young people and the great variety of beliefs that occur within the religious majority in Finland. However, these findings also indicate the difficulties in exploring the beliefs within a research population that has had limited previous experience in addressing these issues verbally. The question is whether the difficulties they encountered in discussing matters of religious affiliation, religious socialization patterns and beliefs are characteristic of the Finnish population at large, or whether they reflect a specific majority pattern. I will attempt to answer this question in the following section.

7. MINORITY POSITIONS: RELIGION AND LANGUAGE

7.1 The experience of the minority member as a stark contrast

In the beginning of this last result chapter, I will now turn to those who were not members of the Church in the data and address how they spoke of religious affiliation and their perceptions of being a religious minority in Finnish society. I met four young people who were either members of a Christian minority along with their families or had no religious affiliation. The small number of minority members both in this data and in the Swedish-speaking group at large makes them relatively easy to identify. To avoid disclosing the identities of these informants, this chapter will be general rather than detailed in character and will focus on the central differences that were detected between majority and minority members.

The religious minority group discussed here is rather heterogeneous in character, but share central features that justify discussing them as a group. I will point out the different ways that minority members expressed different sentiments than church members concerning their religious affiliation. These concern their motivation for their religious affiliation status, their discussions of religious elements in the school context, including religious education, and their ways of approaching matters of personal religious identity.

Previous chapters have established that church members typically had little experience reflecting on their membership. Church membership was considered to be part of normal behavior to the extent that the practical consequences of membership were not mentioned. In contrast, the minority members' descriptions of their religious affiliation status were characterized by a high degree of awareness and conscious reflection and an awareness of family history. The religious minority members resembled the informants from mixed-pattern families (Section 4.2.2) in this respect. Those whose parents lacked religious affiliation generally portrayed the circumstances that had led to their parents leaving the Church. Parents who had no religious affiliation were often described as being different towards religious questions or characterized by their being critical towards religion. Those whose parents belonged to a Christian minority group described religious affiliation as a personally significant dimension of their parents' lives. Even when parents continued the affiliation patterns of the previous family generations, that religious affiliation was not framed as a family tradition that had been passed on from one generation to the next. Instead, the informants' accounts of religious affiliation included their references to their personal faith or to their adherence to the overall message of the Christian community. These parents were all rather active in the religious community that they belonged to and were referred to as "*religious*" (BF7) or "*saved*" (CM1). Some variation arose in how much of the parental activity had involved their children, which was also reflected in a varying degree of the informants' mention of being influenced by their parents.

When asked to state why families belonged or did not belong to a religious organization, the responses of minority members therefore indicated their individual agency and accountability. Their religious (non-)affiliation was considered to be a part of their family identity rather than an unreflected tradition, and minority members also acknowledged themselves as being part of these patterns. Not only were minority members aware of being different from the majority in terms of their religious affiliation, these differences did not bother them. The accounts of minority membership therefore depicted religious affiliation as an achieved identity marker rather than one that was ascribed. This also explains why the descriptions did not include the same types of negotiation patterns as those that characterized the majority members.

The second distinguishing feature of minority members was the manner in which they spoke of the presence of religion at school. Whereas some minority members had attended Lutheran RE, others had attended Ethics or minority RE. Those who had attended minority RE or Ethics described these subjects as being different from other subjects at school. The instruction was often offered in classrooms that were different from the usual rooms, the groups consisted of pupils of different ages, and the minority RE or Ethics had sometimes been arranged outside normal school hours.[318] Sometimes these conditions had affected the informants' education in a negative direction. For example, it had been difficult to determine a suitable level for everyone regardless of age, and the education offered after school hours had been tiring. However, the minority RE and Ethics were mainly described in an appreciative tone and the informants conveyed their satisfaction with the current curriculum design that created space for them as minority members. One informant expressed that minority RE not only had taught her most of what she knew about her religious group, but also helped her form an awareness of her personal minority identity. These informants could also refer to specific reflections that the minority RE and Ethics had evoked, which suggests that these subjects had influenced their way of thinking. Ethics and minority RE, respectively, therefore seemed to have had a greater impact than Lutheran RE and also created a more salient awareness of the informants' personal religious affiliation.

The minority members also mentioned school as the arena for them becoming increasingly aware of being different from the Lutheran majority. Those who had attended minority RE or Ethics mentioned that it had separated them from their normal classroom setting in a manner that was not always appreciated. One minority member also remarked how he had been confronted with attitudes by others on his religious affiliation at school that he experienced as hurtful. School was also the main arena for minority members to gain experiences of the Lutheran Church. Through school assemblies and religious services, they had encountered church representatives. For some, these experiences had shaped their understanding of the Lutheran Church. One informant expressed feeling estranged towards

[318] This experience reflects how the arrangements of Ethics and minority RE groups pose a challenge in many schools: see, for example, Vahtera & Kuukka (2007).

religious phenomena generally, but meant that the encounters with Lutheran Church at school had made him more positively inclined towards the Lutheran Church than to religion in general. BF7 reflected on the inherent contradictions in the role of the Lutheran Church at school:

> *I think it's a little... like, paradoxical that there has been this big discussion about that, that during class, [Lutheran] teachers are not allowed to say like, that we believe in God or that there is a God or something and instead you have to state that "this is what the believers believe", and how that's really important, because when you attend a [school] service, it's full propaganda, like "this is what we all believe and now we are all going to sing this hymn together." I think that's a paradox.*

These observations contribute to the images of school as a religious socialization agent that were described previously (Section 5.2) in two ways. First, they demonstrate that (Lutheran) RE is not the only arena for the majority religion to be expressed in the school context. The Lutheran Church is also present on occasions that are not confined to the Lutheran students, but none of the church members chose to discuss this during the interview. Second, these observations also indicate that the organizational principles underlying religious education were much clearer to the minority members than to those who were members of the Church.

The third distinguishing feature reported by the minority members was the way in which they discussed their personal religious identity in relation to their religious affiliation status. I will exemplify by describing three informants, whose descriptions capture the experiences of the minority members that were interviewed.

The first informant belonged to a Christian minority community. She did not appear to have any engagement in her religious community. Minority membership was instead stated in terms of a family identity that other family members maintained more actively. She was informed on how his community portrayed their faith, but was personally undecided as to whether she could actually abide to those beliefs. However, she was proud of her religious minority identity and regarded it as an important aspect of who she was, although from a cultural perspective rather than one that was religious. For her, minority membership entailed collective belonging and for this reason she intended to maintain their membership in her future family.

The second informant also belonged to a Christian minority community, but differed from the one above, because his religious affiliation entailed activity and commitment. He had been initiated into this community by his parents, but his current engagement was a result of his own decision. For him, minority membership was not primarily appreciated due to the minority status that it entailed. Rather, this informant portrayed the role of his religious affiliation in the same manner as CF5, a self-identified Christian, whose religious identity was fundamental both from a personal and a social perspective. In this respect, it might be

suggested that active Lutheran Church members are best understood as a minority group, despite their majority affiliation.

The third informant had no religious affiliation, and stated that both religion and beliefs were non-issues in her life. She was satisfied with her non-affiliated status, and thought this mirrored who she was in terms of religion. The school context had made her aware of how her non-religious identity was different from the majority of their peers in terms of religious affiliation. At the same time, she had not experienced being different from her Lutheran peers in religious terms.

Even though these minority members expressed diverging views and attitudes towards religion, they had one thing in common: they all expressed awareness of their religious affiliation status and thought that it mirrored who they were.

The impact of the majority context on the minority patterns of behavior was also apparent in that some minority members had attended alternative confirmations that had been arranged by their own community, and these were either religious or secular in character. The reason for participating mainly related to their wish to have fun just like their Lutheran peers. These camps offered minority members an access to peer settings where they had the rare opportunity to share their minority membership with others. In this respect, the camps clearly differed from the accounts the Lutheran Church members provided of confirmation training, since these camps had implied a new social setting and had resulted in new acquaintances. The camps were therefore reported to be a valuable experience, because they had strengthened their notions of minority belonging both on a personal and a collective level. However, in other respects, minority membership did not seem to influence peer relationships to a greater extent.

The informants' accounts of religious affiliation therefore included clear differences between the church member majority and non-Lutheran minority. A minority religious affiliation appeared to be a personal choice, salient to the extent that it was sometimes spontaneously mentioned when speaking of their families. The children of minority parents also seemed to know much more about their parents' thoughts on religious questions than the majority members, which implies that minority member parents had addressed religious matters with them, including their own religious preferences, more openly than the majority member parents. Majority and minority religious affiliations therefore entailed different degrees of explicit religious socialization at home.

Minority members also considered their school to have been the arena that made them aware of being different than the majority in terms of their religious affiliation. This awareness had also resulted in their more detailed perceptions of the religious elements in their school context that were not confined to the RE/Ethics setting. For minority members, school had therefore functioned as a context that had established who they were not in terms

of religion, which also was prevalent in the frequent choices to attend an alternative to the Lutheran confirmation training in an attempt to not feel left out. However, those who had attended minority RE or Ethics also expressed how that instruction had established their minority belonging and, for those attending minority RE, it had given them base for religious knowledge.

Even though minority members did not describe their personal religious identity in a succinct manner, it was nevertheless evident that they had reflected on the relation between their religious affiliation status and their personal attitudes towards religion, and their views on religious affiliation also implied personal accountability. In this respect, their accounts resembled those of the religious minority parents. The minority affiliation implied an awareness and an agency that was markedly different from that of the Church majority.

When the four types of Lutheran Church members were presented previously, I mentioned that the self-ascribed "Christian" member of the Church who was interviewed did not fit into any of the groups. The minority members' descriptions of their religious affiliation and their parents imply that active church members, those who spontaneously referred to themselves as "Christians," had more in common with the minority members than the other church members in this study. Their accounts of religious affiliation also implied their awareness and agency rather than a lack of reflection. Likewise, the positioning and negotiations that were characteristic of the Church member majority was absent in the accounts of the minority members and the "Christian" church members alike.

7.2 Language use and linguistic identity

7.2.1 Monolingual and bilingual life: language use in everyday life

After summarizing the results on religious affiliation, I will now briefly address the Finland-Swedish research context of this enquiry, which was shared by members of the Lutheran Church and minority members alike. This chapter will explore the language issue that determines that these informants occupy a societal minority position in Finland by providing an overview of how the informants described their lives as Swedish-speaking Finns in terms of their language use and language identity. These findings contribute to the discussion on religious affiliation in two ways. First, it could be argued that religious affiliation did not appear to be a salient or reflected identity marker because young people have not yet developed into being personally accountable for their collective identities on a more general level. The first analytical objective is therefore to explore whether the discussions on language identity confirm or contradict these notions. The second objective is to examine whether young church members acknowledged the Church as a Swedish-speaking arena, which would imply that their religious affiliation had ethnic dimensions. Evidence such as this then suggests that their reports of religious affiliation reflect the Swedish-group specifically.

This section provides an overview of how young people describe the role of Swedish language in their everyday lives, both private and public. Section 7.2.2 explores their comments on linguistic identity, more specifically, whether they recognized themselves as being members of a language minority, and if so, how extensively that social position has been addressed and valued. Finally, section 7.2.3 analyzes the Swedish-speaking dimension of church membership specifically.

As for the language use reported, the Bigcity world was clearly bilingual in character. All informants described themselves as bilinguals and they reported to the questions on language with a sense of clarity, which was evident in some of them providing rather detailed accounts of their estimated ability in each language, respectively, and how this varied according to life domain. Self-categorization primarily originated from language use at home. For instance, nearly all informants had one Finnish-speaking parent and one Swedish-speaking parent and they described language practices at home as being consistent rather than context-dependent. Their families had established stable language patterns so that the children spoke Finnish to one parent and Swedish to the other. Moreover, their extended family settings appeared to be differentiated in terms of language. As a consequence, the informants would generally speak Swedish to some in their extended family and Finnish to others.[319] These language practices were described with the same type of clarity as their personal language ability. The language use reported in the Bigcity families therefore entailed the parallel use of Finnish and Swedish on an everyday basis in stable and patterned ways. The only exception was that with siblings, Finnish and Swedish were used more interchangeably, partly depending on the situational factors (for example, other people present). As for social settings, it seemed natural for Bigcity informants to have friends who were both Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking. In addition, the language use in the peer setting did not seem to adhere to any distinct divisions, where friends from school would imply use of Swedish. For some informants, speaking Finnish also tended to spill over into the Swedish-speaking school setting, which I will address later.

As the bilingual informants in Bigcity adjusted their own language use according to the linguistic ability of their counterpart, they spoke Finnish in public settings when they reported that the Swedish skills in their surroundings were weak. For example, BF4 stated that using Swedish would mean that the counterpart would have to "*make an effort*" and BM1 expressed that using Swedish publicly would be "*disturbing*" the other person. BF1 (jokingly) described one of her friends as mean, since he would speak Swedish to those staff members in shops who displayed a Swedish flag on their name tags to indicate their skills in Swedish. Despite these visible indications of professed Swedish skills on the part of the interlocutor, BF1 would still assume that he or she was a native Finnish-speaker and would therefore use Finnish in

[319] This implies that bilingual families are a rather new phenomenon in the Finnish setting. The monolingual family settings suggest that bilingual families have not yet come to replace each other generationally, but that bilingual families are still a "hybrid" in a context, that is, a hybrid, yet monolingual.

conversation. BM2 stated that the only situation he would envision himself speaking Swedish was if the interlocutor overheard him using Swedish with others and would initiate conversation in Swedish as a result. Generally, however, initiating conversation in Swedish in a public setting was regarded as being inconsiderate of others and therefore offensive. BF5 also thought that using Swedish would cause negative reactions: *"(...) if you begin to speak Swedish they will look at you as if you are some idiot."* Using Finnish instead of Swedish did not matter, as informants mastered both. As stated by BM2: *"[speaking Finnish] doesn't cause any problems for me."* This pattern was also maintained in their contact with the authorities. Even though Finnish authorities are obligated to hold services in both languages, the assumed poor language skills on the part of others were also referred to here. However, some would use one language rather than the other due to one's domain-specific ability. For example, BF3 offered the following example: "*My mom, she always thinks that you should speak Swedish everywhere (...). When I broke my leg, she wanted me to speak Swedish [at the hospital], but I don't understand that stuff in Swedish because I've always heard [people talk about it] in Finnish, so I think it's easier [to handle] in Finnish."*

Even though BF3 referred to her mother's views here, it was fairly uncommon to refer to discussions with others concerning language use or linguistic ability. Rather, their personal reflections were a result of their navigating through complex patterns of monolingual and bilingual settings on an everyday basis.

In Middletown, I also interviewed informants who described themselves as bilingual because they used two spoken languages at home and were similar to the Bigcity informants in their accounts of their extended family. However, it was evident that these informants lived in a much more Swedish-speaking setting. About half were from monolingual Swedish-speaking homes and mainly spoke Swedish with their extended family. The more Swedish-speaking surroundings had resulted in slightly changed standards for a linguistic self-categorization. For example, two informants from Swedish-speaking homes referred to themselves as bilinguals due to their speaking Finnish to some of their friends whom they had met outside school. The more equal balance between Finnish and Swedish in Middletown was also reflected in the informants' comments on their school language. Some had attended Finnish-speaking daycare because their parents considered it to be important for them to learn Finnish before enrolling in Swedish-speaking school. This implies that whereas linguistic ability in Swedish was considered to be a given, their skills in Finnish were not equally self-evident. The stronger position of Swedish in Middletown was also reflected in their accounts of their language use at school. In Bigcity, the question of which language informants spoke at school seemed appropriate and relevant; in Middletown, I had the impression that the informants did not understand why I would ask about this. As an example, MF1, who came from a bilingual home, replied "*Swedish*" when I inquired as to which language she spoke at school, and she added: "*I mean – I've always attended a Swedish-speaking school.*" The

language of the school thus seemed to predict the language used at school both in formal and informal settings.

The more bilingual nature of Middletown was also reflected in their public use of language. Regardless of whether the informant used Finnish or Swedish in public settings, they would refer to the dominant societal position of the language in question. MM5 stated that his linguistic behavior had recently changed in public:

> ***MM5:*** *[Lately] I've started off [conversation] in Swedish more, previously it used to be in Finnish, but now I've started trying [to speak] Swedish more, to see if [others] do [as well]. Every once in a while they're having trouble [speaking], and then you have to begin to speak in Finnish in the end, when they can't make it [through].*
> ***M:*** *What made you change… strategy?*
> ***MM5:*** *I don't know, (...) previously it was just a reflex, my speaking Finnish. Now I just began [speaking] Swedish [instead]. I don't know.*

Both the lack of shared understanding on the surrounding linguistic conditions and the changed language behavior MM5 describes indicate that the bilingualism was not only an individual characteristic, but also reflects the societal conditions in Middletown. MM5 was not the only one who commented on how he had begun to use Swedish more in town after noticing that many in fact already did. This suggests that Middletown informants had reflected on their language use, but without them considering how speaking Swedish would be received in public, which suggests a more favorable stance towards Swedish in the surrounding context. In this respect, their language use in public was a matter of choice which, however, sometimes needed to be changed due to the deficient skills of the interlocutor. Furthermore, those who chose to speak Finnish in public settings seemed to do so for pragmatic reasons, not because speaking Swedish was frowned upon.

The stronger role of Swedish both on a personal level and a societal level was also evident in their contact with the authorities. Many expressed a will to speak Swedish, sometimes adding that it was their legal right to do so. These preferences partly stemmed from their personal linguistic abilities. For example, CM3 commented: *"I know exactly what to say in Swedish – it becomes harder to find the words in Finnish if it's about something more complicated (...)."* In sum, the language use in Middletown was determined by a combination of the linguistic environment and personal language skills. The surrounding context provided frames for the available options in a given situation, but personal language skills was perhaps the more important factor for how a given situation was encountered.

