Lived Religion and the Religious Field

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Lived religion and the religious field

ABSTRACT

In the study of lived religion, the focus on laypeople as religious agents can result in the simplistic juxtaposition of religion-as-practised by individuals and religion-as-prescribed by institutions. This perspective leads to analyses that over-emphasize agency and overlook the embeddedness of religious persons in intricate power relations that expand beyond the institution(s) closest to them. I propose that Pierre Bourdieu’s social theory, particularly as related to the religious field, offers tools for tackling this issue. While Bourdieu’s work has been criticized for relegating the laity to the status of passive consumers of religious goods, his theorizations can also be employed to produce nuanced micro-level accounts that prioritize laypeople’s practical knowledge of the field and the positions they take within it. Based on my case study of older Finnish women’s normative assessments related to religion, I demonstrate how scholars can investigate the role which their informants’ histories and investments within the religious field play in their religion-as-lived. The women in my study, lifelong members of Orthodox or Lutheran churches, defended their positions in the increasingly individualistic Finnish religious field through an emphasis on childhood socialization as the foundation of ‘proper’ religion.

KEYWORDS

habitus; capital; generation; normativity; tradition; Finland

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Introduction

> The key questions [of the study of lived religion] concern what people do with religious idioms, how they use them, what they make of themselves and their worlds with them, and how, in turn, men, women, and children are fundamentally shaped by the worlds they are making as they make these worlds. There is no religion apart from this, no religion that people have not taken up in their hands. (Orsi 2003, 172)

Religion is the handiwork of people. This quote from the historian Robert Orsi aptly summarizes the basic premise of the lived religion approach. Religious idioms—which I understand to include language, symbols, techniques, rituals, and objects—do not exist independently from people who know them as such. They have to be activated by individuals who have the interest and abilities to do so (see Bourdieu 2000, 150–151). Such interest and aptitude, moreover, are always socially mediated and often highly specific: it is a rare person who embraces just any religious idiom that s/he comes across. There is, rather, a surplus of religion compared to that actively used, or even recognized, by any one person or group. When people make religious worlds, they do so in relation to other religious (and secular) worlds made by other people: laypeople, specialists, spokespersons, scholars, and policymakers.

How do people assess religious idioms or even recognize a certain idiom as 'religious'? How do they define their religious worlds against those of others? In this article, I suggest that Orsi's list of key questions could be expanded with sub-questions concerning the relationship between people, their own religion, and the religion of others. These additional considerations merit more attention in the study of lived religion because they help reveal how people are shaped by the idioms they use and the worlds they make. These considerations, in other words, draw attention to the structured—as well as the structuring—aspects of religious practice.

The study of lived religion has developed as a response to scholars' growing awareness of the modern category of 'religion' as a power-laden cultural construct carrying the legacy of the Reformation, colonialism, and nationalism (e.g. Asad 1993; McCutcheon 2003; Smith 1998). In their articulations of the lived religion approach, influential advocates such as Orsi, Meredith McGuire (2008), David Hall (1997), Nancy Ammerman (2007a, 2007b, 2014, 2016), and Courtney Bender (2003, 2012) have voiced their disillusionment with various inbuilt features of conventional academic understandings of religion. These include the Protestant theological undertone of concepts and theories (McGuire 2008; Orsi 2016; see also

Stringer 2008), the preoccupation with the question of secularization (Ammerman 2007b), the privileging of institutions over non-institutional forms of religion (Bender 2003), and the hierarchical division between 'élite' and 'popular' religion, in which the latter category receives its meaning through its distance from officially sanctioned 'proper' religion (Hall 1997, viii; see also Primiano 1995).

As advanced by these US historians and sociologists of religion, the study of lived religion promotes methodologies geared to circumvent taken-for-granted scholarly preconceptions and perspectives. Different scholars have different specific emphases, however, depending on disciplinary background. In some of the sociological literature, in particular, lived religion has been understood as a reference to laypeople's autonomous and unofficial religious activity. For McGuire (2008, 12), for instance, the usefulness of the term lies in "distinguishing the actual experience of religious persons from the prescribed religion of institutionally defined beliefs and practices". This focus, which can be seen to constitute a reaction against the institutional bias of traditional US sociology of religion, has recently been criticized (Ammerman 2016). It is more fruitful to delineate the research using theoretical articulations regarding human experience and human social action. In this vein, Orsi (2010, lii–liii: note 4, liv–lv: note 10; 1997, 7–8, 20: note 11) has interpreted the lived religion approach as considering religion within what existentialists and phenomenological anthropologists have called the life-world.

