New international studies on religions and dialogue in education
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Religious and spiritual education in plural societies are emerging areas in the field of research on learning, development, socialisation and formative practices in various religious and spiritual contexts – an interdisciplinary field in which scholars of religious studies, pedagogy, educational studies, psychology, anthropology, neuroscience, theology and philosophy are engaged.

Religion and spirituality involve multicultural encounters in local and global contexts. Empirical research, however, is a relatively new enterprise. Theory formation is still in progress and cannot evolve into a serious research discipline without empirical research using adequate and valid methodology. The series Research on Religious and Spiritual Education will meet the need for good empirical studies and innovative theoretical concepts. It focuses on schools, families and communities as contexts of religious and spiritual learning and instruction; constraints and opportunities for religious and spiritual development; educational and formative goals and practices for schools with regard to values, beliefs and worldviews; religious and spiritual socialisation within families and communities; and new ways of understanding religion and spirituality as educational fields. It is aimed at theory formation as well as the enhancement of educational practices concerned with religion and spirituality.

The series includes monographs in English as well as edited volumes of articles. In taking various research designs into account, it resembles research traditions all over Europe. All these publications are of uniformly high quality. The series is associated with the European Association for Research on Learning and Instruction (www.earli.org), Special Interest Group Religious and Spiritual Education.
Martin Ubani (Ed.)

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Editorial

In this season of change and movement, there is a growing demand for new ways of interpreting the past, present and future. Many global processes such as migration, pluralism and the redefinition of citizenship challenge the traditional notions of borders concerning cultures, states and nationalities, ethnicities and even religions. Arguably, the past decades have also shown that religion is a relevant – and sometimes even a dominant – actor in the public space. In addition, today the need for dialogue and educating for dialogue skills is increasingly being recognised. At the same time, dialogue concerning religions is also becoming more inclusive: dialogue in religious education is to recognise not only the dialogue between religious traditions but also the dialogue that includes non-religious traditions or takes place within religious traditions.

It can be said that we are currently living not only in information societies or digital societies but also in learning societies. Education has for years acknowledged the role of informal learning in the learning trajectories of the individual. Today, digitalisation and social media have increased the combination of communication and learning in formal settings such as in schools or confirmation training or more informal settings such as homes, with knowledge and communities outside of the immediate surroundings.

Consequently, in societies today, the distinction in religions or identities between global and local or inside and outside no longer functions well. As the many borders in our world are becoming again more transparent and cultures blended, there is an increasing and constant need to re-examine the conceptions and theories concerning the individual, religions and education through the interplay of philosophical and theological analysis, empirical evidence and scholarly interaction.

The articles in this volume are extended works selected from presentations from the 14th Nordic Conference on Religious Education (NCRE2017) that took place on 12/6–15/6/2017 at the University of Eastern Finland and was chaired by Professor Martin Ubani. The conference theme was: »Religions, cultures and dialogue in learning environments and beyond«. It was hosted both by the School of Theology and the School of Applied Educational Science and Teacher Education. Established in 1977, the NCRE has become one of the integral international conferences in religious education. At NCRE2017, there were 120
participants not just from Scandinavia and the Baltic countries but also from all over the world, including the US, UK, Belgium, Turkey and Ghana.

The volume at hand includes 14 original refereed international articles. Their topics include studies on religious education in different contexts ranging from higher education to home education, and research on education about religions to confessional education. They highlight different aspects concerning religion and dialogue in education. The book is divided into 4 chapters.