As for the Countryside informants, Swedish dominated language use at home with their family, around their friends and at school. When I asked CM4 whether his friends were Swedish-speaking just as he was, his reply was: "*One is bilingual,*" which indicates that even bilingualism was a noteworthy exception. Accordingly, the informants regarded speaking Swedish in public as being the natural thing to do. Regardless of the situation, the Countryside informants expressed a preference to maintain Swedish as the language they used, including

in their contact with Finnish-speakers. They often referred to their legal right to speak Swedish in a way that implied that such a right tended to be challenged. For instance, CF1 remarked that regardless of where she would be in Finland, she always used Swedish initially in public interaction:

> *[I think] you should always give service in the language [the customer] prefers. That's important to me. And therefore it is also important for me to serve Finnish-speaking customers in Finnish, 'cause I understand that they don't wanna speak Swedish to me, and then they should get service in Finnish. But maybe [I use Swedish in public] also because, subconsciously I want to teach Finnish-speakers that I exist, as a Swedish-speaker, I'm here too. (...)*

The Countryside informants therefore expressed strong opinions about their right to use Swedish, both from a legal perspective, and (like CF1) from a customer's perspective. These opinions are in sharp contrast to the Bigcity informants' preference to make matters easier for the interlocutor in similar situations. The local language settings therefore seemed to entail different formulations of how the relations between the majority and minority should be carried out in practice. However, personal language skills also contributed to these notions. The Countryside tendency to speak Swedish in their contact with Finnish-speakers also indicates that if the situation demanded a language switch into Finnish, few had the ability to carry out such a conversation in a proficient way. CF1 previously referred to how she would speak Finnish to a Finnish-speaking customer: those whose summer-jobs had put them in similar situations often had the ability to speak Finnish sufficiently. Apart from these experiences, the monolingual Swedish environment had offered the informants few opportunities to practice speaking Finnish. Finnish therefore remained merely a subject they studied at school. As a consequence, others would change into English when conversing with a Finnish-speaker, return later in the company of someone who could help, or stick to Swedish and hope that the counterpart still would be able to understand. Some informants admitted the inherent contradiction of demanding service in Swedish from Finnish-speakers on the one hand, and yet failing to speak Finnish on the other. CF5 commented that one aspect she was not proud of regarding her Finland-Swede identity was: "(*...) that we're so incredibly bad at Finnish. That there are so many Finland-Swedes who simply don't care. Maybe I should... maybe we should get our act together. I mean, we can't demand that [the Finns] should know Swedish if we don't know Finnish either."*

In fact, just like CF5's statement, few Countryside informants were indifferent to their lack of skills in Finnish. This did not make them stand out in their peer context – most reported that they were just like their friends in this respect, which perhaps made it more socially legitimate. Nonetheless, failing to speak Finnish properly was regarded as a real limitation that also affected an informant's plans for future studies and geographical mobility. For example, this was one of the reasons cited for these informants seldom imagining themselves as living in a Finnish-speaking setting in the future. As discussed previously, plans for going abroad or for taking sabbatical years were also most frequently mentioned in

Countryside. These plans were generally described as shorter adventures, but sometimes informants imagined them as a springboard for a future abroad. For instance, when I asked CM1 which language he thought he would speak in ten years, he replied "*Swedish and English.*" Since these notions were not reported in those locations where young people knew Finnish better, it could be suggested that these plans in part could be understood as strategies relating to the informants' limitations of not having a strong command of Finnish. Likewise, many Countryside informants seemed to compensate for their deficient Finnish skills by orientating towards other languages, which then would explain the explicit comments reported about mastering English.

To summarize, despite common denominators, such as having attended Swedish-speaking school and being the same age, great differences were detected in language use. In addition, the language spoken by their families had a crucial impact regarding their personal skills in Finnish. Mastering two languages instead of one was clearly understood as an additional value, regardless of whether the informants were monolingual or bilingual. The informants from bilingual homes expressed confidence in mastering social situations and their use of language reflected flexibility and a consideration of others. In contrast, the informants from Swedish-speaking homes offered more varied accounts. Those who had acquired skills in Finnish from settings outside their homes also used both languages in a flexible manner, but also mentioned that they did not master both languages equally well and would therefore wish for Swedish-speaking service in certain settings. However, those who had little experience of speaking Finnish referred to their legal rights to speak Swedish in specific settings, but also expressed how an inability to speak Finnish meant limitations and some boundaries for the future. From this perspective, the practical accounts of what a Swedish-speaking identity entailed resulted in different types of awareness of such collective identity, depending on the language skill and location. The informants' language use and language ability not only related to their family background, but also to the linguistic conditions of the local setting. For example, whereas the surrounding presence of Finnish in Middletown enabled young people from a monolingual family background to acquire Finnish skills in other settings, the monolingual Swedish Countryside provided limited opportunities to use Finnish.

However, the local setting also provided different conditions for language use in terms of what was regarded as socially desirable. A large proportion of Swedish-speakers in the local context entailed confidence in using Swedish publicly. Not only does this suggest that the local majority and minority position affects language usage, it also indicates that being identified as a Swedish-speaker in public had different meanings in different locations. In Bigcity, this was not preferred, because speaking Swedish in public use was associated with disturbing behavior and, as the following section will demonstrate, it was also partly associated with a Finland-Swede stereotype that the informants wished to distance themselves from. The Middletown informants seemed to be pragmatic in their language use, which

suggests that language was not a charged issue in the local context. Some Countryside informants appeared ready to fight for their rights as Swedish-speakers in public. They expressed their will to make themselves visible to the majority population, which suggests that the Swedish-speaking interviewees were proud of their linguistic identity. On the other hand, their poor skills in Finnish also afforded them little choice in the matter; as the alternative was to use their deficient Finnish.

It is important to note that regardless of the location, the descriptions of language use did not entail an understanding of Swedish-speakers as a structurally disadvantaged and exposed group in Finnish society. The informants did relay accounts of situations they had encountered problems in due to their Swedish-speaking identity. Countryside informants described the personal limitations and disadvantages that were a consequence of deficient skills in Finnish. This lack of personal skills in Finnish and the lack of Swedish skills in Finnish society undoubtedly were something they found to be disturbing. However, those experiences were told from an individual perspective and not driven by the understanding that this was what a Swedish-speaking group identity entailed. It could be argued that the choice by Bigcity informants not to speak Swedish in public was in fact as a strategy to avoid harassment and discrimination. However, their factual descriptions of private and public language contradict this argument. In this respect, young Swedish-speakers seemed to share the opinion that being Swedish-speaking was not a troublesome or an excluding factor in their everyday life. Their minority identity put them in exposed situations at times, but these situations were exceptions rather than constituting that they belonged to a structurally disadvantaged group in Finnish society.

Thus, discussions of public and private language usage clearly indicated an awareness of one's Swedish-speaking group identity. In the next section, I will turn to address how the informants expressed the value and meaning of their group identity.

7.2.2 Being a Finland-Swede – the value of linguistic identity

When the informants were asked about their Finland-Swede identity, all informants defined themselves as Swedish-speaking Finns, but they tended to describe the significance of this identity in a neutral manner. Some openly stated that they had not reflected much on their identity as Finland-Swedes. They certainly regarded it as important in general, but were rather unclear as to what it meant for them personally: "*Well, maybe it's not that incredibly important, (...) I'm not, I don't know, it's not an important thing. It's just what I am. It's nothing I'm pleased with – of course, it's a plus to know both languages… But no, it's not… super-important."* (BM4) The comment "*it's just what I am*" was echoed in many interviews. Being Finland-Swede was regarded as an inherent part of their identity that seldom was expressed in everyday situations. For example, CM3's comment "*I'm like everyone else around here*" reflects that being Finland-Swede was a self-evident aspect of life, especially in a monolingual Swedish-speaking setting. In fact, some would even claim that being a Finland-Swede was not exceedingly important and would not comment on the issue further. The

Countryside and Middletown informants who communicated this indifference were characterized by using predominantly Swedish at home, with friends, and in public. I suggest that the indifference in this group is likely to be similar to how the Finnish-speaking majority members would respond to questions on linguistic identity. It is likely that identity markers that are not challenged, threatened, or make the individual different from others in an everyday context are seldom reflected on and even less regarded as being important identity markers. The Bigcity informants who expressed indifference towards being Swedish-speaking typically used Finnish extensively in their everyday lives. To them, the Swedish-speaking dimensions of their identity seemed to make them stand out from the Finnish-speaking majority, which was not welcomed. For example, BF5 argued she did not regard her Swedish-speaking identity as important:

> ***BF5:*** *I don't want… I usually don't say that I'm some sort of Finland-Swede cause the Finns, they have a certain… they act in a certain way towards them.*
> ***M:*** *Mm-hmm. How do you think Finns – what kind of prejudice do you think Finnish-speakers have towards Swedish-speakers?*
> ***BF5:*** *That we're rich and snobs. And that's actually not true anyway (…)*

This conversation perhaps explains BF5's previous statement that speaking Swedish in public would mean that others would think she was *"an idiot."* In other words, she regarded her Swedish-speaking identity as being a social disadvantage because it ascribed her characteristics she could not identify with, especially since she did not come from a privileged background. Later, she commented: "*it's just, I'm Finland-Swede and… (pauses) that's just the way it is, I don't think there's anything special to it… (…) It's not bad and it isn't good, either, [or] an extra classy thing to be."* Being a Swedish-speaking Finn therefore seemed to be associated with different markers, depending on the local context. Whereas some informants from Swedish-speaking settings would not ascribe being Swedish-speaking a high value because it was regarded as a natural part of life, some informants from predominantly Finnish settings considered it to be deviating in a non-desired manner.

BF5's reasoning touches upon themes that also arose in discussions with other informants from Bigcity when they described their identity as Finland-Swedes. Their reasoning often included negotiations and positioning against the stereotypical image referred to by BF5 of Finland-Swedes as "*classy, rich snobs.*" Nonetheless, what was evident in some interviews was that their positioning did not only concern an abstract and somewhat exaggerated image, but it also referred to a group of real people from whom the informants felt estranged. The Bigcity informants seemed to have encountered real-life examples of the prejudiced image of a "typical" Finland-Swede, and because the distance expressed also meant a distancing from real people in one's school or extended family, this matter was sometimes rather sensitive to discuss.

The "real" Finland-Swedes whom informants were hesitant to associate themselves with were also described to some extent. For example, BM1 expressed his distance to a

certain group of people he referred to the "*Super-Finland-Swedes.*" I asked him whether it was the language or the people themselves that he felt distant to, and he replied: "*It's… it's the people, it has nothing to do with the language. The language I manage… just as well [as they do]. It's the people. They're so different in some sort of way.*" When I asked him to be more specific about this group, he portrayed them as being tall, thin, smartly dressed and as residing in a privileged Bigcity area. BF7 also mentioned expensive clothes as well as a tendency to judge other people by their appearance. These descriptions were the most explicit. BF2 described how the settings that were "too" Finland-Swedish made her feel estranged, but she became uncomfortable when I asked her to elaborate on what she meant. Finally, she mentioned singing drinking-songs as part of this behavior. She was not the only one who mentioned drinking-songs as an example of "excessive" undesired Finland-Swedish behavior:

> *I would say [I am] somewhere in between the Finland-Swede and Finnish [culture] (…) OK, these are stereotypes, but there are also superior Finland-Swedes around… like "Swedish-speaking better people…" I wouldn't see myself as part of that group… (…). If someone excessively distances [himself] from other Finnish people because that person is a Finland-Swede and regards himself as super-special – that's hard for me to handle.*

Since all Bigcity informants but one had a bilingual family background, it is difficult to establish whether it was the local setting or their family background that caused the susceptibility to the differences between the language groups. However, since mention of a Swedish-speaking group that could be characterized by other common denominators than language was only found in Bigcity, this seemed to be characteristic to the specific Bigcity setting. Some of the interviews from the other locations also included negotiations regarding language group identification, but only on the grounds of linguistic ability. Some bilingual informants expressed hesitancy about them being Finland-Swedes because they also spoke Finnish daily. MM3 stated he was not sure what being Finland-Swede entailed, but added: "*Surely I'm a Finland-Swede, I speak mostly Swedish and I live in Finland…*" When I asked him why he still hesitated referring to himself as a Finland-Swede, he responded: "*When I think of Finland-Swedes, I maybe primarily think of those who are entirely Swedish-speaking, from [little Swedish-speaking village] or something… who live somewhere on the countryside and haven't got any contact with anything Finnish, so they only know Swedish…"* The stereotype concerned a lack of Finnish skills and therefore differs from the "Finland-Swede" that was described by the Bigcity informants. However, regardless of location, those who negotiated their language group identity were all bilingual. Bilingual identity therefore seems to cause more reflection on what constitutes Swedish-speakers as a group besides language as well as where borders are drawn between in-group and out-group members. My interviews with the monolingual Swedish-speakers very rarely included these types of reflections.

Those who stated more explicitly that their Finland-Swede identity was important to them pertained to linguistic ability, minority position or the distinct identity position that this entailed. For some, being Finland-Swede implied linguistic ability – compared to being

"merely" a Finn, a Finland-Swede identity necessitated mastering more than one language, which was valued. This reasoning was based on the assumption that all Swedish-speakers know Finnish, which indicates that these comments usually were expressed by bilingual informants. Others based their responses on the assumption that Swedish-speakers were a group in decline. For them, being Finland-Swede was particularly important for this reason: *"I don't think Finland would be Finland if six per cent Swedish-speakers, or whatever it is, [if Finland-Swedes] did not live here (...) – I think that [this group] should be here and it's a shame [the number of Swedish-speakers in Finland] go down all the time."* (MF4)

The previous citation indicates that the Swedish-speaking youth is also characterized by the understanding of their minority position (section 2.1.3), but this did not have a central role in our discussions. Instead, the most central reason for regarding one's Finland-Swede identity is connected to the notion that being Finland-Swede reflected an identity that was distinct from both the Finnish and the Swedish majority cultures. Whereas some would describe this as being neither Finnish nor Swedish, others described it as being a little bit of both and feeling most at home in between these two cultures – this space in between was therefore regarded as being Finland-Swedish. Shifts and nuances occurred in how this in-between –identity was conveyed. Some monolingual Swedish-speakers expressed distance to the Finnish-speaking culture, sometimes in a rather condescending way. Bilinguals, on the other hand, regarded the Finland-Swedish culture as a special dimension of Finnish culture, and the latter they also partially identified with. However, what that culture constituted was more difficult.

When reviewing the results from this chapter, the sense of being "in-between" captures many of the notions that were described in this section, but these notions had different meanings, depending on the locations.

7.2.3 Religious affiliation – a marker of ethnic identity?

This section will attempt to link language identity to religious affiliation. When I addressed the question on affiliation with a specific parish in the Lutheran Church, it became clear that all did not belong to Swedish-speaking parishes. In fact, a few bilingual informants belonged to a Finnish-speaking parish or were unsure of which parish they belonged to. However, all church members had participated in Swedish-speaking church activities as children and had also participated in confirmation training in Swedish, regardless of their parish affiliation. The Finland-Swede's parishes and schools therefore perform their tasks similarly to Finnish-speaking schools and parishes, but they have also provided young people with settings that have been Swedish-speaking. As far as school was concerned, the Bigcity informants especially acknowledged school as a Swedish-speaking context, which probably stems from monolingual Swedish-speaking arenas being exceptions in their predominantly Finnish-speaking local setting. The question is therefore whether the linguistic dimension of church affiliation was mentioned by the informants in a similar manner and whether this was regarded as an additional value.

When I approached the matter during interviews, the informants' reactions could be described as their being somewhat surprised. It was apparent that few had previously given any thought to the linguistic dimension of religious affiliation. The informants responded to this question with pauses or verbal expressions such as *"Well, I guess…"* (CF4, CM5), or "*I haven't given it much thought, but I suppose that…"* (MM2). The issue of the language used in church settings was clearly a topic that was addressed by me. The informants' conversations gave me the impression that it had never occurred to them before that there was a link between their linguistic background and the specific church context. For example, when I asked MF4 what she thought of the interview questions afterwards, she specifically mentioned this question as a stage in the interview that made her feel uncomfortable, since the topic was so new to her.

Those who thought that belonging to a specifically Swedish-speaking parish was important to them referred to their personal language skills, their minority setting or to how their choice corresponded to the social setting that they preferred to be in. The comments about language skills were mainly expressed by monolingual informants from the Swedish-speaking settings in Countryside or Middletown. For instance, CF4, who had previously expressed how she wished she had a better command of Finnish, remarked: "*If the parish were Finnish-speaking, then everything would be in Finnish I suppose, so, it wouldn't be fun (...) when you don't understand any of it.*" Being competent in Finnish, however, did not sway some from preferring Swedish. MM5, who described using both Swedish and Finnish in his everyday life, still thought that he preferred a Swedish-speaking congregation because it meant that *"(...) you get [service] in your mother tongue."* For these informants, language preferences corresponded to their personal language skills.

Those informants who described belonging to a Swedish parish as an additional value in comparison to belonging to a Finnish one were all bilingual and were from Bigcity or Middletown. Their responses, however, were described in a somewhat vague manner. While MF5 understood the Swedish-speaking church setting as one means amongst others of maintaining Swedish skills, BM2 referred to how his appreciation of the minority setting and to feelings of community that he associated with that setting. Like BM2, MF4 seemed to express a similar notion when she stated: "*I'm proud to say I belong to a Swedish-speaking parish (...). In some way. I don't know why really."*

Those who stated that their belonging to a Swedish parish was significant for social reasons were from bilingual homes in Bigcity or Middletown and they referred to their personal habits or their personal contacts with church professionals in a specific parish. BM1 explained his willingness to remain a member in a Swedish-speaking parish by stating that "I've always done [church stuff] in Swedish" and referred to how he would not be interested in changing his school language into Finnish, either. Maintaining Swedish as a language therefore reflected a general willingness to maintain language patterns. Others referred more specifically to their relations to a specific Swedish-speaking parish by their participation in

children's activities or by knowing people who were active in that parish. For them, the willingness to maintain their bonds to a Swedish-speaking parish related to their interpersonal contacts with the people they associated with the parish in question.

Others thought that the language of the church context was irrelevant because their contacts with the Church were so infrequent. These statements were neither related to a specific location, nor did they reflect the informant's personal language skills. BM3 was the only informant who expressed specifically that he might as well be affiliated with a Finnish parish, because the language per se did not matter to him. These responses therefore addressed the marginal role of the Church in these informants' lives rather than the language issue specifically.