To analyze religion-as-lived—religion taking shape in individuals' ongoing processes of engagement with the realities of everyday existence—Orsi stresses the necessity of upholding a dialectical stance, which is constantly "moving back and forth between structure and agency, tradition and act, [and] imagination and reality" (Orsi 2010, xli). The relationship between individual agency and social structure, however, remains insufficiently addressed in much contemporary scholarship under the banner of lived religion. When the focus is on individuals, it is easy to over-emphasize creativity and subversion at the expense of conformity and discipline. This shows, for instance, in the way scholars tend to equate lived religion, either implicitly or explicitly, with unorthodox and unsanctioned interpretations of official religious practices and beliefs (e.g. Marks 2014, 65–66; Peumans 2014, 620; Possamai 2015, 788).

Advocates of the lived religion approach cultivate a sensitivity to the way the hierarchical presuppositions inherent in many conventional definitions can distort inquiries into the religious lives of their research

subjects. Instead of predefined concepts, priority is thus given to people's own interpretations of their practices and beliefs (Ammerman 2007a, 5; McGuire 2008, 4, 12; Orsi 1997, 7). Nevertheless, in their interlocutions, scholars often encounter the kind of normative classifications that they themselves strive to avoid. Religion cannot be encountered or engaged with in some pure form; assessments of it are influenced by existing discourses on religion. Furthermore, informants' views on what counts as appropriate or worthy religion also reflect their positions on various other actors inhabiting the same social context.

I argue that an exclusive focus on the difference between religion-as-prescribed by institutions and religion-as-practised by individuals produces only a partial view of the dynamics at the core of individual religiosity. It perpetuates the institution–individual dichotomy, only shifting the center of attention from the former to the latter. It often prioritizes agency at the expense of structure. In addition, this one-dimensional perspective also overshadows the embeddedness of religious persons in a wider religious field that expands beyond the institution(s) closest to them. In reality, people use religious idioms and make religious worlds while enmeshed in intricate power relations, with various actors staking different claims. An understanding of this broader social web is necessary for capturing religion-as-lived, especially in a modern, pluralistic society. Moreover, one way to gain such an understanding is to pay attention to research subjects' appreciations and classifications of religion. They reveal the extent to which individuals are aware of the existence of multiple religious (and secular) worlds and constitute one tactic with which people defend and justify their world vis-à-vis that of others.

In the following, I suggest that Pierre Bourdieu's theorizations can provide scholars of lived religion with tools to analyze both how individuals use religious idioms (to evoke again Orsi's quote that opened this article) in their daily lives and how their interpretations of these idioms are linked to their positions and struggles within a wider social context. First, I produce a brief outline of how Bourdieu's key concepts have been connected to religion as a social phenomenon. Using an empirical example, I then demonstrate how these concepts can generatively connect research subjects' opinions and judgments with their histories, status, and investments within the religious field.

Several contributors to this *Theorizing Lived Religion* special issue, of which this article forms part, discuss contemporary spirituality. All touch upon the issue of the way religiosity that lacks formal institutional

organization nonetheless unfolds within various regulative structures and discourses. My example concerns more traditional religiosity: that of elderly Finnish Orthodox women and, to some extent, their Lutheran peers. These women, I propose, strive to uphold their positions in the increasingly pluralistic and individualistic Finnish religious field through an emphasis on childhood socialization as a foundation of 'right' and devout religion.

Bourdieu, religion, and the study of lived religion

Since its development as a distinct research field, the study of lived religion has been connected to theories of practice. Advocates of the approach have turned towards practice, in particular, to investigate the complex power relations influencing religious activity (Hall 1997, xi; Orsi 2003, 171–172). The social theory of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu arguably constitutes the best-known formulation of practice theory. Nevertheless, while the usefulness of Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and practice has been acknowledged in lived religion literature (Bender 2012; Bender 2003, 167–168: note 2; McGuire 2008, 99–100; Orsi 1997, 16), more substantial engagements with his theorizations are rare (see, however, Kupari 2016).