The first chapter is called »Inter-religious and non-religious dialogue in education«. This chapter includes four articles. The articles discuss issues concerning dialogue and education in home education, public education and in spiritual education. The first article in the chapter by Metso is called: »Raising a Christian or an Orthodox Christian. Parents’ experience of their ecumenical reality and minority status in the religious upbringing of Finnish Orthodox children and youth«. The article shows how issues related to ecumenism, minority identity and religious education are intertwined in Orthodox home education. The second article of the chapter is called: »Theoretical and methodological perspectives to studying religious and cultural diversity in Finnish, Swedish and Estonian comprehensive schools.« In the article, Kuusisto, Straarup, Schihalejev, Kallioniemi and Vikdahl discuss the grounds for a valid cross-cultural study of young people. The article »Interreligious education in Hong Kong: Promoting human values in risk of assimilation by sovereign transition« by Lam follows with an examination on educational policy challenges in Hong Kong. The articles are complimented by Wortzman’s invited individual article: »The role of mindful art-making in Jewish dialogical spiritual education« in which she combines art education with dialoguing with Jewish tradition.

The second chapter of the book is called »Socio-cultural issues on pluralism and education«. It consists of three articles that depict different topics concerning the socio-cultural context and learning. The first article is called: »Toward democratic practices in RE? A teaching experiment in Finnish classrooms«. This article by Ubani discusses the results from the lessons that used teacher-centred methods and democratic student-centred methods based on socio-cultural learning and it demonstrates how the sense of participation was higher in the latter lesson. In the second article: »Theology students’ views about competence on multicultural and multi-faith issues«, Şanver and Erakkuş present quantitative results on Turkish Theology students who are studying to become professionals in religious education for different institutions. The third article by Asare-Danso examines the developments of Church-State relations in the
Ghanaian educational policy. Asare-Danso’s article is called: »Church state in educational dialogue: A historical study of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana«.

The third chapter focuses on the teachers. It is called: »The educator meets religions«. It consists of four articles that examine the theme of the book from the teachers’, student teachers’ and instructors’ viewpoints. The first article examines the personnel in a Christian day care in Finland. This article by Luttinen and Härkönen is called: »Early childhood educational thinking in a Christian day-care centre« and it implements a conceptual model of pedagogical systems theory. This is followed by the article: »Religious minorities as bridge builders in diverse classrooms«. In this article, Hammer and Paaske discuss the effects and possibilities of a Jewish community initiative in Norwegian schools. In her article: »Islamic education in the non-confessional frame: Challenges of Islamic religious education in the Finnish context« Kujanpää discusses the challenges in implementation of Islamic religious education in Finnish public education. The fourth article in this chapter is from Ubani. It is called: »What kind of educational reflections do RE student teachers have during their pedagogical studies? A dialogical perspective on a case study.« It is a case study following a set of studies on RE student teachers by the author.

The fourth chapter includes three articles. The chapter is called: »New developments in religious education«. In the first article of the chapter: »Religious competence and the new national curriculum of Latvia: Current developments«, Geikina analyses the new national curriculum in Latvia from the viewpoint of religious competence. This article is followed by Mitropoulou’s and Faridou’s article called: »High school students’ views on the use of digital learning objects in religious education.« The article is based on data collected from Greece. The third article in the chapter is by Aikonen and is called: »A teacher as a user of technological devices and social media applications in Religious Education.« In the article, Aikonen presents the results from teachers of different types of religious education in Finland on the use of ICT in their educational practice. This is the last article of the volume.

The volume at hand is an outcome of many things. At this opportunity, I would like to express gratitude to several parties. I was privileged to lead the local organising committee of which researchers Raili Keränen-Pantsu, Eveliina Ojala and Sari Murtonen contributed greatly in the organising of the conference along with lecturer Risto Aikonen. In addition, Vesa Hirvonen, Pekka Metso, Ismo Pellikka, Katja Korkeakoski and Tiia Liuski helped with the implementation. The students Peter Schiel and Markus Pelkonen were of great help in the conference office before and during the conference. The research
assistants Julianna Räty and Sari Murtonen again proved to be invaluable in the editing process of the manuscripts. In addition to them, I would like to express my gratitude for the excellent review work done. The other members of the Nordic-Baltic committee of the NCRE conference: Geir Skeie, Christina Osbeck, Mette Buchardt, Gunnar Gunnarsson and Olga Schihalejev were also integral in the planning and execution of the conference. The NCRE2017-conference received support with gratuity from a few external sources. These were the Federation of Finnish Learned Societies, Joensuu University Foundation, the Finnish Lutheran Church, the Orthodox Church of Finland and the City of Joensuu. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to series editors Kirsi Tirri, Theo Van Der Zee, Ulrich Riegel and Waxmann publishing co. and Executive Editor Beate Plugge for accepting this contribution in the Waxmann series: »Religious and Spiritual Education« and for the assistance throughout the process. May this volume be worthy of the trust and effort shown by all the various parties and be for the benefit of the researchers, policymakers, practitioners and students of religion and spirituality in education.