As mentioned in Section 2.2.3, the diocese for the Swedish-speaking parishes in Finland, the Borgå diocese, has the highest proportion of membership of all the dioceses in the Finnish Lutheran Church. The question is how to interpret these numbers and to determine what they are indicative of. These responses suggest that the reason for maintaining membership is not due to their loyalty to their minority setting in which their religious affiliation is enacted. These indicators were in fact only detected amongst some bilingual informants who explicitly referred to a Swedish-speaking religious affiliation as one way of expressing and experiencing a minority community. However, those notions were only revealed when the issue was addressed explicitly by posing a question. In comparison to how the informants addressed and acknowledged the role of the school setting as an explicitly Swedish-speaking arena, they did not refer to the role that the Swedish-speaking parishes have as providers of Swedish-speaking arenas. Furthermore, the monolingual informants did not speak of the church context as a minority setting. Those who regarded the language at church as important would instead refer to their deficient skills in Finnish. This means that the explanatory value of language per se was minimal.

I suggest that one explanation that may explain the Borgå diocese having the highest membership numbers is offered by CM2. CM2 came from Countryside and from a monolingual family. He did not regard his being a member in a Swedish-speaking parish to be important, because: *"(...) it's not like I've been there at all – I'm just like everyone else from [Countryside]."* Moreover, CM2 did not seem to have reflected on his language usage previously and he also did not regard his identity as a Finland-Swede to be important. However, he mentioned his local identity several times during the interview and expressed affection for the village he came from. When CM2 described what being a church member meant, he also referred to his local setting. Even though he described himself as being indifferent to the Church, he considered church membership to be part of the tradition in his village. He expressed that leaving the Church would come with a social cost that would make others talk and regard him as being different. This reply from CM2 therefore suggests that membership relates to the conventions in the local communities and to the interpersonal contacts established there.

This interpretation addresses the issue of social capital in the Finland-Swede group. In fact, it could be suggested that the reference to a social setting that is wider than family and friends is an indication of how social capital functions in practice. For those whose families have been deeply rooted in a local community for generations, being anchored in the community entails stable social frames and a certain sense of traditionalism, which originates from perceived loyalty to others rather than from the content of the traditions. The local communities that are characterized by social stability are certainly found in the Finnish-speaking rural areas as well, but as was mentioned in the first chapter, the Swedish-speaking areas are typically less mobile than the Finnish-speaking areas. In this sense, language is not acknowledged as the explicit factor that attributes meaning to religious affiliation, but due to the social stability and the closely knit networks of the Swedish-speakers, a Swedish-speaking identity nevertheless results in local anchorage. It could then be argued that these patterns contribute to church membership figures remaining high in the local Swedish-speaking contexts for the same reason as that suggested in previous chapters: the major factor entails the role of other people and one's perceived solidarity with them.

8. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Empirical findings

8.1.1 Church membership

The aim of this study was to explore how young Swedish-speaking people in Finland understand the role and function of religious affiliation and how it is related to the social setting that they are embedded in. Theoretically, my main objective was to explore religious affiliation as an interplay between the dimensions of individual and collective identity. For my analysis, I used two bodies of theory: socialization theory and role-identity theory. The concept of religious socialization was adopted to explore how parents, peers, school and religious organizations had contributed to young people's understanding of religious affiliation. Role-identity theory, in turn, functioned as a framework for understanding how collective identities are discussed and negotiated on a personal level. I also explored whether religious affiliation was described as an achieved or an ascribed identity marker, and furthermore, whether the variations in descriptions could be explained by the societal majority or minority position that the religious affiliation entailed.

My data consisted of 31 interviews with 19-year-olds from 3 different locations referred to as Bigcity, Middletown and Countryside. Bigcity was a predominantly Finnish-speaking urban location, Middletown a bilingual middle-sized location and Countryside was predominantly Swedish-speaking and rural. The data were characterized by an even gender distribution and a distribution between upper secondary and vocational students that corresponded to the school choices at the locations analyzed. The interview data were analyzed through a qualitative content analysis.

At the outset, the religious affiliation of those who participated in the study was not known. As could be expected from the religious affiliation patterns on a societal level, most informants were members of the Lutheran Church along with their families. Some informants were from families with mixed-membership patterns, where most family members belonged to the Lutheran church, but some had no religious affiliation or were affiliated with a Christian minority. Only a few informants came from families with consistent minority patterns, with all family members either having no religious affiliation or being members of a Christian minority community. As a result, most of this study became an exploration of how Lutheran Church membership was described and discussed.

The question of why families were church members proved to be difficult to answer because the informants had rarely reflected on this previously, which in turn suggests that young Finnish church members are rarely held personally accountable for their religious affiliation. The reasons the interviewees cited included their alluding to family tradition and traditions in the Finnish society. Even though the informants' reasons for church membership primarily referred to collective dimensions, personal matters such as their faith and values

were also mentioned, especially when they portrayed other family members. Furthermore, church membership had entailed certain patterns of religious practice. For example, most had become baptized as infants and had attended church with their families for family events or during the holidays. The informants had also participated in confirmation training, but here motives for participation were related to their desire to participate in a fun activity with friends more than being related to family. At school, church activities had been an integral part of the way in which holidays and marked events had been framed, both as a part of the religious education curriculum and as part of the school's festivities. However, these behavioral patterns were seldom explicitly linked to church membership and seldom described as a consequence of a reflective personal choice. Instead, they were described as being "*normal,*" as "*something you do.*" Yet, church membership was rarely understood as something that was forced upon them by others, and leaving the Church was regarded as an option in theory. Yet, few regarded it as being likely that they would personally leave the Church as adults.

The discussions of membership and church activities also revealed tensions between personal and social dimensions of identity, which were conveyed through negotiations and positioning. Those who referred to their personal religious views when explaining why they were church members did this in a downplayed manner and explicitly distanced themselves from conservative interpretations of Christian values and beliefs. A noticeable number of discussions concerned what their membership and practice patterns did *not* mean rather than what they meant on a personal level. The accounts of what church membership entailed in practice were also made with an awareness of how these enactments related to social identity. The discussions on church membership were therefore characterized by an emphasis on how it signified the conventional and normal rather than an overt religious identity.

The church members' comments on what a Christian self-identification constituted reflected similar tensions between their personal and social identity. Whereas church membership predominantly was collective in character, being Christian was primarily described as a personal identity. In comparison, factors such as church membership or cultural background were assigned a secondary role. Those who described themselves as being Christian and stated that this reflected their personal beliefs or values did so with explicit distance to normative Christianity and orthodox beliefs: to them, being Christian was an implicit and personal matter. They would also distance themselves from the social category of "Christians.", who were depicted as active church-goers who were socially defined by their religious identity and by being "religious." Those who described themselves as not being Christian simply referred to their lack of Christian beliefs or values. Since this entailed fewer tensions between personal and social identity dimensions, the question was answered with more ease.

Furseth and Repstad were previously cited for framing their discussion on contemporary religious identity by posing two questions: "How embedded? How

individualized?"[320] According to these findings, religious affiliation is characterized by being highly embedded, but not primarily in the institutional context. Rather, the results attest to the central role of the social relations for why membership in the Church is maintained and regarded as being meaningful. The family not only provided reasons for church membership, but also constituted the social setting in which participation occurred. Furthermore, these results also support Day's descriptions of the central role of significant relations in people's lives.[321] When informants refer to the social, traditional and collective dimensions of church membership, this is a means of communicating their social belonging. The social embeddedness of church membership does not rule out religious dimensions and religious belonging, but these were secondary to the role played by close relations.

Furthermore, the frequent discussions and positionings described above demonstrates that membership in the Lutheran Church constitutes a vague religious marker, because it places Finns in the same category regardless of their personal beliefs and values. These notions were further reinforced by those who introduced themselves as "Christians" in the beginning of our conversations. These informants either belonged to the Lutheran Church or to a Christian minority. For them, being Christian defined them personally and socially: their faith was fundamental in how they led their lives, and they shared their active Christian identity with close friends and family. I suggest that the constant positioning against active, conservative Christianity found amongst most church members can be traced to the fact that for the active nucleus of the Lutheran Church, religious affiliation coincides with a personal commitment to faith and to the Church. In previous research, this group has also been identified.[322] This study not only confirms that this nucleus also includes young members, it also demonstrates the impact it has on how the more passive church members express their religious affiliation. These findings therefore contribute to a greater understanding of why church members in Finland are reluctant to portray themselves in religious terms. The results have shed light on how Christian and religious self-identifications do not take place in a social vacuum, but occur in relation to real social groups.

This study has also demonstrated that the lack of reflection is a more central feature of church membership than previously reported, although the study by Bromander has previously reached similar conclusions.[323] I suggest that the impact of this lack of reflection, including the underlying reasons for it, has not been taken into account thoroughly as a central feature of the majority religion in the Nordic countries. The reason this should be understood as a majority characteristic is related to how the minority members tended to adopt a different approach to the questions on religious affiliation. Due to the small size of this group, the religious affiliation of the minority members were not analyzed in depth, but instead became an important basis for a comparison to the religious majority.

[320] Furseth & Repstad 2006, 122.
[321] Day 2006; 2011.
[322] Cf. Helander (2007), Ketola et al. 2011, 60.
[323] Bromander 2011, 61-62.

In some ways, minority and majority members resembled each other in their discussions on religious identity and belief. Just like the majority, the religious affiliation status and the personal religious identity of the minority informants did not coincide. An affiliation with a minority community did not necessarily imply religious belief or a Christian identity: neither did non-affiliation necessarily imply non-belief. However, the minority members described their religious affiliation differently from majority members. The former provided clear straight-forward accounts of their affiliation status and they had reflected on how it related to their personal religious views. Likewise, church members who had minority member parents were also able to explain their parents' affiliation status, and their accounts implicated personal agency rather than referrals to tradition. This suggests that the minority affiliation resulted in a greater personal awareness of one's collective identity and that the question of religious affiliation had been addressed at home. By comparing the minority group to the majority, the assumed patterns underlying church membership therefore surfaced as a feature that was distinct for the religious majority group.

Minority members were also more aware that certain features of the societal context were influenced by the majority church. This was especially prevalent in the role of the Church assumed in the school context. Besides commenting on the presence of the Lutheran Church at school, minority members also named school as the context in which they had become more aware of being different from the religious majority. In contrast, church members did not explicitly acknowledge the presence of the Lutheran Church at school. Their referrals to attending church services or participating in other religious activities at school implied that such occasions were regarded as being "normal."

The division between the majority and minority positions reported here address previous categorizations of the Finnish religious landscape, where the Orthodox Church has been placed in different categories, depending on whether more weight has been ascribed to either state recognition or numeric representation. Given how personal religious affiliation was described in this study, these findings support the argument by Riitaoja et al., who argue that despite their official status as a Folk Church in Finland, the Orthodox Church members resemble other members of the religious minorities rather than the members of the Church.[324] This implies that the categorization made by Hjelm and Myllyniemi, where young people were divided into three groups consisting of the church members, non-affiliates and affiliates with other religious minorities[325], in fact could be simplified into two categories, the majority and minority. Furthermore, the distinction between the majority and minority members' descriptions of their religious affiliation also raises the question of whether all members of the Lutheran Church actually should be understood as majority members. Considering their reflected stance, it could be argued that the active religious group of "Christian" church members in fact categorized as a minority group as well, at least from a social perspective.

[324] Riitaoja et al. (2010).
[325] Hjelm & Myllyniemi (2006).

This classification is supported both by how the group of "Christians" discussed their religious identity and how the rest of the members of the Church positioned themselves against this group.

8.1.2 Religious socialization amongst church members

One of the overall objectives of this study was to understand how religious affiliation had been reflected in the informants' relations and encounters with religion at school and in the context of the Church. Generally, conversations with church members rarely included them mentioning that their parents had exerted direct influence over whether they had participated in church activities or not. Nonetheless, parents and the family tradition were recognized as central factors underlying personal religious affiliation and the way in which it was enacted. Besides these factors, the extended family setting was also included in their descriptions of role of the Church in framing important family events. There were also a few references to their parents explicitly expressing their wish that they take part in church events with the rest of the family. A few recognized the connections between their personal religious views and those of their parents, but generally, members of the Church would rarely express that they acknowledged parental influence over their personal attitudes towards religion and thought that parents had not attempted to influence them.

The church-member descriptions of their homes were also underlined by indirect references to "religious socialization proper." Some concluded that since their parents had not been active in church on a regular basis or expressed salient will for their children to do so, they were not raised in a Christian home. In fact, the Christian dimension of childhood homes were often described through negations – what children knew about their parents was that they had *not* been active and that they were *not* characterized by a public Christian identity. In other words, when the informants stated that they came from a Christian home, the meaning of this claim needed to be discussed and negotiated.

These results confirm that religion is a private matter in the church member homes to the extent that many informants experienced difficulties in describing their parents from a religious perspective. What was known about their parents' stance on religious issues for the most part seemed to be based on insinuation and hunches rather than open conversation, although mothers of the church members seemed more prone to address matters such as belief than fathers. Parental silence was interpreted in several ways. Whereas some had interpreted subtleties and nuances and thereby concluded that they understood their parents as Christian or as harboring Christian beliefs, others had concluded that since matters of religion and faith had not been spoken of at home, they must be insignificant to their parents. The informants' difficulties in describing their parents in terms of religion have also been noted in previous studies[326] and could be interpreted as being related to their silence. These results also offer a possible explanation as to why measures of religious attitudes in Finnish homes tend to be in

[326] Niemelä 2008, 141-144.

the middle of the scale, implying that religion is neither very important nor non-important.[327] The desire to be normal and to be part of the conventional in terms of religion seems to characterize not only the young generation of the church members, but also their parents.

However, on an analytical level, the results indicate rather clear patterns of transmission. The relational setting functioned as an incentive for religious affiliation, both in present terms and in future terms, especially for those whose church membership did not signify belief. The impact of the family was also evident in that children had been enrolled in church activities during childhood and adolescence and that the family setting made it legitimate to give important family events a religious frame. Furthermore, those who had said evening prayers at home reported that they were also willing to uphold these practices with their children in the future. This information reflects a conjunction between the notion of religion being a private matter on a micro-level and the majority religion being on a macro-level. Although silent, the religious socialization by the families of the Finnish Church majority results in specific understandings of who "we" are in terms of religion. Parents also play an inherent part in how their children relate to the context of the Lutheran Church, but these patterns of transmission are not acknowledged because they are part of the mainstream behavior. These silent patterns of transmission do not suggest that parents are socialization *agents*, which results in young people claiming that their parents have not influenced them in religious matters. Furthermore, when these patterns of religious transmission reflect the majority behavior, parental expectations rarely need to be made explicit. This was especially prevalent regarding confirmation. Whereas confirmation entailed "*going with the flow*" in the peer group, the parents of the informants had rarely explicitly stated their attitudes towards confirmation.

The church members varied in their understanding of the conjunction between religious affiliation, home environment and beliefs and this was summarized through identifying four distinct membership profiles, which further implies that patterns of religious transmission do exist.

The Traditional church members had rarely reflected on why they were church members and cited tradition and convention. In a similar vein, they regarded it as likely that they would continue to be members in the future. However, these traditional members generally lacked an interest in discussing religious and existential matters. For these members, it seemed important to convey an image of themselves and their families as being normal in relation to the Church and to religious matters. Their discussions were characterized by positioning themselves in opposition to explicit Christian and religious markers. The traditional members' encounters with the Church and their experiences of religious education included frequent allusions to their peer setting, and their experiences were described as being

[327] Suonperä 2008, 246-247.

collective rather than personal in character. For this group, the most central features were the social and collective character of their church membership and the desire to be normal.

The Reflective Christians had reflected on religious and existential issues as well as their personal Christian identity. For this group, a Christian self-identification coincided with personal belief and significant values, and their religious affiliation reflected their Christian identity. For these reasons, they also regarded it as likely that they would remain members of the Church in the future. Their descriptions of religious affiliation reflected a sense of silent and personal belonging as well as distancing themselves from the moralistic and conservative interpretations of Christianity. The Reflective Christians described their homes as being normal in terms of religion, but many had discussed matters of religion and faith with their parents and at times also with their friends. This group displayed an awareness of societal conventions as well as the attitudes towards religion in their peer group. Nevertheless, their opinions were expressed as a reflection of their personal accountability.

The Critical non-Christians stated negative attitudes towards conventional "Christian" belief and religious activity and portrayed themselves as non-Christians for the same reasons. This group linked their church membership to tradition and other people. Their intention to remain church members was related to the will of others to participate in the life rites of the Church. These informants described their parents as normal church members, but this group tended to not be highly aware of their parents' religious attitudes and faith and these subjects had rarely been addressed at home. The contradiction between their critical attitudes towards belief, their tendency to emphasize independent reasoning *and* their intent to remain church members implied a strong will to follow convention. The emphasis on the will of others might therefore be interpreted as a strategy to de-emphasize this contradiction. For the most part, the Critical non-Christians described their friends as resembling themselves in their attitudes towards religion.

The Threshold members were ambivalent in their views on church membership due to their having experienced incompatibility between their personal attitudes and those expressed in the institutional setting. For the same reason, they were uncertain of their future religious affiliation. This reasoning suggests that this group viewed religious affiliation as a way to express personal belonging, which meant that the collective and traditional dimensions were ascribed little importance. The Threshold members came from families with mixed-membership patterns or had non-affiliated parents. They described the religious attitudes of their church member parents with some uncertainty, but they were much more certain about why their non-affiliated parents no longer were church members.

The main result is therefore that young people do not conceive of their parents as being salient socialization agents in religious matters. However, these membership patterns imply that parental attitudes are also reflected in their children's understanding of church

membership when religion played an implicit rather than explicit role in the home environment.

The influence of peers on religious affiliation was implicit rather than explicit. The peers were most explicitly referred to in relation to confirmation training, and the informants stated that peers had played a crucial role in their decision to participate and also legitimated the religious nature of the activity. The role of peers was sufficiently strong that some informants from non-affiliated families had decided to join the Church because they wanted to participate in confirmation for social reasons. However, on an analytical level, the impact of peers was salient. The peer setting resembled the family setting in that existential and religious matters were rarely discussed. This was either due to either a lack of interest or to a perception that religion was regarded as a sensitive and private subject. The silence on these matters sometimes appeared to be driven by the assumption that others were not interested, even though they themselves expressed personal interest in these issues. However, these patterns were in line with the understanding most church members had of their friends: they were not "Christian," and the silence on these issues enhanced that understanding. The peer setting had therefore contributed to how certain patterns of enactment were perceived as being normal and conventional rather than religious in character. The peer context had also resulted in encounters with "Christians". Some of the informants made explicit references to classmates or friends who were active and openly religious. In this sense, the division between the majority members of the Church and "Christians" reflected the distinctions between the groups of people in their everyday surroundings.