Bourdieu sought to understand and explain social reproduction and change through a focus on the dialectic between relations of meaning (socially produced knowledge) and relations of domination (Wacquant 1992, 7, 15). The core trio of concepts in his theoretical apparatus—field, capital, *habitus*—aims to facilitate such a relational analysis of social phenomena. In Bourdieuian vocabulary, the concept of field refers to semi-autonomous configurations of relations in the social world, within which individuals, interest groups, and institutions are positioned (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 98–101). In each field, individuals compete for power. Capital denotes the various resources, values, and wealth around which power relations crystallize. Thus, within each field, the pursuit of power translates into a struggle for the accumulation and control of capital as delineated by the symbolic system operative within the field in question. Finally, Bourdieu (1990, 53) defines *habitus* as systems of incorporated dispositions which inform individuals' actions within different fields. When the individual's *habitus* is compatible with a particular field, s/he experiences the field as a meaningful world, tacitly accepting the immanent rules that govern activities and their outcomes within it (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 116–117).

According to Bourdieu (1971, 300–305, 318–320; 1991, 5–9, 22–25), a division of labor with respect to the production of religious goods constitutes

the necessary condition for the emergence of an independent religious field. This field extends between different classes of religious specialists who are in control of religious capital such as knowledge, competencies, commodities, and qualifications (see also Verter 2003, 159–160).[1] Bourdieu mainly discusses religion as a legitimator of social classifications and inequalities and how religious specialists compete for authority over this legitimation (Rey 2007, 5, 8, 57). Moreover, based on the historical case of French Catholicism, his work focuses on a situation in which a particular institution (the Roman Catholic Church) and a particular class of specialists (Catholic clergy) hold a monopoly of the religious field. It can thus not be applied to other contexts. However, Bourdieu never actually intended his concept of field for this kind of uncritical use. Rather, he emphasized that empirical research is needed to determine the existence and the boundaries of any field in any given time and place (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 100–101). In this vein, Bourdieu's theorizations have successfully been used to investigate differently organized religious fields and the way laypeople actively participate in them (e.g. Dillon 2001; McKinnon, Trzebiatowska, and Brittain 2011; Verter 2003; Wood 2007).

According to Bourdieu, the activities of religious professionals in the religious field aim at affecting laypeople's worldviews and ways of life by inculcating in them a particular religious *habitus*. Bourdieu's own observations concerning the religious *habitus* are mostly limited to its role in power games. For many scholars of religion, however, its real potential lies elsewhere: in "its trenchant power for explaining the nature of human belief and practice" (Rey 2007, 92). The notion of *habitus* makes it possible to view religion as an embodied dimension of subjectivity, which develops as a result of the individual's more or less active and conscious participation in the religious field and in relation to his/her trajectory, position, and capital within the field. As the "generative basis of all thoughts, perceptions, and actions conforming with the norms of a religious representation of the natural and supernatural world" (Bourdieu 1991, 22; 1971, 318–319), *habitus* can be seen as the foundation of religion-as-lived. It defines the possibilities and limitations of what individuals embedded in particular contexts can do, know, imagine, and feel about religion.

The lived religion approach seeks to examine religion within the matrix of everyday life. From this perspective, the question of how the religious field is connected to other social fields is relevant, but this interconnection constitutes an under-developed aspect of Bourdieu's work (e.g. McKinnon, Trzebiatowska, and Brittain 2011, 358–359; Verter 2003, 156–157).[2] Bender (2012, 285–286), who has examined how religion comes into play in mundane

interactions between people, thus criticizes Bourdieu's concept of field for postulating a separate, self-contained religious sphere as the point of origin for all things religious. More theoretical work on the relationship between the religious field and other social arenas is certainly needed. Despite his 'insular' vision of the religious field (Verter 2003, 156), Bourdieu's theory does not actually presume that religious dispositions only inform activities performed in designated religious settings. Because dispositions are linked in a complex way, religious dispositions can also generate reactions with regard to, for example, art, sexuality or politics and *vice versa* (Schäfer et al. 2016, 160).