In Joensuu, on 26/2/2018
Martin Ubani
Conference Chair of the NCRE2017
Editor
I

INTER-RELIGIOUS AND NON-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN EDUCATION
Raising a Christian or an Orthodox Christian?
Parents’ experience of their ecumenical reality and minority status in the religious upbringing of Finnish Orthodox children and youth

Abstract

This chapter focuses on the effect of parents' ecumenical reality and their minority position on the religious upbringing of children in the special context of Finnish Orthodox Christians, as described by the parents themselves in letters collected for this study. Family has a decisive role in religious socialization. Children growing up in mixed-marriage families, however, tend to diverge from religion more so than those with a homogenous religious family background. The chapter indicates that in the Finnish Orthodox context, both the minority position and ecumenical family setting of Orthodox parents compel them to simultaneously demarcate and assimilate when bringing up the new Orthodox generation. Since most Orthodox Finns grow up in mixed marriages, solving the challenge of religious diversity is often a complex family matter, strongly influencing parents’ experience of religious socialization in families. Outside of the family, a lack of peers is a major issue that complicates Orthodox religious upbringings. If Orthodox family support is available, the responsibilities of religious parenting are easier to bear.

Keywords religious upbringing, religious socialization, mixed marriages, ecumenism, Orthodoxy

The »ecumenical family« as a challenge for religious upbringings

Sociologically, the family has a decisive role in transmitting religious traditions, beliefs and practices. Children are strongly influenced by the religiosity of their childhood home and their parents’ religiosity and beliefs (Edgell, 2009; for research references, see Benson and King, 2005). This is even more the case in the
developed world, where both family and religion have been strongly privatized (Wilcox, 2005, pp. 99–101). Some scholars have recently begun to speak of the »sanctification of family relationships« due to religion’s positive effect on family cohesion (Mahoney, 2005; Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, & Murray-Swank, 2003; see also Howarth, Lees, Sidebotham, Higgins, & Imtiaz, 2008). In the complex case of a mixed marriage, instead of having a solely positive effect, the interconnectedness between religion and the family can complicate family relationships and weaken the commitment to and outcomes of a religious upbringing. In the elementary classic Handbook of Family Religious Education, McIntosh and Spilka (1995) indicate that mixed marriages tend to be less successful in terms of religious upbringing, at least when it comes to children’s identification with religious traditions and their participation in religious activities in adulthood.

Orthodox Christians are a small minority in Finland, with ca. 61 000 registered members of the Finnish Orthodox Church constituting approximately 1% of the population. In addition, there are at least 20 000 other Orthodox Christians (mainly Russians) living in Finland who are not registered in the Church. The Finnish Orthodox Church has legal status, and is recognized by the state as the second-ranking indigenous or national church of Finland, with the majority of Finns (72%) belonging to the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Mixed marriages have become more common among the Orthodox population since the Second World War. Currently, most Orthodox Finns (over 90%) marry a non-Orthodox spouse, who, in most cases, is Lutheran. Homogenous Orthodox families are a minority group within the Finnish Orthodox community. Consequently, mixed marriages are sociologically, religiously and ecclesiologically influential factors in Finnish Orthodoxy. At home and in church, Orthodoxy is practised within a framework that is thoroughly permeated by ecumenical reality and relations.

The focus in this chapter is on the effect of the specific dynamics of family religious education in a Finnish Orthodox context. From these dynamics, two research questions arise:

1) How is the ecumenical reality (within and outside the families) and belonging to a religious minority reflected in the parents’ goal of providing a religious upbringing for their children?