Peers also constituted the social setting for religious education and church activities, particularly confirmation training. The informant's personal views and reflections were often stated in relation to the perceived sentiments of their peer group. For example, the opinions of religious education as being "boring" were either used as support for personal views or as something to oppose. Likewise, confirmation training was described in relation to the interpretive frames that were provided by their peer group, for example, through their references to what to expect from confirmation training and how to relate to its content. The informants took into account their peers in a manner that suggests that their peer setting set standards for how religion should be approached at school and in the church context. Considering how the interviewees described their peer settings, the sanctions for approaching these settings differently than others involved talk and gossip. However, even though their peers exerted an influence on their personal choices of enactment, their family patterns seemed to have more impact than their friends for their long-term religious affiliation. For example, the fact that some minority members chose confirmation, yet were uncertain of their membership in the long run and also that they considered leaving the Church, attest to their willingness to "*go with the flow*" was temporal in character in comparison to the more profound impact of their home environment.

By contrast to the impact of parents and friends, the informants' schools and the Church had much less impact and significance as socialization agents in their formulation of their personal religious identity. Those who reported that religious education had triggered reflections on religious and existential matters reported that these notions had confirmed their previous views rather than having challenged them. Moreover, the church context in particular was overshadowed by the social frameworks in which their encounters had occurred. The direct question on the informants' personal perceptions of the Church resulted in rather vague accounts of the Church on a general level rather than them relating it to their personal experiences. Their accounts of memories from children's activities as well as their confirmation were also vague or primarily related to experiences that were social or activity-related. These accounts offer further support to the perception that institutional settings are not experienced individually, but in the company of others. Considering that previous studies have reported the tendency of Finnish parents, who consider religion to be a private matter, to leave the responsibility of religious socialization to the Church,[328] these statements suggest that the impact of the overt religious socialization in the Church context nevertheless appears to be secondary to the more implicit religious socialization by their family and peers.

However, how the church members spoke of the Church, Christianity and religion were permeated by how their experiences of the church context had resulted in specific frames of reference, where "religion" predominantly meant "Christianity", and "Christianity" generally was a synonym referring to the "Church." Although this was not overtly commented on or even realized, school and church had contributed to a highly context-specific knowledge base, and the informants' experiences of religious practice were confined to the Church setting. Some informants mentioned that their religious education and confirmation had contributed to their personal existential matters and faith. In addition, the informants' accounts of previous experiences were often similar to how their current views were expressed. This suggests one of two conclusions – either the experiences described could be understood as the source of current views, or then these experiences were remembered because they resembled the informant's current views on the Church. Since the minority members provided spontaneous and sometimes rather detailed accounts of how the Church was perceived, institutional encounters seemed to be much clearer for those who were situated outside them. This represents yet another way that the minority and majority positions lead to different perceptions and this affects the focus of attention in a given context.

I will end this section by briefly addressing the patterns of gender that are reflected in the data, as they disclose both patterns of socialization and stance towards religious and existential matters. The female informants reported to a much higher extent that they had said evening prayers at home in comparison to the male informants and the female informants had been more active in the church activities that were planned for younger children. Female informants also had more experience in discussing existential and religious matters with their

[328] Helander 2006, 165; Ristimäki (2009).

friends and were more prone to report personally reflecting on their religious education at school. In addition, gender differences were displayed in the informants' conceptions of the religious attitudes of their mothers than fathers. These responses suggest that Finnish girls are granted more space for their religious and existential reflections than Finnish boys, both at home and in their peer settings and that their ways of describing their views and attitudes are underlined by such gender roles. These results are supported by how the interconnections between gender and religion are generally described.[329]

8.1.3 Religious affiliation in a minority context

For those interviewed, the common denominator was their Swedish-speaking minority identity. They were aware of this minority position and ascribed value to their Finland-Swedish identity, but what being Swedish-speaking meant and what it entailed in everyday life depended on their home language and their home location. Despite the common minority position that existed, the language conditions at the local level in combination with the language spoken at home therefore resulted in them having different experiences of being part of a linguistic minority, which confirms the previous research that has been conducted on young Finland-Swedes.[330] The local level also set different standards in terms of what was appropriate to expect from the Finnish-speaking majority. The extent to which previous experiences had actualized matters of linguistic identity depended highly on the local context. In monolingual Swedish settings, where Swedish-speakers constituted the majority, linguistic identity was fairly unreflected, especially in comparison to those who resided in monolingual Finnish settings. Furthermore, bilingual informants were generally more detailed in their reflections on linguistic identity than those who came from Swedish-speaking families. Nevertheless, these results suggest that the language conditions at the local level seemed to have more effect than their national minority status on how the informants expressed their linguistic identity. These findings therefore confirm previous results that the Finland-Swede group is aware of their distinctive character, yet they display diverse understandings on what that identity entails. The informants' responses also suggest that when a societal minority position does not coincide with the local language conditions, the local majority position reduces their self-understanding of being a minority. Just as previous results have suggested, informants from bilingual homes had a higher degree of negotiation and discussion on the meaning of Finland-Swede identity.[331] This study has demonstrated that those negotiations occurred regardless of the local context.

Given the research context, it is crucial to ask whether the findings of this study should be understood as characterizing specifically the Swedish-speaking minority only, since the organization of Swedish-speakers into a distinct Swedish-speaking organization of parishes and a Swedish-speaking diocese is an essential part of institutional Swedishness in

[329] See for example Furseth & Repstad 2006, 183-191; Bäckström et al. (2004), 141-167.
[330] Cf. Nyman-Kurkiala (1996).
[331] Cf. Lojander-Visapää (2001).

Finland.[332] However, the role of language in (Swedish-speaking) church membership was not acknowledged by any of the informants. In fact, it did not seem as if the language of the institutional church setting had even been recognized previously by most young people, even though they had reflected on their identities as Swedish-speakers. Church was therefore not mentioned as a specifically Swedish-speaking institution, but school was expressed as a more significant institutional context in that respect. This suggests that church membership denotes affinity with the Finnish Lutheran Church at large rather than the Swedish-speaking enclave of the church context. This concurs with previous findings where the Borgå diocese was unacknowledged in comparison to other institutions in the Swedish-speaking context.[333] These findings do not imply that the ethnic factor has no role in religious affiliation. However, whereas the national and (Finnish) cultural dimensions of church membership were explicitly acknowledged, the ethnic dimension was not. It could be argued that the strong social capital of the Swedish-speaking group contributes to the strong emphasis on social relations that has been detected in the present study.[334] Nonetheless, due to the lack of basis for comparison these notions need to be further explored.

Previous research has focused on the regional heterogeneity of the Swedish-speaking population and has reported that this heterogeneity is evident in religious patterns as well.[335] From this perspective, the discussions and negotiations in relation to church membership found here were surprisingly similar regardless of the local context studied. These results further suggest that this study has discovered general Finnish membership patterns rather than local particularities, especially because they contribute to and complement what is previously known about church membership in the Finnish context. Previous research on adult Finns has also described church membership as relating to tradition and collectivity, the space for family manifestations of togetherness, and the fulfilling of societal needs. [336] The frequent references to life rites that were reported in the previous research on church membership patterns did not recur here, but the emphasis on the collective rather than the personal dimension of church membership resonates well with the previous results from Finland as well as from other Scandinavian countries.[337] The manner in which these young people describe their infrequent but regular patterns in church activity both for themselves and for their families also resemble the previous accounts of the church practices of the Lutheran majority.[338]

Another question is therefore what explains the higher church membership rates of the Swedish-speaking population. Based on these results, I suggest that one explanation may be

[332] Sundback 2010a, 179-180.
[333] Hagström (2005).
[334] Cf. Sundback & Nyqvist et al. (2010).
[335] Cf. Sundback (1994), Klingenberg (2005).
[336] Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 57.
[337] Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 57-58; Bromander 2011, 59-61; Sundback 2000, 62-64.
[338] Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 32-34; Ketola (2011).

the local rootedness and the lower degree of mobility amongst the Swedish-speakers.[339] In other words, those who will not move far from their home context as adults and who will live close to their original settings both socially and geographically will be more likely to preserve an understanding of church membership as "something one does" to a much higher extent than those whose adult lives will experience social and cultural mobility. This reasoning is in accordance with the argument by Sundback that an increased degree of exogamy could be interpreted as a secularizing factor,[340] which in turn would explain some of the regional differences in relation to religion in the Swedish-speaking context.

8.2 Theoretical implications

8.2.1 Majority and minority

This study was conducted in a linguistic minority context, and as a consequence, the concepts of majority and minority were a natural part of the conceptual framework. However, the majority and minority positions also came to have explanatory value for the discussion of religious affiliation. Even though the majority factor has been commented on in previous research on the Nordic religious situation, the results of the present study nevertheless suggest that the impact of the majority factor has been underestimated on how nominal religious identities are articulated at an individual level.

The religious majority and minority members in this study were characterized by different degrees of reflexivity. For example, understanding church membership as collective rather than personal reflected a majority position. The descriptions of its enactment demonstrated that not only was personal church membership initiated in the collective domain of the family, the informants had seldom encountered the institutional settings of school and Church without the company of others, meaning either their family or friends. Since the informants' patterns of practice at home reflected those of their peers, and their religious education at school had continued to legitimize the religious affiliation of their family as something unifying rather than setting apart the self from others, church membership was described as being self-evident. The similarities in the young people's accounts of how membership had been enacted during childhood and adolescence suggest that these patterns are integrated parts of cultural conventions in Finland. In such a context the individual church member seldom faces situations in which he or she is made personally accountable for his or her religious affiliation. This exemplifies the description by Liebkind of the inherent normative hierarchy majority and minority positions entail.[341]

The way in which the church members are able to maintain an implicit and seldom reflected upon bond with the Church thus indicates the privilege of the majority, which allows

[339] Cf. Finnäs (2010).
[340] Sundback (1994).
[341] Liebkind (1995). Lars Laird Eriksen's (2012) analysis of Norwegian classroom discussions of religion through the concept of whiteness is also related to this type of majority privilege.

for some identity markers to be maintained for no more fundamental reason than that "*it is something you do.*" One of the characteristics of culture is that certain acts as well as issues are not reflected upon, simply because they seem natural to the people who perform them. In fact, the iceberg metaphor proposed by Davie[342] highlights this majority privilege – the fact that only part of the iceberg is visible and other parts are left hidden reflects the privilege of the majority religion, namely, the privilege of not having to be confronted with certain collective identity markers. The fact that majority members fail to acknowledge the consequences of their majority affiliation therefore does not necessarily mean that the majority membership has no impact. This majority privilege should therefore be taken into account as a background factor in the analysis of how religious identities are expressed on an individual level.

The studies on youth and religion have predominantly analyzed the majority privilege of self-evident belonging from the perspective of the religious minority.[343] These studies have given insight as to how minority members are placed in a social position where they inevitably reflect on their religious identities since it is perceived as different and noticeable by the majority. For example, Karlsson Minganti demonstrated how the intersection of the factors of gender, religion, ethnicity and generation for young Swedish Muslim women resulted in a limited space for personal identity construction, partly as a result of the racial power order in the Swedish context.[344] Likewise, Kuusisto discovered that young Adventists in Finland who attended a mainstream school as opposed to a denominational school became more involved in identity negotiations and reinterpretation.[345] This is similar to the how minority members' descriptions of their experiences in the present study. Those who belonged to a minority religion related this to family identity and were able to provide an account of how religious affiliation was enacted, what it meant, and what it did not mean. Those who did not belong to a religious community also exhibited the same degree of clarity.

Considering all the results, a societal situation is reflected in which the religious features of the majority are a norm that the individual majority members are seldom aware of. This reflects how the religious majority members are in a position to have the power to identify others as being different while assuming that the personal position is part of the "normal" mainstream.

However, just as the majority religion consisted of several patterns of enactment and personal religiousness, regardless of context, a religious minority position did not have a clear-cut effect. When the discussions by Kuusisto and Karlsson Minganti are compared, the situation that Karlsson Minganti reports differs markedly from the individual experiences of the minority members in the study conducted by Kuusisto. Kuusisto recognizes that apart

[342] Davie 2007, 127.
[343] Cf. Kuusisto (2011), Karlsson Minganti (2010). For a similar discussion on adults, see Davidman (2007).
[344] Karlsson Minganti (2010).
[345] Kuusisto 2011, 52-56.

from their religious minority position, the young Adventists in Finland have "full membership of the 'mainstream'," [346] which also applies to the minority members in the present study. In comparison to the church members, the minority members' reflections on affiliation or non-affiliation were more salient, but their minority position did not define them publicly and was not described as being troublesome. For the affiliated minority members, the shared Christian tradition of the majority and minority may explain why the differences were not more accentuated. As for non-members, Hjelm & Myllyniemi explain why a minority position does not have a more distinguishing effect: the weak links between religious affiliation and self-identification does not necessarily separate the non-affiliated from the Church member majority in a very distinct way.[347] It is likely that the minority impact was further diminished by most minority members having attended Lutheran religious education at school despite their minority status. Language and religion therefore did not appear to reinforce each other as minority markers on a personal level, which mirrors the modest ethnic dimension of the religious affiliation in the majority. Minority membership therefore seems to have a varied degree of impact, depending on which other structural factors it is combined with on an individual level. Furthermore, since a minority position in one domain did not seem to result in a general awareness of other collective identities inhabited, these results convey an image of language and religion as being compartmentalized rather than intersecting factors in the Finnish setting.

8.2.2 Institutional dimensions of vernacular religion: exploring religious conventions

In Chapter 2, I presented role identity theory as a framework for accounting for how individuals relate to the social positions they inhabit. The distinction between the conventional and idiosyncratic dimensions of role identities suggests the interpretive space that individuals need to negotiate the personal enactment of social positions. The results here demonstrate the rather strong presence of convention in how church members describe their religious affiliation. In fact, the conventional character of, for example, confirmation training or life rites, means that these ways of enacting religious affiliation are not necessarily acknowledged as being religious, since active religiousness is understood as a feature of minority members rather than the religious majority.

The distinction between the conventional and idiosyncratic dimensions of majority membership is therefore useful in exploring how religious affiliation is part of the assumed aspects of the majority culture. The central features of conventional church membership could in turn be interpreted as the institutional dimensions of Finnish vernacular religion, which Kääriäinen and colleagues have described as being distinct from the institutional Lutheran Church setting, yet in some respects attached to it.[348] Since subsequent scholars have pointed

[346] Kuusisto 2011, 52.
[347] Hjelm & Myllyniemi (2006).
[348] Kääriäinen et al. 2003, 253-261.

out that vernacular religion has only been initially explored,[349] I will propose some findings regarding the church-related dimensions of the vernacular religion in Finland, first in terms of enactment, second in terms of the way it is discussed. Whereas the dimension of enactment refers to the basic, conventional ways of behavior as a church member, the patterned ways in which that behavior is described imply a pattern, that is, that there are certain ways to express conventional church membership.

From this perspective, conventional church member identity is characterized by collective rather than personal enactment, and that enactment is directed towards other people rather than for purely religious reasons. This orientation regards the institution as a public utility[350] and conventional church membership signifies an independent and free-minded relationship to the institutional context, which is devoid of obligation. Furthermore, conventional church membership is characterized by its silent and low-key enactment, underlined by the understanding of religion as a deeply personal matter. The silence of conventional church membership should therefore not necessarily be interpreted as signifying a lack of significance.

Furthermore, conventional church membership was described as ascribed rather than achieved, both regarding how religious affiliation had been initiated and how it had been enacted. The recurrent references to the will of others rather than personal preferences, the recurring expression "It is something you do" and the tendency to tone down the personal meaning of church practice are all indicators of how church membership is described as a matter that is weakly related to personal accountability. These patterned descriptions are in line with the notions of religion as a private matter and illustrate how personal reflections in relation to church membership are downplayed and reluctantly shared.

Church membership has resulted in various patterns of enactment and interpretation and this indicates the inherent negotiation and interpretational freedom that it entails. This feature of vernacular religion has also been pointed out previously.[351] These results also suggest that since church membership is a poor indicator of personal religious belonging, conventional church membership entails positioning oneself against "Christians", that is, active church members characterized by salient religiosity. From this perspective, the tendencies to tone down the religious dimensions of religious enactment were also a means of expressing social identity.

Some of the conventional aspects of church membership described here reflect the majority position, but also relate to cultural particularities and social conventions. The borders described between religious enactment that is implicit and explicit as well as endorsed and undesired suggests a willingness to be conventional in terms of religion and to be considered

[349] Hjelm & Myllyniemi 2006, 127-128.
[350] Cf. Davie 2007, 143; Davie 2007b, 25-27.
[351] Cf. Kääriäinen et al. 2003, 257-261.

normal, and this means that active religious practice is not part of this pattern in the Finnish context. In contrast, the informants' descriptions of their personal beliefs and values in relation to church membership reflect the idiosyncratic dimensions of church membership. Likewise, the degree to which church membership implied personal belonging also suggests an idiosyncratic dimension.

These results therefore support Woodhead's call for religious studies being conducted with a higher awareness of the cultural context in which it occurs.[352] These types of patterns will also result in certain conceptions of what is socially desired in terms of religious affiliation, that is, what to put on display and what to speak less of. These suggestions also challenge the conceptions of Rosen and Zuckerman on religious affiliation in the Nordic setting as being insignificant from a religious perspective and as being unrelated to belief.[353] This is not to say that their findings are not valid; however, given how the social context clearly in the present study seemed to influence the informants' descriptions of their religious affiliation, it could also be argued that Rosen's group interview setting may have had an impact on the extent to which the interviewed wanted to associate themselves with the Church publicly. In the same manner, Zuckerman does not reflect on how the comments such as: "to public profess a belief in God or Jesus [in Scandinavia] marks you the strange one, the deviant one, the oddball"[354] influences how those he interviewed described their personal religious attitudes.