Bourdieu (1971, 311–313; 1991, 15–17) associates the specific interest or motivating force underlying activities within the religious field with supernatural powers. For him, commitment to the 'game' of the religious field hinges on the assumption that relations between humans and supernatural powers or entities matter and that these relations need managing and cultivating. This broad understanding of what religion is about is relatively similar to views articulated by advocates of the lived religion approach. They have connected religion, for example, to "special beings" (Orsi 2005, 2–4), "supernatural forces" (Rubin, Smilde, and Junge 2014, 14), and "sacred presences" (Ammerman 2014, 191).

Nevertheless, Bourdieu's notion of the religious field as organized around relations with supernatural powers should ultimately be read as a provisional, not essentializing, interpretation of religion. After all, the power to define 'religion' is a central issue at stake here. For Bourdieu, religion is a social construction and a contested category, which reflects the *status quo* of the religious field in a particular context at a certain time. While some basic parameters concerning religion are tacitly accepted by virtually everyone in the field, other issues are more openly disputed. Based on their participation histories, laypeople also subscribe to different views of 'proper' and virtuous religion or of e.g. 'heresy', 'bigotry', 'superstition', and 'humbug'. They are disposed to place a high capital value on different manifestations of religious belief, practice, and experience.

While Bourdieu's understanding of the religious field has been commended for its potential to discern conflict (Maduro 2012, 35), it has also been criticized. Martin Riesebrodt captures the general tone of this criticism when he notes that Bourdieu "reduces religion to an instrument for pursuing this-worldly power interests and social advancement" (Riesebrodt 2010, 67). Bourdieu's treatment of religion is widely viewed as lacking sophistication; even scholars who analyze religion using his insights have often relied primarily on other aspects of his work (see Rey 2007, 5–7). In defense of

Bourdieu it is important to reiterate that, in his theory, religious dispositions do form the necessary catalysts for people's active participation in the struggles of the field (Bourdieu 1971, 311–312; Bourdieu 1991, 15–16). However, as religion is inherently neither altruistic nor self-interested, religious dispositions also generate behavior that seems to belong to the latter category.

The notion of the religious field, despite its shortcomings, provides a fruitful additional perspective of religion as a social phenomenon. Bourdieu's theorizations facilitate analyses targeting different aspects and features of the field. As befits a contribution to the study of lived religion, I focus on individuals. How do laypeople's interpretations of religious practices, beliefs, and experiences take form and inform their actions? How do laypeople, in and through their everyday religiosity, contribute to struggles in the religious field? In the following, I illustrate how Bourdieuian concepts can be used to analyze people's assessment of their everyday religious practice and long-term trajectories in the religious field.

At the crossroads of tradition and individuality: elderly women in the Finnish religious field

The case I present here is based on my research on the religion of elderly Orthodox Christian women in Finland (Kupari 2016). The study relied primarily on semi-structured interviews with 24 women who had been socialized into Orthodox Christianity in childhood and secondarily on written autobiographical submissions of 30 Evangelical Lutheran and 9 Orthodox Christian women.[3] The call for written submissions was circulated during 2006 and 2007 and the interviews were conducted in 2007 and 2008. When the data were gathered, the following details emerged: the women's average age was 75; their mean year of birth was 1932; 57 of the 63 research subjects were born either between the two world wars or during the Second World War.

This research drew inspiration from the lived religion approach. It focused on religion as part of the daily life of laywomen over the course of different life phases. I was particularly interested in the 'cumulative' dimension of my elderly informants' religiosity. How did their present-day practices, beliefs, and perceptions reflect their life trajectories and the wider social changes that they had lived through? The study thus emphasized the role of embodied memory as a feature of the life-world for the study of lived religion. To theorize the interviewees' present-day religiosity as the outcome

of their lifelong religious practice, I used Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*. For Bourdieu, *habitus* is embodied history or the "active presence of the whole past of which it is the product" (Bourdieu 1990, 53–56). Thus, it provides an ideal tool for conceptualizing religious practice from a long-term temporal perspective. To capture the Orthodox women's *habitus*, I analyzed their accounts in terms of these being indicative of their social trajectories, accumulation of capital, and present status within the Finnish religious field.