2) Do the parents feel that the ecumenical element in the family, or in the Finnish religious landscape, has complicated the religious upbringing of their children?
In a resource book (Jaanu-Schröder, Lehmuskoski, & Työrinoja, 1995) for »ecumenical families«, published by the Finnish Ecumenical Council in 1995, the lived reality of the Finnish Orthodox Christian population was reflected in relation to mixed marriages and religious upbringings. The negative aspects arising from the Finnish context that were pointed out in the book include a lack of acceptance in terms of both practising the Orthodox faith and promoting an Orthodox upbringing in the family on the part of the non-Orthodox spouse, concealing Orthodox symbols (e.g. icons) at home, grief caused by disagreement between spouses over baptizing their children, the disappointment of grandparents when »losing« their grandchildren to another church and a weak awareness of the Orthodox tradition among those who have been raised in a mixed-marriage family. As positive descriptions, the book also gives witness to the harmonious coexistence of Orthodox and non-Orthodox Christian traditions in one family, and the experience of mutual respect, reciprocal learning and a strengthening of the Orthodox identity in ecumenical family settings.

Despite the impact of an ecumenical family life and a minority position in terms of the everyday lived religion, very little research has been undertaken on the family issues of the Finnish Orthodox population. Voitto Huotari (1975a; 1975b, pp. 62–69) has discovered a strong tendency in mixed marriages to support the Lutheran tradition at the expense of Orthodoxy, for example, by baptizing the children outside of the Orthodox Church. Research carried out among female Orthodox evacuees (who fled from Karelia, the Eastern Finnish territory ceded to the Soviet Union, in the 1940s), shows that social pressure directed women towards minimal exposure of their Orthodox tradition while navigating between Orthodoxy and Lutheranism in mixed marriages and ecumenical family life. Distinctively Orthodox practices (the sign of the cross, venerating icons, Orthodox prayers) were observed privately by them. (Kupari, 2014; 2015).

These findings on the lived reality from the 1940s to the 1970s cannot be applied as such to the current Finnish context. Since the 1960s, Orthodoxy has emerged from the margins, and has an established social, cultural, religious and ecumenical presence in 21st-century Finland (Huttunen, 2002; Laitila, 2009; Metso, 2016). Attitudes towards Orthodoxy in mixed marriages have also changed. A more recent study on Eastern Finnish parents’ commitment to religious parenting suggests that non-Orthodox parents also feel responsible for the religious upbringing of their Orthodox children. Ecumenical family reality may even enhance the overall observation of religious traditions. (Vatanen, 2001).
This chapter provides up-to-date information on the lived reality and phenomena of the religious socialization of the Finnish Orthodox population. Due to a consciously ecumenical approach, religious intermarriages or interfaith marriages are not discussed in this chapter.

Before engaging with the analysis, the phenomena of religious socialization, and the concept and context of the Finnish Orthodox family are briefly described.

Interplay between the domains in religious socialization

Childhood and adolescent religiosity is influenced by several factors. The main domains that contribute to the religious socialization of children and youth include the family, peers, religious education (RE) and the congregation. Based on research results, Benson and King (2005) itemize three main factors in religious socialization:

1. **Family influences**: children conform to their parent’s religion more often than switching to another denomination or abandoning their religion. Religious activity at home, both parents’ commitment to religious modelling and consistency in the religious message enhance positive religious socialization. The transmission of religious values and beliefs in the family is hindered by mixed marriages and parental discord.

2. **Congregational influences**: religious development is significantly influenced by parochial education, RE programs and involvement in activities in the congregation. In addition to committed teachers, learner-centred processes and meaningful educational content for children and adolescents, congregational religious socialization is influenced by the positive climate of the community.

3. **Other influences**: peers and peer groups have an impact on religious socialization, and inform religious attendance and religious importance. In relation to the family and other contextual influences, peer influence seems to have a less important role in religious socialization.