8.2.3 Socialization theory and role-identity theory: what is so special about youth?

As previously stated, research on youth and religion is characterized by diverging understandings of youth as an age phrase, and just like socialization theories, much research has been driven by an interest in what young people will become rather than an interest in the conditions young people face at present.[355] Inspired by critical notions from childhood research, this study was underpinned by an interest in the latter: religious affiliation was explored from the perspective of young people without an implicit interest in future changes or views as indications of age-specific developmental tasks.

At the outset, the life stories of the young people encountered in these interviews related similar living conditions in terms of age, language, education and future plans. However, their accounts of their lives still were far from being succinct. Whereas some tended to approach life with confidence and did not seem to have encountered any hardships others told stories of struggle and difficulties. Moreover, the informants' lives were also characterized by varied degrees of independence. For instance, some discussed their adult future in a light-hearted way, as if they still regarded the future to be at a distance, and they described living conditions in which material and practical concerns primarily the concerns of

[352] Woodhead (2009).
[353] Rosen (2009).
[354] Zuckerman 2008, 12.
[355] Cf. Klingenberg (2012).

parents. Others had already detached themselves from their childhood homes and had become aware of how growing independence also entailed growing responsibility in everyday life. In this respect, these findings strongly question the meaningfulness of conducting youth research from a perspective driven by the understanding of youth as characterized by certain developmental tasks: these seem to play a secondary role in relation to experiences in the everyday, which had a much more crucial impact on the outlook on life.

These notions were also partly discovered as being related to religious affiliation. A minor, yet illustrating example was that those who brought up taxation as a negative dimension of church membership were financially independent from their parents. As a consequence, they were more aware of the cost of living than those who still lived in their childhood homes. The fact that minority members had reflected much more on affiliation and its consequences also stemmed from their personal experiences of being different. Although life experience did not come across as the most crucial factor for how informants described their religious affiliation, it was still evident that these young people's reflections on religious and existential matters more generally related to their previous experiences.

Within religious studies, there is high awareness of the situational and context-dependent character of what religion "is" in a given situation. That awareness is addressed through a social-constructivist approach, with the social context rather than academic assumptions determining the conceptual understanding of religion.[356] In a similar manner, I suggest that studies on youth and religion could also benefit from a more open-ended conceptual understanding of what adolescence and youth entail. Studies on youth and religion would then focus more on a higher awareness of life experience as a significant factor for the amount of existential reflection and personal agency in relation to personal religious identity. The observed differences between young people and an adult generation would then correspond to the adults having more life experiences, without the underlying assumption that adults would be fundamentally different from young people.

In fact, the theoretical framework in this study exemplifies how the frameworks referring to children and young people on the one hand, and adults on the other, explain human behavior in similar ways. Giddens considers socialization to be a learning process where elders play a central role, yet the learning of cultural skills is achieved through individual reflexivity and self-awareness.[357] Role identity theory describes the individual as a reflexive agent in handling her social positions and assumes that role identity enactment entails a generous interpretive space on behalf of the individual. However, such space is navigated with an awareness of that changes in the hierarchy of social positions will necessarily have social implications.[358] Both theoretical frameworks therefore understand individuals as capable of independent reasoning, yet anchored in a social setting and

[356] Cf. chapter 3.1.2.
[357] Giddens 2006, 163.
[358] McCall and Simmons 1978, 70-79; 217-218.

voluntarily bound by important relations in that setting. As a result, both theories have explanatory value for the relational impact on the religious affiliation patterns reported here. In this respect, role identity theory could be understood as a prolonged description of socialization. This interpretation is congruent with the notion of socialization being a life-long process.[359] This suggests that it is also possible to determine theoretical openings for exploring youth and young adults as being similar to an adult generation rather than different from them.

8.2.4 Religious socialization

The majority and minority positions also affected socialization patterns. Religious transmission in the religious majority was characterized by implicit and silent patterns of practice, framed as an unquestioned convention. In comparison, the children of minority parents tended to know much more about the religious stance of their parents because the religious affiliation or non-affiliation of minority parents had been discussed at home. These results confirm the results from Kelley and De Graaf, where the majority and minority positions were crucial factors in how parents functioned as religious socialization agents.[360] This suggests that a majority affiliation puts parents in a position that decreases parental responsibility to actively transmit certain patterns. This will most likely affect how tangible religious socialization at home will be, especially in a cultural context where religion is understood as a private matter. However, as discussed in the previous section, parental transmission also had impact on how the majority members described their own religious affiliation, as illustrated by the four types of membership patterns.

These results challenge the previous theoretical conception of religious socialization in the family context as being explicit and verbalized. For example, the strong verbal dimension is part of Sherkat's conceptualization of religious socialization, where the family is considered to be a source of information about supernatural explanations, which have an impact on a child's cognitive preferences.[361] The interest in the tangible dimensions of religious socialization is also found in quantitative studies, which often measure explicit behavioral patterns. These conceptual understandings correspond rather weakly to the religious socialization in the Finnish majority, as most of the informants described their childhood families as having silent stances towards religion and quiet enactment. Indeed, the informants would describe the transmission of religion in their home as the opposite of salient transmission. The accounts by these informants suggest that similar to the majority and minority positions, the understanding of what religious socialization entails also must acknowledge the cultural context in which it takes place. This reasoning implies a shift away from assuming that there are more tangible ways of religious transmission and also calls for more attention regarding how religious practice is framed. The reason for this is that by

[359] Cf. Giddens 2007, 162.
[360] Kelley & De Graaf 1997, see also chapter 2.1.3.
[361] Sherkat 2003, 151-153.

studying religious socialization in terms of salient parental agency and verbal transmission in a context characterized by collective enactment and by strong notions of religion being a private matter, will identify what occurs in the minority groups rather than capturing the religious transmission by the majority. In this sense, understanding religious socialization as being tangible would lead to the conclusion that the membership in the Finnish Lutheran Church rarely results in religious socialization at home. Instead, evidence from the present study provides support for the description by Furseth & Repstad of the role of parents in religious transmission as "religious role models"[362] to their children. In other words, the role model concept recognizes more the more implicit and silent ways of conveying family values and conventions, that were essential in the Finland-Swede context.

This study has also contributed to an understanding of how young Finland-Swedes encounter institutional religion by pointing to the strong collective dimension of their encounters. As quantitative studies on young people's attitudes and values are based on individual accounts, the results implicitly create an image of young people approaching institutional contexts as individuals. However, the responses from the present study demonstrate the role of peers in how school and the Church were encountered. In a similar manner, the informants expressed their personal religious views with an awareness of how these personal attitudes were similar to, or different from, the others in one's close peer group and in the general youth context. Just as Wilkins reported, those who were part of smaller peer groups that were subcultures in the general peer setting, for example, "Christians," also expressed their personal views with an awareness of how they related to the more overarching youth culture.[363] This study also corroborates the descriptions by Ambjörnsson of what normal behavior denoted in terms of gender and the fluctuating borders between the normal and unique on the one hand, and deviating and undesired on the other, in relation to gender and sexuality, also revealed a complex interplay between conformity and uniqueness.[364] These findings suggest that personal religious identity will be expressed in ways that coincides with how these young people want to be perceived socially in their everyday settings. In brief, I suggest that the impact of peers in how religious issues are approached has only been initially explored within religious studies.

8.2.5 What happened to individualization?

The maintained and unquestioned patterns of religious affiliation discussed here undoubtedly challenge the theories on contemporary identities and their emphasis on personal choice. For example, "*the subjective turn*[365]" of culture that was proposed by Heelas & Woodhead as well as other notions of religion as an increasingly chosen and subjective matter, seem to be counter-intuitive to the majority membership patterns described here. However, these young lives are built on the premise of individualization, which also concerns how they relate to

[362] Furseth & Repstad 2006, 114-117.
[363] Wilkins 2008, 247-252; 257-259.
[364] Ambjörnsson 2003, 283-293.
[365] Heelas & Woodhead et al. 2005, 2.

their religious affiliation. In this respect, the informants' individualization occurs in parallel with a continuous anchorage in social settings where family relationships constitute a reliable and trustworthy foundation. Despite the strong collective dimensions of religious affiliation, the informants' discussions on religious affiliation also conveyed individualized notions, and let us now focus on a few of these.

When the informants' views, beliefs and patterns of practice implied church affinity, that affinity was not motivated by an obligation to the Church. On the contrary, the thought of enacting their membership in specific ways or by holding church-related beliefs as a consequence of church membership did not even seem to have crossed the minds of most of those interviewed here. Likewise, when church membership was described as an obligation, that obligation was directed toward other people and not toward the institutional context. In fact, the tendency to understand church as a public utility that was referred to earlier also demonstrated that the discussions on the institutional context revealed that the informants understood that the Church would exist regardless of their personal involvement. Even though most church members had not considered leaving the Church, their reactions to the question implied that it was a valid question, and their responses never implied that it would not be possible for them to do so. The ways in which the interviewees expressed membership therefore implicitly pointed to their personal freedom in relation to the Church, but not necessarily in relation to their close relationships.

The informants' individualization was also evident in their willingness to express differing views or criticism towards the Church dogmas and values and this did not appear to be troublesome or controversial. Even though the church members described their own stance towards religious matters in a conversation that was framed by the fact that they were members of the Church, their responses lacked a sense of *obligation* to relate to church beliefs. Rather, their responses reflected their independence in the same manner as their membership was expressed. The informants' responses displayed great variation when they would divulge their own attitudes towards the Church, Christianity, existential matters and beliefs. The fact that some regarded membership as being meaningful and at the same time admitted having a lack of faith or that they expressed alternative notions of belief all attest to the freedom these young people experienced within the frames of church membership. These notions support Rosen's findings on how religion is not understood as "packaged."[366]

The main results therefore do not contest general individualization tendencies, but as discussed earlier, the degree of personal reflexivity will be influenced by majority or minority positions. Moreover, the more streamlined and collectively enacted collective identities are, the less aware people tend to be of them. As a result, individualized stances on a personal level may in fact indicate a structural presence on an analytical level. In these findings, this suggestion is illustrated by the lack of acknowledgment of the connection between religious

[366] Rosen 2009, 157-164.

affiliation and religious literacy, that is, knowledge about a specific religious tradition. Likewise, discussions of beliefs, faith, religion and Christianity for the most part implicitly concerned the church context. This evidence indicates that when religious affiliation in a societal context is characterized by a religious majority group, personal religiousness is often developed in a "critical dialogue" with the established traditions of faith.[367]

8.3 Methodological implications

Section 3.2.1 presented a discussion of how a diversified religious landscape in Western Europe has resulted in the increasing criticism of religious studies accounting for this change and that this discussion has in part been one of methodology. It has been suggested that questions either include misguiding response alternatives, for example, by assuming that personal beliefs or values are directed towards one religious tradition,[368] or by emphasizing that the results of quantitative studies should not be understood as providing the complete picture of belief or religious affiliation.[369] It was also noted how some criticism towards quantitative studies specifically have stemmed from the results of qualitative studies, where approaching religion or belief has resulted in a questioning of the validity of previous findings, for example, on what denotes belief.[370] Here, I will briefly discuss how the present study has contributed to that discussion.

This study has offered some evidence that qualitative studies are not always the best alternative for addressing the religious issues in a majority context. This study has reported that the questions on religious affiliation and beliefs were responded to with uncertainty. A recurring objection against quantitative studies is that the available response alternatives in the questionnaires do not provide a reliable and exhaustive account of individual reasoning, with the conclusion that conducting interviews on the same topic would offer a more valid account of what people "really" think:[371] these notions were also what initially motivated the research interest that subsequently resulted in this study. However, these statements assume that people have clear views on this subject matter. Indeed, the present enquiry has clearly challenged that assumption.

In previous quantitative studies, Finnish respondents have provided multi-faceted accounts of church membership.[372] These results may give the impression that if a Finn would be asked about his or her church membership in person, he or she would offer a similar account by referring to a number of reasons and by describing those reasons as being fairly important. However, when this question was asked in the present study, the informants gave short responses and appeared to have difficulty answering it. I suggest that the apparent

[367] Furseth & Repstad 2005, 170.
[368] Rosen (2009).
[369] Davie (2010).
[370] Day (2011).
[371] Cf. Silverman 2010, 167-173; Bryman 2012, 538-539.
[372] The multifaceted reasons for church membership in Finland is reported in Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 57-58; see also Sundback (2000). See also Chapter 1.

difficulties that the informants encountered in responding to open-ended questions on membership offers a new perspective to the results derived from quantitative research and to how these results should be interpreted. The image of membership as a reflected matter in survey results would then imply methodological differences rather than the changed membership patterns or the specific response patterns of a certain age group.[373] This suggestion does not mean to imply that I dismiss quantitative results for providing a less truthful image of a phenomenon. In fact, it could be argued that quantitative studies better address the difficulties that respondents face when asked about the behavioral patterns that they have previously not reflected on, because a survey may include available response alternatives that the respondent can draw on when trying to formulate and explain his or her own stance. However, this reasoning implies that the quantitative response alternatives on offer are well anchored in previous knowledge that has been derived from more inductive research and reflect the most central reasons for membership discovered, for example, in the present inquiry.

The gendered response patterns also entail a methodological challenge. To elaborate on the gender differences slightly, the articulate female informants with an upper-secondary education responded to my questions with much more enthusiasm than the silent male informants with a vocational schooling. For the former group, the analytical questions regarding the how's and why's of religious affiliation and personal religious attitudes hit home, but in the latter group, these questions appeared to have been awkward and misdirected for many informants. The fact that the conversational partner was a young female academic may have also played a part in how these questions were handled.[374] From this perspective, quantitative studies have the advantage of being more gender-neutral in that they do not discriminate between verbal and less verbal participants.

The results here also call for the need for greater attention to be directed to the religious socialization patterns in the mainstream populations of the Nordic countries, which are characterized neither by explicit religiosity nor non-religion. Posing questions to unveil these religious socialization patterns raises similar questions as Davie has raised in her discussion of the methodological challenges of mainstream religion. In other words, how should one approach "forms of religion that normally lie hidden?"[375] The present study suggests that when studying religious socialization through interviews, attention should not only focus on the explicit behavioral patterns, but also by posing questions on more implicit stances and attitudes, since such views seem to form and influence how children will express their personal understandings of the role of religious affiliation. Here, questions on religious labels, such as identification with being "Christian," were highly useful in providing a starting point for trying to describe and define the religious attitudes of other people. On the other

[373] Such an interpretation is in line with Bromander's (2011, 61-62) comments on his findings.
[374] Engebretson (2004) addressed similar issues in her research on spirituality among male adolescents.
[375] Davie 2007, 126-128.

hand, these questions tapped into highly context-specific conceptions in the research context which need to be taken into account when analyzing the results.

The latter, in turn, feeds back into quantitative research, when questions regarding labels have been extensively used in the Finnish research context.[376] This study has demonstrated that the same labels are used to refer to different referents by different people and therefore entail diverse meanings. This relates to Mikkola's results in her study of values in the Finnish context, where a value such as "honesty" would be shared by different value profiles, but would have different referents.[377] The same phenomena were found in the present study and this demonstrates that the meaning of labels should not be taken for granted. These results also question the meaningfulness in conducting comparative studies on labels, since they will be interpreted differently in different cultural contexts, not only in terms of the labels having different connotations, but also due to the social categories people place themselves into when self-identifying through them.

8.4 Outlook and suggestions for further research

In this last section, I will give a brief overview to some of the developments in Finnish society that have occurred since the interviews were conducted. The discussion of these developments will conclude in a reflection regarding how contemporary the findings reported here are. However, before that, I will present two results of this study that suggest important issues for further research.

The first is that when analyzing the responses of young people, my suggestion is to adopt a point of departure that focuses on their similarity to adults rather than their differences. The results of this study provide support for this departure point. For the most part, younger Swedish-speaking Finns and older Finns described their reasons for their religious affiliation similarly. From this perspective, results from youth research could contribute to research on adults as well. For example, it could be argued that the impact of social settings has been explored more extensively in youth studies than in the studies on adult populations, when the impact is likely to occur in the adult population as well. According to this argument, it would be fruitful to determine what initiates a change in the established church-member patterns of the adults in the Finnish context. In other words, which experiences and relations challenge the taken-for-granted nature of the majority religious affiliation in adult life? Based on the findings in this study, it could be proposed that friendships with people who are characterized by a different stance towards religious affiliation could imply this challenge; likewise, social settings characterized by diversity rather than uniformity would also challenge the notions of majority membership as "*something you do.*" Furthermore, from this perspective, it could be argued that the directions in which the lives of these young people will unfold, and the degree to which their future

[376] Cf Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 41-44; Niemelä 2007, 183-199; Niemelä 2010, 207-211.
[377] Mikkola 2003, 303-305.

lifestyle will resemble or differ from the current one, will have explanatory value as to how religious affiliation will be understood from the perspective of the future.

These results have also pointed to a higher awareness of the cultural specificities in how religious identity patterns are articulated. More specifically, this became prevalent regarding the informants' self-identification with different labels. Being Christian entailed positioning themselves against "Christians," the group of active minority members inside the Church. The fact that revival movements are found within the Finnish Church rather than outside of it may have led to a higher emphasis on personal faith leading to active religiosity.[378] However, this Finnish specificity does not characterize other all Nordic Lutheran Churches alike. For example, in von Brömssen's study on Swedish multi-cultural context, the "religious" people whom young people distanced themselves from in their responses were also members of an ethnic minority.[379] Likewise, in Day's findings regarding a "Christian" identification in the English setting, conceptions of being Christian were directed to collective identification, which partly lead the discussion in different directions from those addressed here.[380] These results are not contradictory; rather, they point to the highly context-specific nature of the labels that are so often adopted in contemporary research. What these labels are associated with in a cultural context, and what they should be interpreted as an indication of, therefore make results difficult to translate directly from one cultural context to another. I suspect that explorations of what being "religious" entails would also result in diverging, context-specific understandings.

The matter of context-specificity brings us to the fact that the empirical data for this study was collected in 2006. I will conclude this study by providing a brief overview of the more recent developments in Finnish society regarding religious affiliation as well as the population of Swedish-speaking Finns.