For the last 500 years, the Finnish religious field has been dominated by one institution: the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland. In 1917, when Finland gained independence, 98% of Finns identified as Lutheran (Kääriäinen, Niemelä, and Ketola 2005, 82, 88–92). The relationship between Finns and the Lutheran Church has, moreover, been described as 'believing in belonging', indicating the interconnection between Church membership and national identity, Lutheranism, and Finnishness (Nynäs, Illman, and Martikainen 2015, 12–15). Orthodox Christianity, in contrast, has been marginalized within the field. The majority of the Finnish Orthodox population originates from Karelia, which has acted as a buffer zone between first Sweden, then Finland, and Russia for centuries (Martikainen and Laitila 2014, 153–155). Throughout the Finnish nation-building process, the identity of the Karelian Orthodox Christians was disputed: while their language (Karelian or Finnish) connected them with the Finns, their religion was seen to connect them with the Russians (Kirkinen, Nevalainen, and Sihvo 1994, 276, 559–560).

The prejudice against Orthodox Christians continued well into the second half of the twentieth century. The most recent redistribution of the Karelia population took place after the Second World War, when Finland ceded most of its Karelian territories to the Soviet Union. Over 400,000 Finnish Karelians, including two-thirds of the Finnish Orthodox population, lost their homes (Martikainen and Laitila 2014, 160–161). When the displaced Karelians were resettled in other parts of Finland, the Orthodox evacuees aroused extra suspicion because of their 'backward' and 'Russian' religion. It was only in the 1960s, in step with the budding pluralization of the Finnish religious field, that the public image of Orthodox Christianity began to transform: it changed from a stigmatized to a positively exotic minority faith (Martikainen and Laitila 2014, 161–164, 170).

According to Marcus Moberg and colleagues, in twenty-first-century Finland, the Lutheran Church continues to provide "the general religious discursive 'backdrop' against which all other types of discourse on religion or spirituality often, in some way or other, have to be constructed" (Moberg et

al. 2015, 52). In the Finnish religious field, Lutheranism still serves as a central paradigm and blueprint for religion more generally. This also applies to my research material.

As I have discussed elsewhere (Kupari 2016, 85–89), the Orthodox women I interviewed often described their practices and beliefs in terms of similarities and differences with what they interpreted as Lutheran practices and beliefs. This tendency reflects their history of participation in the Finnish religious field. The interviewees, most of whom had Lutheran spouses, children, and grandchildren, were used to conduct their religious lives in intimate contact with the dominant faith. Through comparisons between Orthodoxy and Lutheranism, they articulated their understanding of Orthodox Christianity as 'proper' religion with the discursive tools at their disposal. Simultaneously, their statements served to solidify and augment the women's own positions in relation to the Lutheran majority.

My Lutheran and Orthodox interlocutors were similar in all respects besides religious affiliation. They were more or less of the same age and socio-economic status. Furthermore, all the women (or their parents) were Finnish Karelians who had been evacuated from their homes during the Second World War. However, depending on their religious majority/minority status, the informants' circumstances of religious practice, especially during earlier life phases, differed in significant ways. It is thus no surprise that the Lutheran women who responded to my call for written autobiographical submissions did not share the Orthodox women's tendency to compare. They had no need to legitimate their practices and beliefs in relation to any other religious tradition. During data collection, it became clear that the two groups nonetheless had a lot in common. One experience that they shared was having lived through massive shifts in the composition of the Finnish religious field.

In recent decades, membership of the Lutheran Church has dropped at an accelerating rate. At the end of 2017, 71% of Finns were members of the Lutheran Church, while about 1% (60,000 people) belonged to the Orthodox Church. The overwhelming majority of the remaining 28% was not affiliated with any religious institution (Statistics Finland 2018). This development reflects the effects of both secularization and pluralization. The Finnish religious field increasingly favors projects of 'seeking'. Experimenting with different religious alternatives in order to find the right lifestyle is valued rather than lifelong religious adherence. The younger generations, especially, express a growing distance from institutionalized religion. As older, female Christian faithful in contemporary Finland, the women in my research were

not oblivious to this trend. Their response was to justify their positions in the field by emphasizing 'childhood religion' as a special modality of religious practice and experience.