Orthodox scholars of religious pedagogy have emphasized the importance of the interplay between different factors in the development of religiosity. Ideally, family, church (congregation) and school (RE) interact coherently forming a foundation and structure for religious socialization. This constructive network
is termed *integrative triangulation*, in which a religious education and upbringing in its wholeness is equally carried out by each of the three domains (Tarasar, 1995; Aikonen, 1998; Penttonen, 2001).

The Orthodox appreciation of the linkage between the different domains in religious socialization is supported by results from the research on the interplay between different influences. Religious engagement is significantly increased when children and youth have been imbedded in a religiously coherent nexus of family, church and school (Benson, 1992; Gunnoe & Moore, 2002; Regnerus, Smith, & Smith, 2004; see also Fowlkes, 1988; Benson & King, 2005).

In addition, the Orthodox understanding emphasizes the idea of life-long and holistic religious socialization: Religious growth and education is a continuous process connected with an overarching network of relationships in the domains of family and church (Koulomzin, 2004; Penttonen, 2013). As a result, religious formation and development are ecclesial, communal, holistic and life-long in nature (Boojamra, 1989).

**Ideals and the reality of religious socialization in the Finnish context**

Ideally, the family is, in the Orthodox teaching, a »miniature church«, whose life is organized liturgically and communally in relation to the congregation. As a rule, the Finnish Orthodox are a minority that lives scattered among an overwhelmingly Lutheran majority. People belonging to the dominant denomination – and, increasingly, to other religious communities as well – are members of most families of Finnish Orthodox believers. The status quo is that religiously homogenous miniature churches are rare exceptions, since in most cases, the other parent of a Finnish Orthodox child or youth is non-Orthodox. A mixed marriage does not necessarily mean that Orthodox »miniature churches« cannot be supported, yet their protection might be difficult (Merras, 1999, p. 77; Johannes, 2002, pp. 147–148; 2006, pp. 74–76). The general Orthodox view of mixed marriages is therefore disapproving (Metso, 2014).

The Finnish Orthodox Church is well aware of the ecumenical reality of most of its members’ family lives. In recent documents provided by the church, supporting mixed-marriage families is strongly endorsed. In 2011, the principles of early childhood education, *Holy Noise* (In Finnish: *Pyhää melu*), explicated the challenges brought about by the »ecumenical families« in terms of...
religious upbringings and preschool RE. Supporting the Orthodox identity of children and their Orthodox parents in such families was designated as the main task of the church in the field of early childhood education (Pyhä melu, 2011). Similarly, the declared strategy of the church for 2010–2015 was that the church would stand by those Orthodox members living in »ecumenical families« (Kirkon strategia, 2009, chap. 6.1).

Research on the religiosity of Finnish adolescents (Mikkola, Niemelä, & Petterson, 2006; Niemelä, 2006) shows that religiosity with institutional structures and traditional forms significantly affects the transmission of religiosity, assuming that the parents are committed to the religious upbringing of their children in the family. Consequently, it seems that Orthodoxy, with its emphasis on tradition and objective forms of faith (e.g. the communal nature of Christian life, liturgy, fasts, and feasts), could provide a supportive structure for religious upbringings in the home.

Minority settings create a challenge, especially regarding the processes of secondary socialization. If the values and beliefs of the larger social surroundings differ significantly from the home environment, children are compelled to reflect on their choices in overlapping contexts: How should one navigate day care, the school or the peer group, when the norms, beliefs and rules of those domains differ from the ones prevailing at home? A study on the Seventh-day Adventist minority in Finland indicates that in situations where the home differs from the ruling culture, children repeatedly face situations in which they must make choices between different coexisting norms (Kuusisto, 2005, 2011). A similar situation most likely applies to Orthodox children as well. Concerning the roles in the sphere of secondary socialization, they are compelled to evaluate the meaning of their own religious tradition while making decisions on manifesting their identity in various social roles and situations.