If young Swedish-speaking Finns had been probed about their language identity at a more recent point of time, it is likely that the responses would have a different tone. Since 2006, the language climate in Finland has hardened considerably. The societal position of the Swedish language has been debated and questioned, predominantly in Finnish-speaking media. The most debated subject concerns Swedish being a compulsory school subject in the upper grades of Finnish-speaking comprehensive school. This subject has been debated previously as well, but during recent years, the calls for changing Swedish into an optional school subject has gained foothold in the established political parties, which was noticeable especially during the 2010 election campaigns for the Finnish parliament.[381] In addition, other aspects of the official bilingualism policies have also been debated, such as the right of

[378] Cf. Helander (2007).
[379] Von Brömssen 2003, 310-317.
[380] Nominalist Christians would describe their Christian identity as a consequence of birth, ethnic affiliation or social aspirations. Day 2006, 128-129.
[381] Saukkonen 2011, 19-20; Kovero 2011, 111.

Swedish-speakers to speak Swedish in contact with authorities, and the economic cost of bilingualism.[382] Furthermore, these debates have occasionally been characterized by a hostile tune towards the Swedish-speaking population. In his analysis of some of the media debates, Pasi Saukkonen concluded that the debates not only concerned the factual matters, but also included conceptions about the Finland-Swedish group.[383] In 2013, a number of journalists and politicians reported having received anonymous death threats after having defended societal bilingualism in Finland in public.[384] These incidents received much attention both in the national newspapers and outside Finland, and resulted in several public actors stepping in to defend societal bilingualism. However, it could be argued that this incident is yet an indication of the changed and hardened tone in the societal debate.

The reason that the issues of linguistic identity and language practice were assigned a secondary role in this inquiry partly stemmed from the rapid changes that have occurred from 2006 and forward. The increased hostility towards the position of Swedish-speakers in Finnish society has most likely had implications for the self-understanding of this group. As for the religious situation in Finland, the developments have not been equally dramatic in character, yet, they have been notable. Recent years have further entailed an increasing number of religiously non-affiliated Finns as a consequence of decreasing Lutheran Church membership figures. At the end of 2012, 76% of the Finns were members of the Church, which is 6% less than in 2007.[385] The popularity of life rites has also declined: for example, 83 % of the Finnish 15 year-olds were confirmed in 2012, which can be compared to 89 % in 2007.[386] Recent studies also report on a decreasing number of Finns self-identifying as Christian and ethical and moral attitudes being characterized by an increasing gap between the active religious minority and the passive majority.[387]

Whereas the discussions on language identity reflect a somewhat different societal situation than the present, the question is to which extent the findings on religious affiliation reported here also characterize a past rather than a present state of affairs. I suggest that a similar study conducted at present would result in fairly similar results regarding religious affiliation patterns in terms of implicit majority patterns on the one hand, and a distinct and reflected minority on the other. An increased proportion of Finns situated outside the Lutheran Church will likely direct increasing attention to some of the taken-for-granted patterns that are integrated into the Finnish mainstream culture. It is also likely that the increasing degree of non-affiliated Finns in combination with the emphasis on authenticity and individual choice in contemporary culture will result in an increasing number of Finns questioning their reasons for religious affiliation. Taken together, these developments

[382] Saukkonen 2011, 19-20.
[383] Saukkonen 2011, 100-105.
[384] Helsingin sanomat (2013).
[385] Suomen evankelis-luterilainen kirkko (2013); Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 55-56.
[386] Salomäki 2013, 5-6; Suomen evankelis-luterilainen kirkko (2013); Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008, 55, 136, 138-139.
[387] Haastettu kirkko 2012, 24-28; Salomäki (2013).

undoubtedly suggest changes in how religious affiliation is described and discussed in Finland. However, I still regard it as unlikely that enough time has passed for these developments to have altered the general notions presented in this enquiry. Although Zygmunt Bauman has described modernity as liquid,[388] these findings have suggested that behavioral patterns embedded in social belonging on the contrary tend to be rather viscous in character. Therefore, I suspect that this dialectic between liquid and viscous dimensions of personal and social identities and religious dimensions as part of these identities will continue to spark the academic debate for years to come.

[388] Bauman (2000).

REFERENCES

Alanen, Leena (1988). Rethinking Childhood. *Acta Sociologica* 31 (1), 53-67.

Alanen, Leena, Sauli, Hannele & Strandell, Harriet (2004). Children and Childhood in a Welfare State: The Case of Finland. In Jensen, A-M. et al.: *Children's Welfare in Ageing Europe.* Trondheim: Norwegian Centre for Child Research, Norwegian University of Science and Technology; 1. 143-210.

Allardt, Erik och Starck, Christian (1981). *Språkgränser och samhällsstruktur. Finlandssvenskarna i ett jämförande perspektiv*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell AB.

Alvesson, Mats & Sköldberg, Kaj (2008). *Tolkning och reflektion: Vetenskapsfilosofi och kvalitativ metod.* 2nd Ed. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Ambjörnsson, Fanny (2007). *I en klass för sig: Genus, klass och sexualitet bland gymnasietjejer.* Stockholm: Ordfront.

Ammerman, Nancy T. (2010). The Challenges of Pluralism: Locating Religion in a World of Diversity. *Social Compass* 57 (2), 154-167.

Archard, David (2004). *Children: Rights and Childhood*. 2nd Ed. London: Rutledge.

Ariès, Philippe (1962). *Centuries of Childhood*. New York: Vintage.

Arnett, Jeffrey Janson (2004). *Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood: A Cultural Approach*. 2nd Ed. New Jersey: Pearson.

Arweck, Elisabeth & Newbitt, Eleanor (2010). Young people's identity formation in mixed-faith families: continuity or discontinuity of religious traditions? *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 25 (1), 67-87.

Bauman, Zygmunt (2000). *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beck, Ulrich (1992). *Risk Society: Towards a new modernity*. London: Sage Publications.

Beckford, James (2010). Foreword. In Collins-Mayo, Sylvia & Dandelion, Pink et al.: *Religion and Youth*. Theology and Religion in Interdisciplinary Perspective Series; BSA Sociology of Religion Study Group Series. London: Ashgate.

Beckford, James (2003). *Social Theory and Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Beijar, K.; Ekberg, H.; Eriksson, S.; & Tandefelt, M (1997). *Life in Two Languages: The Finnish Experience.* Esbo: Schildts.

Blunt Bugental, Daphne & Grusec, Joan E. (2006). Socialization Processes. In Eisenberg, Nancy et al.: *Handbook of Child Psychology; Vol. 3: Social, emotional and personality development.* 6th Ed. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 366-428.

Borg, Sami et al. (2007). *Uskonto arvot ja instituutiot: Suomalaiset World Values – tutkimuksissa 1981-2005*. Yhteiskuntatieteellisen tietoarkiston julkaisuja; 4. Tampere: Yhteiskuntatieteellinen tietoarkisto.

Borg, Sami (2007). Suomalaisten luottamus yhteiskunnallisiin instituutioihin. In Borg, Sami et al.: *Uskonto arvot ja instituutiot: Suomalaiset World Values – tutkimuksissa 1981-2005*. Yhteiskuntatieteellisen tietoarkiston julkaisuja; 4. Tampere: Yhteiskuntatieteellinen tietoarkisto.

Bromander, Jonas (2012). Religion som resurs: en översikt av enkätmaterialet. In Lövheim, Mia & Bromander, Jonas et al.: *Religion som resurs? Existentiella frågor och värderingar i unga svenskars liv*. Skellefteå: Artos & Norma. 43-75.

Bromander, Jonas (2011). *Svenska kyrkans medlemmar*. Stockholm: Verbum.

Bromander, Jonas (2005). *Medlem i Svenska kyrkan: En studie kring samtid och framtid*. Stockholm: Verbum.

Bromander, Jonas (1999). *Av fri vilja: på fri tid*. Mitt i församlingen 1991; 1. Uppsala: Svenska kyrkans församlingsnämnd.

Bruce, Steve & Voas, David (2010). Vicarious Religion: An examination and critique. *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 25 (2), 243-259.

Bryman, Alan (2012). *Samhällsvetenskapliga metoder*. 2nd Ed. Translation: Björn Nilsson. Malmö: Liber.

Burke, Peter (1991). Identity Processes and Social Stress. *American Sociological Review* 56, 836-849.

Bäckström, Anders (2000). De kyrkliga handlingarna som ram, relation och välbefinnande. In Gustafsson, Göran & Pettersson, Thorleif et al.: *Folkkyrkor och religiös pluralism – den nordiska religiösa modellen*. Från statskyrka till fri folkkyrka; 2. Stockholm: Verbum. 134-171.

Bäckström, Anders, Edgardh Beckman, Ninna & Pettersson, Per (2004). *Religious Change in Northern Europe: The Case of Sweden*. From State Church to Free Folk Church; Final Report. Stockholm: Verbum.

Cheal, David J. (2008). *Families in Today's World: A Comparative Approach.* Milton Park: Routledge.

Collins, W. A., Maccoby, E.E., Steinberg, Laurence, Hetherington, E.M., & M.H. Bornstein (2000). Contemporary Research on Parenting: The Case for Nature and Nurture. *American Psychologist* 55 (2), 218-232.

Collins-Mayo, Sylvia & Dandelion, Pink et al. (2010). *Religion and youth*. Theology and Religion in Interdisciplinary Perspective Series; BSA Sociology of Religion Study Group Series. London: Ashgate.

Corsaro, William A. (2011). *The Sociology of Childhood*. 3rd Ed. Sociology for a new century series. Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press.

Creswell, John (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. 3rd Ed. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage.

Davidman, Lynn (2007). The New Voluntarism and the Case of Unsynagogued Jews. ─Ammerman, Nancy T.: *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*. New York: Oxford University Press. 51-67.

Davie, Grace (2010). Vicarious religion: A response. *Journal of Contemporary Religion*; 25 (2). 261-266.

Davie, Grace (2007a). *The Sociology of Religion*. London: Sage.

Davie, Grace (2007b). Vicarious Religion: A Methodological Challenge. In Ammerman, Nancy T et al. (2007): *Everyday Religion: Observing Modern Religious Lives*. New York: Oxford University Press 2007. 21-35.

Davie, Grace (2000). *Religion in Modern Europe: A Memory Mutates*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Davie, Grace (2004). New Approaches in the Sociology of Religion: A Western Perspective. *Social Compass* 51 (1), 73-84.

Davie, Grace (1994). *Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Day, Abby (2011). Believing in belonging: An ethnography of young people's constructions of belief. *Culture and religion* 10 (3), 263-278.

Day, Abby (2006). *Believing in belonging: A case study from Yorkshir*e. Unpublished PhD thesis, Lancaster University, Lancaster, UK.

Engebretson, Kath (2004). Teenage boys, spirituality and religion. *International journal of children's spirituality*; 9 (3). 263-278.

Eriksen, Lars Laird (2012). *Christians in the closet? – Why white Norwegian pupils are silent about religion*. Unpublished paper presented at the Nordic Conference for the Sociology of Religion in Umeå, Sweden, August 17th, 2012.

Eskola, Jari & Vastamäki, Jaana (2001). Teemahaastattelu: opit ja opetukset. In Aalto, Juhani & Valli, Raine (red.): *Ikkunoita tutkimusmetodeihin I*: metodin valinta ja aineistonkeruu: virikkeitä aloittelevalle tutkijalle. Chydenius-Instituutin julkaisuja 2/2001. Jyväskylä: PS-kustannus.

Finlands författningssamling (2003). Helsingfors: Justitieministeriet. Lagstiftning. Elektronisk författningssamling. 2003. Band 77. [online] Available from: http://www.finlex.fi/sv/laki/kokoelma/2003/20030077.pdf [Retrieved 31.3.2009]

Finlands författningssamling (2001). Helsingfors: Justitieministeriet. Lagstiftning. Elektronisk författningssamling. 2001. Band 197. [online] Available from: http://www.finlex.fi/sv/laki/kokoelma/2001/20010197.pdf [Retrieved 31.3.2009]

Finnäs, Fjalar (2010). Befolkningsutvecklingen i Svenskfinland. In Sundback, Susan & Nyqvist, Fredrika (red.): *Det finlandssvenska sociala kapitalet: fakta och fiktion.* Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland; 734. Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland. 29-43.

Finnäs, Fjalar (1997). Social integration, heterogeneity and divorce: The case of the Swedish-speaking population in Finland. *Acta Sociologica* 40, 263-277.

Fishman, Joshua (1967). Bilingualism with and without diglossia; diglossia with and without bilingualism. *Journal of social issues* 32, 29-38.

Fonecta (2006). [online] Available from: www.fonecta.fi [Retrieved 13.4.2006]

Frønes, Ivar (1995). *Among Peers: On the Meaning of Peers in the Process of Socialization*. Oslo: Scandinavian University Press.

Furseth, Inger & Repstad, Pål (2006). *An Introduction to the Sociology of Religion: Classical and contemporary perspectives*. Aldershot: Ashgate.

Furseth, Inger & Repstad, Pål (2005). *Religionssociologi – en introduktion*. Edition 1:3. Translation: Harald Nordli. Malmö: Liber.

Giddens, Anthony (2007). *Sociologi*. 4th Ed. Translation: Björn Nilsson. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Giddens, Anthony (2006). *Sociology*. 5th Ed. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Giddens, Anthony (1997). *Modernitet och självidentitet: självet och samhället i den senmoderna epoken*. [Modernity and Self-Identity; Self and Society in the Late Modern Age.] Translation: Sten Andersson. Göteborg: Daidalos.

Gustafsson, Göran & Pettersson, Thorleif et al. (2000). *Folkkyrkor och religiös pluralism – den nordiska religiösa modellen*. Från statskyrka till fri folkkyrka; 2. Stockholm: Verbum.

Haastettu kirkko: Suomen evankelis-luterilainen kirkko vuosina 2008–2011 (2012). Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja; 115. Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskus.

Hagström, Marcus (2005). *"Va fan e Borgå stift?" eller Finlandssvenska ungas uppfattning om finlandssvenska institutioner*. Åbo: Åbo Akademis Tryckeri.

Hansegård, Nils-Erik (1968). *Tvåspråkighet eller halvspråkighet?* Stockholm: Aldus/Bonnier.

Harris, Judith Rich (1998). *The Nurture Assumption: Why Children Turn Out the Way They Do*. New York: Free Press.

Harris, Judith Rich (1995). Where Is the Child's Environment? A Group Socialization Theory of Development. *Psychological Review* 102 (3), 458-489.

Heelas, Paul & Woodhead, Linda et al. (2005). *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion is Giving Way to Spirituality*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Helander, Eila (2007). Keitä ovat kirkon uskovaiset? In Visala, Aku (ed.): *Kirkko ja usko tämän päivän Suomessa: STKS:n symposiumissa marraskuussa 2006 pidetyt esitelmät*. Suomalaisen teologisen kirjallisuusseuran julkaisuja; 253. Helsinki: Suomalainen teologinen kirjallisuusseura. 147-159.

Helander, Eila (2006). Finland: Individualistic Religiosity within Tradition. In Zieberts, Hans-Georg & Kay, William K. et al.: *Youth in Europe II: An international empirical Study about Religiosity*. International Practical Theology; 4. Münster: LIT Verlag. 159-191.

Helander, Eila (2005). Finland: Optimistic realism and individualistic solidarity. In Zieberts, Hans-Georg & Kay, William K. et al.: *Youth in Europe I. An international empirical study about Life Perspectives.* International Practical Theology Vol. 2. Münster: Lit verlag. 13-25.

Helsingin Sanomat (2013). Katainen: Uhkailu järkyttää – Pääministeri penaa arvokeskustelua. [online] Available from: http://www.hs.fi/kotimaa/a1369819084379 [Retrieved 30.5.2013]

Helve, Helena (2006). Nuoret ja usko. In Wilska, Terhi-Anna et al. (2006). *Uskon asia: Nuorisobarometri 2006.* Opetusministeriö Nuorisotutkimusverkosto/Nuorisotutkimusseura, julkaisuja 67. Nuorisoasiain neuvottelukunta, julkaisuja 34. Helsinki: Nykypaino. 92-109.

Henning-Lindblom, Anna & Liebkind, Karmela (2007). Objective ethnolinguistic vitality and identity among Swedish-speaking youth. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 187/188, 161-183.

Herberts, Kjell (2008). Flerspråkiga kameleonter? Finlandssvenskarnas språk i vardagen. In Herberts Kjell et al.: *Opinioner och trender i Svenskfinland – Barometern 01-07*. Vasa: Institutet för finlandssvensk framtidsforskning. 17-35.

Hirsjärvi, Sirkka, Remes, Pirkko & Sajavaara, Paula (1997). *Tutki ja kirjoita*. Helsinki: Kirjayhtymä.

Hjelm, Titus & Myllyniemi, Sami (2006). Kirkkoon kuulumattomat nuoret maallistumisen peilinä. In Wilska, Terhi-Anna et al. (2006). *Uskon asia: Nuorisobarometri 2006*. Opetusministeriö Nuorisotutkimusverkosto/Nuorisotutkimusseura, julkaisuja 67. Nuorisoasiain neuvottelukunta, julkaisuja 34. Helsinki: Nykypaino. 124-145.

Hogg, Michael A. & Abrams, Dominic (1988). *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes*. London: Routledge.

Holm, Nils G (2000). Svenskt i Finland. In Gustafsson, Göran & Pettersson, Thorleif. *Folkkyrkor och religiös pluralism – den nordiska religiösa modellen*. Från statskyrka till fri folkkyrka; 2. Stockholm: Verbum. 323-359.

Holm, Nils G (1979). *Finlandssvensk skolungdom om religion och samlevnad*. Meddelanden från Stiftelsens för Åbo Akademi forskningsinstitut; 49. Åbo: Åbo Akademi.

Holme, Idar Magne & Solvang, Bernt Krohn (1991). *Forskningsmetodik: Om kvalitativa och kvantitativa metoder*. Översättning: B. Nilsson. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Hyltenstam, Kenneth & Stroud, Christopher (1991). *Språkbyte och språkbevarande. Om samiskan och andra minoritetsspråk*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Hyyppä, Markku & Mäki, Juhani (1997a). Pohjanlahden rannikon suomenruotsalaiset säilyvät työkykyisinä. *Suomen lääkärilehti* 52 (8), 831–39.