In their accounts, both Orthodox and Lutheran women equally emphasized childhood as the foundational period of their religiosity. Religion was central to their present-day lives, they reasoned, because it had been a self-evident part of daily life in their childhood homes. It was 'tradition', 'heritage', and 'upbringing' that had been 'learned in childhood', 'handed down through generations', and 'preserved in memory'. Many aspects of the informants' religion were, indeed, characterized by such long-term continuity. For instance, through their daily religious customs, such as praying and venerating icons, the Orthodox women tapped into their childhood experiences of religion, producing a lived continuum of practice (Kupari 2016, 134–137). The women's focus on continuity reaching from childhood to old age stemmed from and mirrored their religious dispositions—their *habitus*:

> Let's say that I've been Orthodox already since before birth. It's […] almost like a gene; it's in you already. So, it feels so hard to imagine, I cannot even imagine being Lutheran. That I'd change to Lutheranism. I think that religion has to, it has to start with the child. That you experience having an Orthodox God, even if God is the same for everyone but still… (Raili, October 27, 2008, Outokumpu)[4]

According to the women in my study, 'proper' religion was childhood religion. In other words, the key constituent of their understanding of the ideal organization of the relations between humans and supernatural powers was that these relations were formed in childhood. This emerged with particular emphasis in connection with the topic of conversion. In the above excerpt, for instance, the interviewee states her opinion that 'religion […] has to start with the child'. This perception, I argue, also rested on her *habitus* as embodied history. The use of corporeal metaphors, for instance, describing Orthodoxy as 'almost like a gene', conveyed an experience of possessing deeply ingrained knowledge of the supernatural that was impossible to shake off. The experience was significant in the women's impression that conversion and other projects of self-willed religious change were anomalous. They could never fully succeed.

Nonetheless, the women's views also reflect the dynamics of the Finnish religious field. Since the Second World War, conversion has constituted an important phenomenon in the Finnish Orthodox community (Nguyen 2007, 123–124). Overall, projects of religious and spiritual realignment have become more and more common. Religious pluralism and

people's awareness of different religious (and secular) lifestyles have also increased. Toini and Katri, for example, framed their negative views of change within these broader trends. Toini explained that she did not encourage even her own daughter's conversion to Orthodox Christianity, because "everyone gets by with their own religion".[5] Katri, for her part, asserted that, even if she had been born into a different culture, the "only right" religion for her would still be that of her childhood:

> My [Lutheran] daughter would have changed her faith to Orthodoxy. But I said to her: "You know, give it a second thought. Everyone gets by with their own religion." And that was that. I've never coaxed anyone to convert; I don't like the idea of that. (Toini, April 7, 2008, Helsinki)

> I think that, had I been born somewhere across the world, in India, for example, my religion would be completely different. I would have grown into it since childhood and it would be the only right one for me. Just like this Orthodox religion is now. (Katri, April 7, 2008, Helsinki)

The argument that childhood religion is an intrinsic part of the self and should be preserved throughout one's life only becomes meaningful in a situation where adherence to the religion in which one was brought up no longer forms the self-evident trajectory. The women's focus on the importance of childhood socialization therefore indicates that they considered this style—their style—of religion to be in decline in the Finnish religious field. The women, in other words, conceived of their positions in the religious field as undermined by other, more change-oriented lifestyles. Through emphasizing stability as an important constituent of virtuous religion they struggled with this powerful tide.

The informants' accounts can also be interpreted through the concept of capital. The position an individual occupies in the religious field is based on his/her religious capital. Dominant conceptualizations of religious capital reflect the state of the field at any given moment (Bourdieu 1971, 318–319; Bourdieu 1991, 22). Through their assessments, my research subjects promoted the notion of (lay) religious capital founded on inherited knowledge and permanence of religious practice. For them, meritorious religious behavior consisted of staying true to and keeping up the tradition in which one had been brought up, whether in an Orthodox, Lutheran or even non-Christian religious context. In this sense, the accounts can also be read as expressions of (moderate) religious relativism and tolerance. The legitimacy

and, consequently, the capital value of foreign religious idioms are not denied; rather, the main distinction is drawn between the faithful and the fickle.

Despite their critical interpretations of religious realignment, the women were not categorically against the notion of religion as a personal choice. Their familiarity with the individualistic ethos of the religious field was evident, especially in the way they discussed the religion of their children and grandchildren. The women were careful to note that the religiosity of their offspring was their private affair and that one should not force one's beliefs on others (Kupari 2016, 145–149). Moreover, to some extent, this discourse also penetrated their arguments about the primacy of childhood religion. In some statements, like Katri's, childhood religion was not necessarily presented as the only tenable religious option, but as the one most suitable for the person in question. In a religious field where individuality and self-fulfillment are held in high esteem, the informants also defended their style of religion by emphasizing that it could constitute an active choice.