Analysis

Data and method

The data for this chapter was collected through an open invitation in several major Finnish Orthodox magazines (Aamun Koitto, Ortodoksiviesti and Paimen Sanomat) in spring and early summer of 2014. In the invitation, the parents of Orthodox children and youth were asked to describe their under-
standing, aims and forms of religious upbringing, as well as experiences and feelings related to religious parenting.

Letters were received from 41 parents who were, at that time, or who had been involved in the religious upbringing of Orthodox children and/or youth. Two letters were jointly written by both parents and the exact number of letters received was 39. Women were more active in responding; all but five informants were women, the data thus suggesting that Finnish women are perhaps more dedicated to religion than men are (on women’s religiosity, see Trzebiatowska & Bruce, 2012; Utriainen & Salmesvuori, 2014).

Methodologically, the research follows a micro-qualitative approach, and content analysis is used as the actual method in analysing the letters (Kyngäs & Vanhanen, 1999; Spickard, 2005; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2013). The analysis was carried out inductively, based on the content; the phenomenon was explored, and thematically and theoretically reconstructed from the data.

The ecumenical reality of mixed marriages emerged from the data in the following ways.

- Seven informants were married to a non-Orthodox, four to a Lutheran, two to a person with no church-affiliation and one to a Muslim (later divorced).
- At least five informants were Lutheran. This exemplifies that in mixed marriages, non-Orthodox parents may also take part in the religious upbringing of their Orthodox children. A bit surprisingly, perhaps, Lutheran parents were proud to raise Orthodox children. None of them brought up the negative effects or painful experiences around not sharing the same faith as their child.
- The phenomenon of the conversion to Orthodoxy emerges strongly in the data. Nine informants had converted to Orthodoxy at some point in their lives. In four such cases, the spouse had also embraced Orthodoxy. All in all, ten informants revealed that their spouse had converted to Orthodoxy at some point during their marriage. In the letters, it became evident that in many cases, Orthodoxy had been embraced in order to enhance religious harmony in the family. Thus, sharing one faith in the family is highly valued in the data.

Demographical statistics do not seem to apply to the data, since the majority of informants live in homogenous Orthodox marriages. They are represented to an extent that exceeds their prevalence in the overall Finnish Orthodox population (which is less than 10%). Also, conversion to Orthodoxy is strongly represented, while the majority of the Orthodox population are »cradle Orthodox« (i.e. baptized into Orthodoxy in their infancy). Nevertheless, a high number of converts in the data gives witness to the fact that mixed marriages
have been experienced by most informants as a prevalent setting at some point in their marital and family life.

The aims of a religious upbringing

How is the minority position and ecumenical reality of Orthodox Finns reflected in the aims of a religious upbringing? To begin with, the idea of the nature of a religious upbringing among the parents of Orthodox children and youth varies considerably. Even though half of the informants (21) explicitly identify with transmitting the Orthodox tradition as an essential aim of a religious upbringing (the other half of the informants describe processes of transmitting the tradition without explicitly naming it as the goal of a religious upbringing), there is no agreement as to what this actually means. Some parents perceive transmitting the Orthodox tradition practically as a part of the general upbringing of their children, the aim of a religious upbringing being simply to raise good and decent people and citizens. Others put more emphasis on the cultural aspect of Orthodoxy, the focus being on the festal tradition and the cultivation of characteristic habits and forms of Orthodox practices (such as the sign of the cross and the veneration of icons). Religious or convictional aspects of religious parenting are not displayed much. Naturally, there are also parents with stronger religiosity with a lucid Orthodox identity. Roughly speaking, the informants can be categorized into three groups:

- **Insecure parents**, who belittle their role and duty in terms of religious parenting. They describe themselves as passive in the religious cultivation of their children, and tend to leave the religious upbringing of their children to teachers of religion in primary school. Only four parents fall into this category.

- **Moderate parents**, who appreciate the beliefs and practices of Orthodoxy, and deliberately aim to pass on the Orthodox tradition to their children. In practice, the religious upbringing of their children is focused on the practical expressions and cultural forms of Orthodoxy rather than on the formation of personal religious convictions. The majority of the informants are moderate parents.