Hyyppä, Markku T & Mäki, Juhani (1997b). Suomenruotsalaisen väestön hyvä terveys ja työkyky ”säästävät” miljardeja. *Suomen lääkärilehti* 52 (28), 3237–3240.

Hyyppä, Markku T & Mäki, Juhani (2000). Edistääkö sosiaalinen pääoma terveyttä? Pohjanmaan rannikon suomen- ja ruotsinkielisen väestön kansalaisaktiivisuuden ja terveyden vertailu. *Suomen lääkärilehti* 55 (8), 821-826.

Hyyppä, Markku T & Mäki, Juhani (2001). Why do Swedish-speaking Finns have longer active life? An area for social capital research. *Health promotion international* 16 (1), 55-64.

Inglehart, Ronald (2006). Mapping Global Values. *Comparative Sociology* (5); 2-3. 115-136.

Inglehart, Ronald (1977). *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles in Western Publics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

James, Allison, Jenks, Chris & Prout Alan (1998). *Theorizing Childhood*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

James, William (1966). *Psychology: The Briefer Course*. New York: Harper Torchbooks.

Karlsson Minganti, Pia (2010). Islamic Revival and Young Women's Negotiations on Gender and Racism. In Collins-Mayo, Sylvia & Dandelion, Pink et al.: *Religion and youth*. Theology and Religion in Interdisciplinary Perspective Series; BSA Sociology of Religion Study Group Series. London: Ashgate. 115-121.

Kelley, Jonathan & DeGraaf, Nan Dirk (1997). National context, parental socialization, and religious belief: results from 15 nations. *American Sociological Review* 62 (4), 639–659.

Ketola, Kimmo (2011). Suomalaisten uskonnollisuus. In Ketola, Kimmo, Niemelä Kati, Palmu, Harri & Salomäki, Hanna: *Uskonto suomalaisten elämässä: Uskonnollinen kasvatus, moraali, onnellisuus ja suvaitsevaisuus kansainvälisessä vertailussa*. Yhteiskuntatieteellisen tietoarkiston julkaisuja; 9. Tampere: Yhteiskuntatieteellinen tietoarkisto; Tampereen yliopisto. 7-24.

Ketola, Kimmo, Niemelä Kati, Palmu, Harri & Salomäki, Hanna (2011). *Uskonto suomalaisten elämässä: Uskonnollinen kasvatus, moraali, onnellisuus ja suvaitsevaisuus kansainvälisessä vertailussa.* Yhteiskuntatieteellisen tietoarkiston julkaisuja; 9. Tampere: Yhteiskuntatieteellinen tietoarkisto; Tampereen yliopisto.

Ketola, Kimmo, Kääriäinen, Kimmo & Niemelä, Kati (2007). Näkyykö usko elämässä? – Uskonnollisuuden vaikutus suomalaisten asenteisiin, arvomaailmaan ja arvokäsityksiin. In Borg, Sami et al.: *Uskonto, arvot ja instituutiot: Suomalaiset World Values-tutkimuksissa 1981-2005*. 60-85.

Keskinen, Vesa (2001). *Kiirettä pitää: Kaverit, koulu ja nuorten vapaa-aika Helsingissä 2000*. Forskningsrapporter, Helsingfors stads faktacentral 2001:10. Helsingfors: Helsingfors stads faktacentral.

Kestilä, Laura (2003). *Helsingin ruotsinkieliset nuoret: Myönteisen poikkeavuuden analyysi*. Forskningsrapporter, Helsingfors stads faktacentral 2003:1. Helsingfors: Helsingfors stads faktacentral.

Klingenberg, Maria (2012). Som man frågar får man svar. In Lövheim, Mia & Bromander, Jonas et al.: *Religion som resurs? Existentiella frågor och värderingar i unga svenskars liv*. Skellefteå: Artos & Norma.

Klingenberg, Maria (2005). *Kristet på mitt eget, personliga sätt. En undersökning av finlandssvenska skolungdomars livsvärden och trosföreställningar.* Skrifter i praktisk teologi vid Åbo Akademi; 46. Åbo: Åbo Akademi.

Koskinen, Seppo & Martelin, Tuija (2003). Why is mortality low among the Swedish-speaking minority in Finland? *Yearbook of Population Research in Finland* 39, 15-31.

Kovero, Camilla (2011). *Språk, identitet och skola II: Barn och ungdomar i svenska skolor i olika språkliga miljöer*. Rapporter och utredningar 2011:6. Helsingfors: Utbildningsstyrelsen.

Kreander, Maria & Sandlund, Tom (2006). Historisk och teoretisk inramning. In Liebkind, Karmela & Sandlund, Tom et al.: *Räcker det med svenskan? Om finlandssvenskarnas anknytning till sina institutioner.* Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland; 684. Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland. 14–51.

Kuikka, Martti T. (1979). *Uskonnonopetuksen tavoitetutkimus III*. Joensuun korkeakoulun kasvatustieteiden osaston julkaisuja n:o 10. Joensuu.

Kumpulainen, Timo & Saari, Seija et al. (2006). *Koulutuksen määrälliset indikaattorit 2006. Kvantitativa indikatorer för utbildningen 2006*. Tampere: Opetushallitus. [online] Available from: http://www.oph.fi/info/tilastot/Indikaattorit_2006.pdf [Retrieved 31.3.2009]

Kuusisto, Arniika (2011). *Growing up in Affiliation with a Religious Community: A Case Study of Seventh-day Adventist Youth in Finland.* Diss. Research on religious and spiritual education; 3. Münster: Waxmann.

Kuusisto, Arniika (2010). Social networks and identity negotiations of religious minority youth in diverse social contexts. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 33 (5), 779-796.

Kuusisto, Arniika (2003). Transmitting Religious Values in Adventist Home Education. *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 24 (3), 283-293.

Kvale, Steinar (1997). *Den kvalitativa forskningsintervjun*. [Also publicerad as *InterViews* 1996, Sage Publications.] Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Kyrkolagen (26.11.1993/1054)

Kääriäinen, Kimmo et al. (2009). *Facing Diversity: The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland from 2004 to 2007*. Publication 60. Tampere: Church Research Institute.

Kääriäinen, Kimmo & Niemelä, Kati & Ketola, Kimmo (2005). *Religion in Finland: Decline, Change and Transformation of Finnish Religiosity*. Publication 54. Tampere: Church Research Institute.

Kääriäinen, Kimmo & Niemelä, Kati & Ketola, Kimmo (2003). *Moderni kirkkokansa. Suomalaisten uskonnollisuus uudella vuosituhannella*. Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja; 82. Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskus.

Liebkind, Karmela (2010). Social Psychology. In Fishman, Joshua A. & García, Ofelia. : *Handbook of Language and Ethnic Identity. Vol. 1: Disciplinary and regional perspectives.* Oxford: University Press. 18-31.

Liebkind, Karmela (1995). Bilingual Identity. *European education: a journal of translations* 27 (3), 80-87.

Liebkind, Karmela, Tandefelt, Marika & Moring, Tom (2007). Introduction: why a special issue on the Swedish-speaking Finns? *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 187/188, 1-11.

Linde, Charlotte (1993). *Life Stories: The Creation of Coherence*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lindgren, Mats, Lüthi, Bernhard & Fürth, Thomas (2005). *The MeWe Generation: What business and politics must know about the next generati*on. Stockholm: Bookhouse Publishing and Kairos Future.

Lojander-Visapää, Catharina (2001). *Med rätt att välja. Språkval och språkstrategier i språkligt blandade hushåll i Helsingfors*. Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland; 630. Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet.

Lövheim, Mia & Bromander, Jonas et al. (2012). *Religion som resurs? Existentiella frågor och värderingar i unga svenskars liv*. Skellefteå: Artos & Norma.

Lövheim, Mia (2005). *Ungdomars livsvillkor och värderingar: sammanställning och diskussion av studier från 2000-talet*. Uppsala: Svenska kyrkan.

Martikainen, Tuomas (2006). Maahanmuuttajat ja uskonto: tausta, jäsenyys, yhdyskunnat. In Laitinen, Aappo (ed.): *Kristinusko Suomessa*. Suomalaisen teologisen kirjallisuusseuran julkaisuja; 249. Helsinki: Suomalainen teologinen kirjallisuusseura. 205-240.

Mayall, Berry (2002). *Towards a Sociology of Childhood*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

McCall, George J. and Simmons, J.L (1966). *Identities and Interactions*. New York: The Free Press.

McCall, George J. and Simmons, J.L. (1978). *Identities and Interactions*. Rev. ed. New York: Free Press.

McRae, Kenneth (2007). Toward language equality: four democracies compared. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 187-188, 13-34.

McRae, Kenneth (1999). *Conflict and compromise in multilingual societies, Finland*. The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters & Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Mead, George H. (1934). *Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist*. Chicago: University of Chicago.

Mikkola, Teija (2003). *Muuttuvat arvot ja uusi keskiluokka: Tutkimus arvojen mittaamisesta ja monitasoisuudesta*. Diss. Helsingin yliopiston sosiologian laitoksen julkaisuja; 241. Helsinki: Yliopistopaino.

Monikasvoinen kirkko: Suomen evankelis-luterilainen kirkko vuosina 2004-2007 (2008). Kirkon tutkimuksen julkaisuja; 103. Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskus.

Myllyniemi, Sami (2006). Nuorisobarometri 2006. In Wilska, Terhi-Anna et al. (2006). *Uskon asia: Nuorisobarometri 2006*. Opetusministeriö Nuorisotutkimusverkosto / Nuorisotutkimusseura, julkaisuja 67. Nuorisoasiain neuvottelukunta, julkaisuja 34. Helsinki: Nykypaino.14-89.

Myntti, Kristian (2009). *Nationalspråk och minoritetsspråk i ljuset av finländsk lagstiftning och internationella konventioner*. Helsingfors: Universitetstryckeriet.

National core curriculum for basic education (2004). 7.11: Religion. The Finnish National Board of Education (23.8.2007). [online] Available from: http://www.oph.fi/ops/english/POPS_net_new_4.pdf [Retrieved 9.9.2007]

Niemelä, Kati (2010). Youth and Religion in Finland. In Giordan, Giuseppe et al.: *Youth and religion*. Annual review of the sociology of religion; 1. Leiden: Brill. 193-218.

Niemelä, Kati (2008). Does Confirmation Training Really Matter? A longitudinal study of the quality and effectiveness of confirmation training in Finland. Publications of the Church Research Institute; 59. Tampere: Church Research Institute.

Niemelä, Kati (2007). Rippikoulusta aikuisuuteen: Pitkittäistutkimus rippikoulun merkityksestä ja vaikuttavuudesta. Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja; 99. Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskus.

Niemelä, Kati (2006a). Does Religious Upbringing Matter? The effect of religious upbringing on the religious and spiritual identity of urban young adults in Finland. In Tirri, Kirsi (ed.) *Religion, spirituality & identity*. Bern: Peter Lang, 153–169.

Niemelä, Kati (2006b). Nuorten aikuisten suhde kirkkoon. In Mikkola, Teija & Niemelä, Kati & Petterson, Juha et al. (2006): *Urbaani usko. Nuoret aikuiset, usko ja kirkko*. Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja; 96. Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskus. 43–65.

Niemelä, Kati (2003a). Uskonnollisuus eri väestörymissä. In Kääriäinen, Kimmo, Niemelä, Kati & Ketola Kimmo: *Moderni kirkkokansa: Suomalaisten uskonnollisuus uudella vuosituhannella*. Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja; 82. Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskus. 187-220.

Niemelä, Kati (2003b). Suomalaisten sitoutuminen uskonnollisiin yhdyskuntiin. In Kääriäinen, Kimmo & Niemelä, Kati & Ketola, Kimmo (2003). *Moderni kirkkokansa. Suomalaisten uskonnollisuus uudella vuosituhannella*. Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja; 82. Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskus. 122-147.

Niemelä, Kati (2002). *Hyvä rippikoulu: Rippikoulun laatu ja vaikuttavuus*. Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja, sarja A; 79. Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskus.

Niemelä, Kati & Pruuki, Lassi (2009). Rippikoulun toteutustavat Euroopassa. In Innanen, Tapani & Niemelä, Kati et al.: *Rippikoulun todellisuus*. Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja; 107. Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskus. 78-90.

Niemelä, Kati & Koivula, Annika (2006). Uskonnollinen kasvatus sillanrakentajana. In Mikkola, Teija & Niemelä, Kati & Petterson, Juha et al. (2006): *Urbaani usko. Nuoret aikuiset, usko ja kirkko*. Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen julkaisuja; 96. Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskus. 163-177.

Niemelä, Kati & Salonen, Kari (2001). Suomalaisten suhtautuminen naispappeuteen. *Teologinen Aikakauskirja* 1, 3–17.

Nyman-Kurkiala, Pia (1996). *Ung och finlandssvensk*. Forskningsrapporter/Institutet för finlandssvensk samhällsforskning; 32. Åbo: Åbo Akademis tryckeri.

Norris, Pippa & Inglehart, Ronald (2004). *Sacred and Secular: Religions and Politics Worldwide*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Parke, Ross D. & Buriel, Raymond (2006). Socialization in the family: Ethnic and ecological perspectives. In Eisenberg, Nancy et al.: *Handbook of Child Psychology; Vol. 3: Social, emotional and personality development*. 6th Ed. New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc. 429-504.

Pettersson, Thorleif (1988). *Bakom dubbla lås. En studie av små och långsamma värderingsförändringar*. Projektet framtida folkrörelser. Stockholm: Institutet för framtidsstudier.

Pirttiniemi, Juhani (2000). *Koulukokemukset ja koulutusratkaisut. Peruskoulun vaikuttavuuden tarkastelu oppilasnäkökulmasta*. Diss. Helsinki: Helsingin yliopiston verkkojulkaisut. [online] Available from: http://ethesis.helsinki.fi/julkaisut/kas/kasva/vk/pirttiniemi/ [Retrieved 13.5.2008]

Polisen (2011). Råd. Unga. En ung person i straffprocessen. [online] Available from: http://poliisi.fi/poliisi/home.nsf/Pages/084FD29F837783ABC2256BC0003CCC90 [Retrieved 3.11.2011]

Possamai, Adam (2009). *Sociology of Religion for Generations X and Y*. London: Equinox Publishing.

Repstad, Pål (1999). *Närhet och distans: kvalitativa metoder i samhällsvetenskap*. 3:e upplagan (rev.) Översättning: Björn Nilsson. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Riitaoja, Anna-Leena, Poulter, Saila & Kuusisto, Arniika (2010). Worldviews and Multicultural Education in the Finnish Context – A Critical Philophical Approach to Theory and Practices. *Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration* 5 (3), 87–95.

Ristimäki, Anu (2010). Kristillinen kasvatus 0-3 –vuotiaiden lasten perheissä. In Pessi, Anne-Birgitta & Grönlund Henrietta et al.: *Perhe, parisuhde, ja kirkko: lähikuvia leikkauspintoihin*. Käytännöllisen teologian laitoksen vuosikirja 2009. Käytännöllisen teologian laitoksen julkaisuja; 114. Helsinki: Hakapaino.

Roberts, Brian A. (2000). The sociologist's snare: identity construction and socialization in music. *International Journal of Music Education* 35, 54-58.

Rontu, Heidi (2005). *Språkdominans i tidig tvåspråkighet. Barnets kodväxling i kontext*. Diss. Åbo: Åbo akademis förlag.

Rosen, Ina (2009). *I'm a believer – but I'll be damned if I'm religious. Belief and religion in the Greater Copenhagen Area – A focus group study*. Diss. Lund Studies in Sociology of Religion; 8. Lund: Lunds universitet.

Räsänen, Antti (2006). *Koulun uskonnonopetus. Suomalaisten käsitykset uskonnonopetuksen luonteesta ja sisällöstä.* Suomalaisen teologisen kirjallisuusseuran julkaisuja; 248. Helsinki: Gummerus kirjapaino Oy.

Saaranen-Kauppinen, Anita & Puusniekka, Anna (2006). *KvaliMOTV: menetelmäopetuksen tietovaranto*. Tampere: Yhteiskuntatieteellinen tietoarkisto. [online] Available from: http://www.fsd.uta.fi/menetelmaopetus/ [Retrieved 12.3.2013]

Saarela, Jan & Finnäs, Fjalar (2005). Mortality Inequality in Two Native Population Groups. *Population Studies* 59 (3), 313-320.

Saarela, Jan & Finnäs, Fjalar (2003). Unemployment and Native Language: The Finnish Case. *Journal of Socio-Economics* 32 (1), 59-80.

Salmenkivi, Eero (2007). Elämänkatsomustieto ja sen opetus. In Sakaranaho, Tuula & Jamisto, Annukka et al. (2007). *Monikulttuurisuus ja uudistuva katsomusaineiden opetus*. Uskontotiede; 11. Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto, Uskontotieteen laitos. 83-100.

Salomäki, Hanna (2013). Haastettu kirkko uuden edessä. In *Haastettu kirkko: Osallisuus, yhteisöllisyys, usko*. Kirkon tutkimuskeskuksen www-julkaisuja; 32. Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskus. 3-9.

Saukkonen, Pasi (2011). *Mikä suomenruotsalaisissa ärsyttää? Selvitys mediakeskustelusta Suomessa*. Magma-studie 1; 2011. Helsingfors: Finlands svenska tankesmedja Magma.

Schofield, Janet Ward (1990). Increasing the generalizability of qualitative research. In Eisner, E.W. & Peshkin, A. et al.: *Qualitative inquiry in education*. New York: Teachers College Press. 201-232.

Seppo, Simo (1971). *Abiturienttien asenteet uskonnonopetukseen*. Jyväskylä Studies in Education, Psychology and Social Research; 25. Jyväskylä: Jyväskylän yliopistoyhdistys.

Sherkat, Darren E. (2003). Religious Socialization: Sources of influence and influences of agency. In Dillon, Michelle et al.: *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 151-163.

Silverman, David (2010). *En mycket kortfattad, ganska intressant och någorlunda billig bok om kvalitativ forskning*. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Sjöborg, A. (2013). Mapping 'Religion' or 'Something – I don't know'? Methodological Challenges Exploring Young Peoples' Relations with 'Religion'. In Day, A. & Vincett, G. & Cotter, C.: *Social Identities Between the Sacred and the Secular*. Farnham: Ashgate. 191-200.