An individual whose *habitus* accords with a particular field finds this field intuitively acceptable and self-evident. *Habitus*, however, does not automatically stay attuned to different social fields. Where there is mismatch between *habitus* and field, living through the *habitus* becomes more problematic and the field loses some of its common-sense character (Bourdieu 2000, 160–162). The religious dispositions of my research subjects had fallen out of step with the transformations in the Finnish religious field. In an increasingly individualistic society, they grappled with marginalization. One outcome of their experience of not quite fitting in was their explicit emphasis on childhood religion as 'proper' religion and on 'proper' religion as childhood religion.

The women equated their present-day religiosity with their childhood religious socialization, 'their parents' way'. Their focus on a continuum of religious practice and belief was evoked by their embodied history. Nevertheless, many aspects of the informants' religion had transformed considerably over the course of their lives: between pre-war Karelia and post-war Finland, childhood and motherhood, and working life and retirement. While acknowledged in passing, these changes were commonly downplayed. From this perspective, the women's insistence on stability can also be seen to constitute a performative strategy. In their daily lives they did not only follow childhood practices and beliefs automatically or instinctively, but also consciously and willfully. These practices and beliefs helped them to buttress their religious world against other worlds, which were organized around

different values. The women thus deliberately positioned themselves in a lineage of tradition, choosing continuity over rupture.

Conclusions

The authors of a number of recent publications identify them as studies of lived religion, making this field of study a prolific research strand in the sociology and history of religion as well as religious studies (Ammerman 2016, 83–86). The term is generally employed in a loose sense, however, to outline the particular research project (e.g. the focus on 'ordinary people' and 'everyday life' and the use of ethnographic methods). The lived religion approach has yet to develop a robust methodological toolkit of its own. Moreover, systematic discussions of the theoretical premises of the enterprise are scarce—hence the motivation for a special issue on *Theorizing Lived Religion*.

Arguably the most influential scholar connected to the lived religion approach (Ammerman 2016, 88), Robert Orsi, describes religion as "a network of relationships between heaven and earth involving humans of all ages and many different sacred figures together" (Orsi 2005, 2). In this special issue, several scholars tackle methodological and theoretical questions pertinent to studying people's lived experiences of the supernatural. My focus, in contrast, has been on the way the relations between humans and supernatural powers—the different ways in which these relations are imagined and cultivated—are used to mold relations between humans. This aspect of religion, I have suggested, can be analyzed by using Bourdieuian social theory. Bourdieu's theorizations help accentuate questions of structure and power in inquiries into religion-as-lived, which remains a challenge, although the need to consider individuals as agents whose activities are shaped by their socio-cultural conditions was already identified in the inaugural volume of the approach (Hall 1997, xi).

More specifically, scholars of lived religion can benefit from examining how their research subjects conceive of and position themselves within their wider religious fields. One way of doing this is to explore informants' interpretations and classifications of religion, e.g. 'proper' religious practice, conduct, knowledge, experience, organization, and authority. People do not produce such assessments as neutral observers. Rather, their views are informed by their investments and histories of participation in the religious field.

In lived religion scholarship, the "recognition of the laity as actors in

their own right" (Hall 1997, viii) has sometimes led to the simplistic juxtaposition of religion-as-practised by individuals and religion-as-prescribed by institutions. Considering the religious field hones our perception of the power relations that structure the lived experiences of religious practitioners. While Bourdieu has been criticized for relegating laypeople to the role of passive consumers of religious goods (although Lene Kühle 2012 argues otherwise), his concept can be used to produce nuanced micro-level accounts that prioritize laypeople's practical knowledge of the field. My analysis of interviews with older Finnish Orthodox women and written autobiographical submissions by Finnish Lutheran women constitutes one such (albeit partial) account.

My research subjects interpreted 'proper' religion by emphasizing childhood socialization. Ideally, they indicated, religion should be acquired during childhood. I focused on this particular feature because it does not directly concern the institutional sanction of religious idioms. While infant baptism still constitutes the most common route into both Lutheranism and Orthodoxy in Finland, neither church has declared that lifelong adherence and conversion result in modalities of religiosity that have any relevant qualitative difference.[6] Rather, the informants' assessments reflect their experiences as proponents of what Robert Wuthnow has called the "spirituality of dwelling" (Wuthnow 1998, 3–11) in the Finnish religious field, where religious idioms are increasingly conceived of and used as replaceable resources for identity work and personal fulfillment. The discussion thus demonstrates the value, for lived religion scholarship, of looking beyond the institution–individual divide and thus at the wider contexts within which people encounter and live religion.