Skutnabb-Kangas, Tove (1975). *Om tvåspråkighet och skolframgång*. Åbo: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland.

Slotte-Lüttge, Anna (2005). *Ja vet int va de heter på svenska: Interaktion mellan tvåspråkiga elever och deras lärare i en enspråkig klassrumsdiskurs*. Diss. Åbo: Åbo Akademi University Press.

Smith, P. and Cowie, H (2003). *Understanding Children's Development*. 4th Ed. Oxford: Blackwell.

Statistics Finland (2006). Use of information and communications technology by individuals: Percent of respondents who have a mobile phone in their own personal use by gender and age group in spring 2005. [online] Available from: http://www.stat.fi/til/sutivi/2005/sutivi_2005_2006-06-12_kuv_007_en.html [Retrieved 7.3.2013]

Statistisk årsbok för kyrkan 2010 (2011). Helsingfors: Kyrkostyrelsen.

Statistisk årsbok för kyrkan 2005 (2006). Helsingfors: Kyrkostyrelsen.

Stets, Jan E. & Burke, Peter J. (2000). Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63 (3), 224-237.

Storm, Ingrid (2009). Halfway to Heaven: Four Types of Fuzzy Fidelity in Europe. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 48 (4), 702-718.

Strandell, Harriet (2010). From Structure-Action to Politics of Childhood: Sociological Childhood Research in Finland. *Current Sociology* 58 (2), 165-185.

Stryker, Sheldon (1980). *Symbolic Interactionism: A Social Structural Version*. Menlo Park, CA: Benjamin Cummings.

Stryker, Sheldon & Burke; Peter J (2000). The Past, Present, and Future of an Identity Theory. *Social Psychology Quarterly*; 63 (4). 284-297.

Ståhlberg, Krister (2005). *Finlandssvensk identitet och kultur*. Meddelanden från Ekonomisk-Statsvetenskapliga fakulteten vid Åbo Akademi. Serie A; 441. Finlandssvenska kulturindikatorer; 5. Åbo: Åbo Akademi.

Suhonen, Pertti (2007). Suomalaisten eriytyvät ja muuttuvat arvot. In Borg, Sami et al.: *Uskonto, arvot ja instituutiot: Suomalaiset World Values-tutkimuksissa 1981–2005*. 26-46.

Sundback, Susan (2010a). Borgå stift som förvaltare av socialt kapital. In Sundback, Susan & Nyqvist, Fredrika (red.) (2010): *Det finlandssvenska sociala kapitalet: fakta och fiktion.* Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland; 734. Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland.

Sundback, Susan (2010b). Nationell minoritet och etnisk identitet. In Sundback, Susan & Nyqvist, Fredrika (red.): *Det finlandssvenska sociala kapitalet: fakta och fiktion*. Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland; 734. Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland. 45-63.

Sundback, Susan (2005). Socialt kapital. In Bäck, Henry; Granqvist, Nina; Sandberg, Siv & Sundback, Susan: *Svenskt och finskt i kommunerna*. Förvaltningshögskolans rapporter; 74. Göteborgs universitet. 9-50.

Sundback, Susan (2000). Medlemskapet i de lutherska kyrkorna i Norden. In Gustafsson, Göran & Pettersson, Thorleif (2000). *Folkkyrkor och religiös pluralism – den nordiska religiösa modellen*. Från statskyrka till fri folkkyrka; 2. Stockholm: Verbum. 34-73.

Sundback, Susan (1994). *Religionen som etnisk faktor bland finlandssvenskarna*. Forskningsprojektet ”Finlandssvenska kulturindikatorer”; 4. Meddelanden från ekonomisk-statvetenskapliga fakulteten vid Åbo Akademi A; 420. Åbo: Åbo Akademi.

Sundback, Susan (1991). *Utträdet ur Finlands lutherska kyrka: Kyrkomedlemskapet under religionsfrihet och sekularisering*. Diss. Åbo: Åbo Akademis förlag.

Sundback, Susan & Nyqvist, Fredrika (red.) (2010). *Det finlandssvenska sociala kapitalet: fakta och fiktion*. Skrifter utgivna av Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland; 734. Helsingfors: Svenska litteratursällskapet i Finland.

Sundman, Marketta (1999). *Barnet, skolan och tvåspråkigheten*. Helsingfors: Yliopistopaino.

Suomen evankelis-luterilainen kirkko (2013). Jäsenet. Etusivu. Ev.lut. kirkko. Kirkko numeroina. Jäsenet. [online] Available from: http://evl.fi/EVLfi.nsf/Documents/68ED832793E78AF5C22575EF003AD029?OpenDocument&lang=FI [Retrieved 27.8.2013]

Suonperä, Satu (2008). Rippikoululaisten vanhempien käsitys kotien arvo- ja uskontokasvatuksesta. In Niemelä, Kati & Tapani Innanen et al.: *Rippikoulun todellisuus*. Kirkon tutkimuksen julkaisuja; 107. Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskus. 240-253.

Svenska Finlands Folkting (2006). *Identitet och framtid: Folktingets undersökning om finlandssvenskarnas identitet hösten 2005. Suomenruotsalainen identiteetti: Folktingetin kyselytutkimus.* Helsingfors: Folktinget.

Swidler, Ann (1986). Culture in Action: Symboles and Strategies. *American Sociological Review* 51 (2), 273–286.

Sysiharju, Anna-Lisa (1970). *Mieluisa-yhdentekevä-vastenmielinen. Eri oppiaineiden oppilaissa herättämistä tunnereaktioista 1960-luvun keskikoulun päätösvaiheessa*. Helsingin yliopiston kasvatustieteen laitoksen tutkimuksia; 8. Helsinki.

Tandefelt, Marika & Finnäs, Fjalar (2007). Language and demography: historical development. *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 187/188, 35–54.

Tapainen, Noora (2008). Äidit uskontokasvattajina ja perinteenvälittäjinä. In Niemelä, Kati & Tapani Innanen et al.: *Rippikoulun todellisuus*. Kirkon tutkimuksen julkaisuja; 107. Tampere: Kirkon tutkimuskeskus. 254–265.

Thoits, Peggy A. and Virshup, Lauren K. (1997). Me's and We's: Forms and Functions of Social Identities. In Ashmore, Richard D. and Jussim, Lee: *Self and Identity: Fundamental Issues*. Rutgers Series on Self and Social Identity; 1. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press. 106-133.

Trost, Jan (2005). *Kvalitativa intervjuer*. 3rd Ed. Lund: Studentlitteratur.

Tuomi, Jouni & Sarajärvi, Anneli (2009). *Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällönanalyysi*. 6th Ed. Helsinki: Tammi.

Vahtera, Sari & Kuukka, Ilona (2007). Kuntajärjestäjän näkökulma oman uskonnon opetukseen. In Sakaranaho, Tuula & Jamisto, Annukka et al.: *Monikulttuurisuus ja uudistuva katsomusaineiden opetus*. Uskontotiede; 11. Helsinki: Helsingin yliopisto, Uskontotieteen laitos. 126-131.

Visapää, Catharina (1996). *Språkmiljö och skolval i Helsingfors*. SSKH meddelanden; 41. Helsingin kaupungin opetusviraston julkaisusarja A; 9. Helsingfors: Forskningsinstitutet, Svenska social- och kommunalhögskolan vid Helsingfors universitet.

Von Brömssen, Kerstin (2003). *Tolkningar, förhandlingar och tystnader: Elevers tal om religion i det postkoloniala och mångkulturella rummet*. Diss. Göteborg Studies in Educational Sciences; 201. Göteborg: Acta Universitatis Gothoburgensis.

Voas, David & Crockett, Alasdair (2005). Religion in Britain: Neither Believing nor Belonging. *Sociology*; 39. 11-28.

Wahlbeck, Östen (2008). Inträdet i finskt medborgarskap. In Kanckos, Lise & Kauranen, Ralf et al.: *Social samhörighet och religion: festskrift till Susan Sundback*. Åbo: Åbo Akademis förlag. 363-374.

Wilkins, Amy (2008). *Wannabes, Goths and Christians: The Boundaries of Sex, Style and Status*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Wilska, Terhi-Anna et al. (2006). *Uskon asia: Nuorisobarometri 2006*. Helsinki: Nykypaino. [online] Available from: http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Nuoriso/nuorisoasiain_neuvottelukunta/julkaisut/barometrit/liitteet/Nuorisobarometri_2006.pdf [Retrieved 29.11.2012]

Woodhead, Linda (2009). Old, New, and Emerging Paradigms in the Sociological Study of Religion. *Nordic Journal of Religion and Society* 22 (2), 103-121.

Wyness, Michael (2012). *Childhood and Society*. 2nd Ed. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Zieberts, Hans-Georg & Kay William K (2006). Analytic Tools and Methods. In Zieberts, Hans-Georg & Kay, William K. et al.: *Youth in Europe II: An international empirical Study about Religiosity*. International Practical Theology; 4. Münster: LIT Verlag. 33-56.

Ziehe, Thomas (1994). *Kulturanalyser. Ungdom, utbildning, modernitet*. Stockholm/Steghag: Symposion.

Zuckerman, Phil (2008). *Society without God: What the Least Religious Nations Can Tell Us about Contentment*. New York, NY: New York University Press.

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Background

Tell me about yourself!
Current studies/employment
How would your friends describe you? Is there something you would like to add to that description?
Family – parent's occupation, siblings, living arrangements,
Would you say you have a good relationship with your parents?
Extended family and relatives – where do they live? Amount of contact? (Relation to grandparents)

Friends and spare time activities

Friends: Describe your group of friends! Do you consider yourself to be a person with a few, close relationships, or a person with many friends? What do you do together?

Do you have a best friend? What qualities does he or she have that makes him/her your best friend?

Do you socialize with the same people in and outside of school?

There is an ongoing discussion in the papers about young people and alcohol. How would you describe the use of alcohol amongst your friends? How about yourself?

Do you have many friends who live somewhere else than in [location]?

Spare time: What do you do when you have time on your own?

Do you participate in any organized spare time activities?

Linguistic identity

Would you describe yourself as unilingual or bilingual? Why?
What language /which languages do you speak…

- With your parents?
- With your relatives?
- With your friends?
- At school during breaks?
- During your spare time activities?
- When out in town?
- When in contact with the authorities?

Would you call yourself a Swedish-speaking Finn? Is this important to you?
Do you ever feel proud or ashamed of being a Swedish-speaking Finn?
If one regards Swedish-speaking Finland, Finnish-speaking Finland and Sweden as different cultures; which culture do you recognize as your own?
In which language…

- Do you read newspapers?
- Do you watch TV?
- Do you read books?
- Do you seek information on the Internet?
- Are your favourite web-sites?

Media use

Do you watch TV? To what extent?
Do you have certain TV-shows that you watch regularly? Why do you like this particular show?
Do you listen to music? Do you have certain artists you like? Why?
Do you watch movies? What kind of movies do you like?
Are you a member of a web-community? Many web-communities provide discussion-sites for their members. Have you ever followed or participated in such discussions? In that case; what do you enjoy discussing?
Have you ever noticed that a program or a movie you watched affected you in any way? How?

Existential questions
What things are most important to you at this stage of your life?[389]
Do you have things that concern or pre-occupy you?
In what situations do you feel most happy and alive?[390]
Do you have a role-model; why? What qualities do you look up to in a person?[391]
What qualities irritate you in other people?
What rules do you try to live after?[392]
When something goes wrong, what do you do to handle it?[393]

How do you understand the meaning of life? Is this something you tend to think about?
What do you think happens when a person dies?[394] Is this something you tend to think about?
Have you had a special time in your life when you have thought about these questions more than usual?
Do you think that a person can live his or her life without thinking about these questions at all?
Do you ever talk about these questions with your friends?

Some people refer to something outside themselves when explaining what happens to them in their life. Do you think that something directs your life and what happens to you?

Religious affiliation
(I will now ask you some questions about your relation to the Church, since Church membership is so common in Finland.)

1. Religion and family
    Does your family belong to the Church? Why/Why not?
    Do your closest relatives belong to the Church?
        If I asked your Mom/Dad if she/he would consider her-/himself to be a Christian, what do you think she/he would say? Why?
        Have you said an evening prayer at home?
        Have you said grace?
        Have you attended Church services as a family?
        Have your parents listened to spiritual radio- or TV-programs?

[389] Engebretson 2004, 272.
[390] Engebretson 2004, 272.
[391] Engebretson 2004, 272.
[392] Engebretson 2004, 272.
[393] Engebretson 2004, 272.
[394] Eriksson 1999, 69.

Do you consider yourself as raised in a Christian home?

2. Religious education at school

What are your views on the religious education you have attended?

Has religious education ever inspired you to make personal reflections? If so, regarding what matters?

Do you think that religious education should be a part of the curriculum at school? If so, what should it focus on?

3. Experience of Church activities

Have you participated in the Church's day-care program / Sunday school /other activities for children and young people? What memories do you have from these activities?

Did you take part in confirmation training? Why? What kind? Have you ever regretted this decision? What do you remember from your confirmation training? What expectations did you have initially?

What do you remember from your confirmation? What did it mean to you? Did you ever consider not going through with the confirmation? What would your parents have said if you had not?

After confirmation, did you serve as a young confirmed volunteer? Have you participated in any Church activities after confirmation?

What is your view on the Church?

You are currently a member of the Swedish-speaking congregation. Is this important to you?

4. Personal religious behaviour

Do you pray? In which language?

Do you ever read the Bible?

Many young people wear a cross around their neck. Have you ever done this? What did the cross symbolize for you?

5. Personal religious faith

It has already come up that you belong / do not belong to the Church. Why?

Would you call yourself a Christian? Would you call yourself religious?

What do you think when you hear the word God? /Jesus?

How would you describe the significance of your faith on an every-day level?

Do you ever talk about religious issues with your friends?

If someone with another religious or cultural background asked you what Christianity is about, would you be able to explain it to them?

The future

What personal dreams and goals do you have planned for your future?

What elements do you hope will be included in your future?

Do you have a positive or negative outlook on your future? Why?

What would you not want your future to look like?

Imagine your life in ten years.

Where do you live? Is it important for you to live in an area where you can speak Swedish?

What do you do for a living? What does your life look like?

What studies have you pursued? In what language have you pursued your studies?

What language do you speak?

If your future includes a partner, what languages does he/she speak? Would you get married? If you wish to get married, do you think you would have a civil ceremony or get married in church?

Will you belong to the Church in ten years?

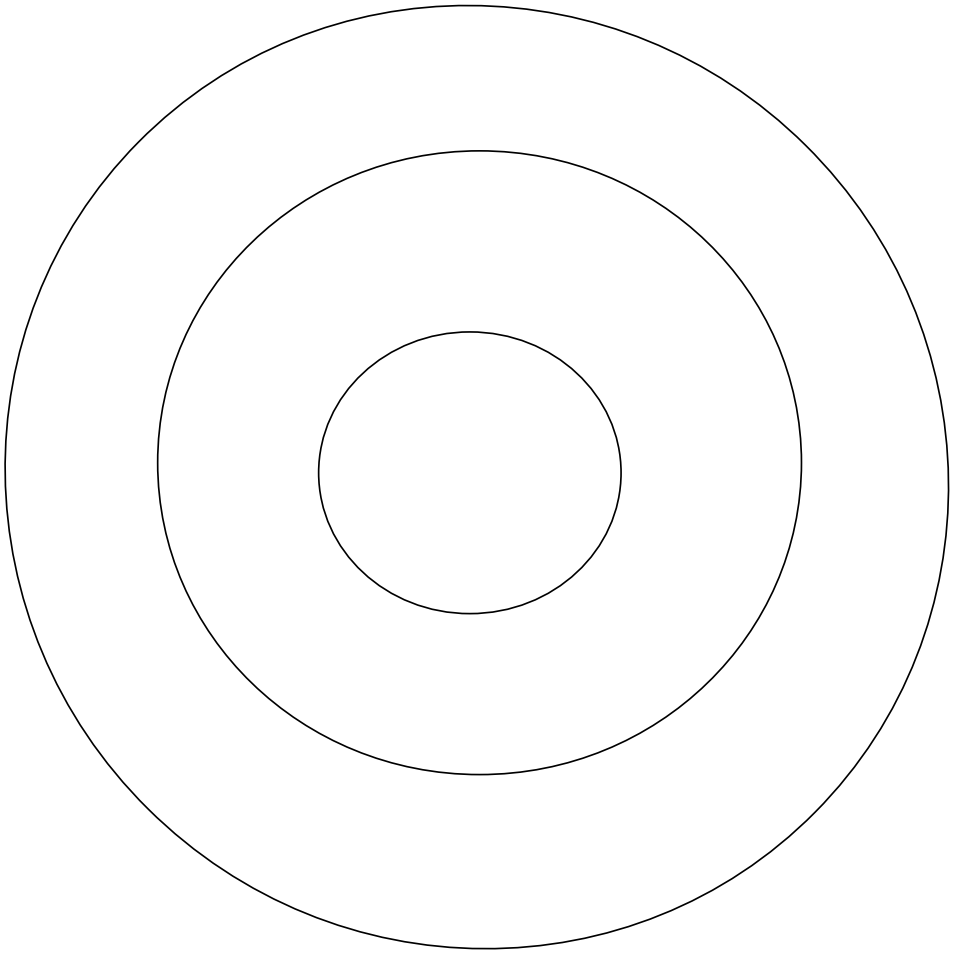
If your future includes children – what language would you speak with your children? Would you like to have your child baptized? Would you say evening prayers with your child?

Value circle

I have a small task for you. I will give you 20 words and a paper with a circle drawn on it. I want you to pick out the ten words that represent the most important values in your life, and place these ten words in the circle in order of importance.

APPENDIX 2: VALUE CIRCLE

Success	**Enjoying life**	**Suspense**	**Freedom**
Intelligence	**Creativity**	**Equality**	**Wisdom**



Tolerance	**Power**	**Honesty**	**Tranquility**
Respect for others	**Security**	**Health**	**Meaning**
Spirituality	**Ambition**	**Diligence**	**Beauty**