Participation in the contests of the religious field, for influence on the way relations between humans and supernatural powers should be organized, can seem an inconsequential aspect of religion-as-lived. This is especially the case with laypeople—like the women of my study—whose lifestyles do not include the propagation of their beliefs and who are not active in movements or campaigns for religious reform. Indeed, in their everyday religious lives, my informants were not primarily motivated by hierarchical distinctions between 'us' and 'them'. Rather, they cultivated a religious lifestyle to enact their embodied knowledge of the world. Nevertheless, taking a stance in the religious field was not completely peripheral to their religiosity. The women's interpretations of 'right' and virtuous religion were, after all, also guided by their religious dispositions.

Bourdieu can be justly criticized for treating religion as an instrument

for constructing and maintaining social inequalities or for gaining and wielding power over others (see Rey 2007, 5–7). Nevertheless, the pursuit of 'worldly' goals such as social advancement cannot be categorically separated from 'genuine' religious activities, which are supposedly wholly occupied with the other-worldly realm (see Schäfer et al. 2016, 155). In fact, the insistence that 'proper' religion is only concerned with the hereafter may constitute a discursive strategy employed by certain invested groups—commonly, religious élites—to bolster their status within the religious field. The division between 'pure' and 'corrupt' motivations for religious action is not unfamiliar to academic discourse. Rather, it is connected to what Orsi (2005, 183–189) has called the "moralizing imperative" of the academic study of religion: the reliance on hierarchical typologies that, from a Bourdieuian perspective, reflects scholars' insufficiently analyzed relationship with the religious field (see Bourdieu 2010).

Scholars of lived religion attempt to disentangle themselves from the 'moralizing' presuppositions that haunt conventional academic definitions of religion. This is a worthy objective; in pursuing it, however, they sometimes overlook that normative judgments and classifications are inherent features of the religious field, through which religious actors may express their sense of place within it. These suppositions can therefore be analyzed to determine the central social distinctions and contentions that have influenced laypeople's religious dispositions. When people take religion into their own hands, they apply religious idioms *both* to construe worlds *and* to defend these worlds in relation to those of others.

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Notes

[1] In constructing his concept of field, Bourdieu relied heavily on Max Weber’s sociology of religion, particularly his theorization of the relations between priests, prophets, and magicians (Dianteill 2003, 530, 535–536).

[2] Generally speaking, fields can relate to each other both horizontally and vertically and have varying degrees of autonomy (Krause 2018, 8–13). For example, in applications of Bourdieu’s concept of field to research on religion, scholars sometimes postulate the existence of several intertwining religious fields: national religious fields, transnational tradition-specific religious fields, and tradition-specific sub-fields of national fields (e.g. McKinnon, Trzebiatowska, and Brittain 2011). In addition, religious fields are connected in different ways to other fields such those of economy, politics, and cultural production (e.g. Verter 2003). According to Bourdieu, however, the relations between fields vary too much, depending on the historical context to be translated into universal principles (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 109–110).

[3] Both the recorded interviews and the written submissions are archived in the Folklore Archives of the Finnish Literature Society.

[4] To protect the interviewees’ anonymity, their names have been changed. All interview extracts have been translated from Finnish by the author.

[5] While, during the first post-war decades, the trend of conversion was from Orthodoxy to Lutheranism, since the late 1970s, the number of individuals joining the Orthodox Church of Finland has exceeded that of those leaving it (Martikainen and Laitila 2014, 163). Many converts have Orthodox ancestry, as would have been the case of Toini’s daughter.

[6] Nevertheless, when conversion to Orthodoxy first became a noticeable phenomenon in the Finnish religious field, leading Orthodox clergy issued statements emphasizing the equal worth of the convictions of converts compared to those of the ‘cradle’ Orthodox (e.g. Archbishop Paavali 1980). From this perspective, my interviewees’ comments can also be read as a departure from the public discourse of the church.