- **Passionate parents**, who are strong in their faith. They wish for their children to adopt an explicit Orthodox identity and for them to become active in practising their faith. Three parents belong to this category.
The data highlights that belonging to a minority and the need to integrate with the majority both culturally and socially have shaped the parents’ ideas of religious upbringings. As for the results concerning the aims of a religious upbringing, as expressed by the parents, two dominant themes came up: value goals and religious identity construction.

The theme of value goals is heavily shaped by their minority position. Being in the minority has clearly given most parents the ability, firstly, to cope with their own difference and, secondly, to deal with difference in other people. This is witnessed in the fact that many parents link this kind of coping ability with their idea of religious parenting. Of the values transmitted through a religious upbringing, tolerance is referred to most frequently (6) as a value that the children are expected to adopt. Four parents describe tolerance specifically as religious tolerance. One such parent characterizes respect for other people’s religions and values as one of the most important goals of a religious upbringing. Similarly, another parent questions the status of Orthodoxy as the true faith, and wishes that her child would »grow to be religiously tolerant. It would be quite a jackpot to be accidentally born into the one and only true religion; the world is filled with religions, though.« Yet another parent finds it important to be tolerant, especially towards Lutherans. Despite the fact that in many letters there are references to cultural, religious or attitudinal confrontations experienced with representatives of the Lutheran majority, the parents of Orthodox children are committed to promoting tolerance in Finnish society, and especially among different denominations and religions.

Alongside tolerance, and with more than one occurrence in the data, other values set as goals for a religious upbringing include: respect of other people (4), taking others into account (4), environmental protection (4), love of one’s neighbour (2) and equality (2). Such value goals indicate that parents link an Orthodox religious upbringing with peaceful coexistence with people of different faiths and ideologies.

The theme of religious identity construction concerns the desired religious profile of the children’s identity. Some parents emphasize a general Christian identity rather than a pronounced Orthodox Christian identity. Raising an Orthodox child does not necessarily indicate that a conscious Orthodox identity should be set as a primary goal. This was already indicated above when a parent challenged Orthodoxy as being »the religious jackpot«. This effort to promote a Christian identity over a labelled Orthodox one can be described as a non-distinctive attitude towards a religious upbringing. Two moderate parents describe this kind of attitude:
I do not either emphasize to my children that they are Orthodox, I just speak generally, for example, of the church and Christianity. If the children ask, I tell them that they are Orthodox. (Mother of three children, 36 years old, Orthodox)

I am not sure that I try to raise my children specifically as Orthodox. I aim to raise them as persons who respect other people and are merciful to themselves and others. (Mother, Orthodox, number of children and age unknown)

In addition, one passionate parent has a strong ecumenical conviction. Even though she is fully committed to Orthodoxy, and wishes her children to be convicted Orthodox Christians, she criticizes the feeling of superiority that she has detected among the Orthodox towards Lutherans, Catholics and Pentecostals. She explicitly denotes her unwillingness to pass on a feeling of Orthodox superiority to her children. Instead, she rejoices in her children’s active denomination-crossing interaction with Pentecostals and Catholics.

This non-distinct attitude matches with parents’ reactions to their children’s detachment from Orthodoxy in their adolescence or adulthood. In several letters, some parents describe their feelings when their children have become alienated from Orthodoxy due to them becoming passive in their faith or abandoning the church altogether, for example through conversion to Islam or by proclaiming that they are atheist. The following description reveals the sometimes-diffuse outcome of committed religious parenting:

In my opinion, I have succeeded in transmitting tradition and providing knowledge. [ – - ] What about the results, then? Quite right. Our oldest daughter is a devoted and very religious Muslim. Our second daughter is irreligious and still belongs in the church. Our youngest daughter is socially and culturally attached to Orthodoxy, not believing in God, though. She goes to church anyway. All of them appreciate traditions and – except for the Muslim daughter – celebrate Easter. They think about fasting and dye eggs for Easter night liturgy. Quite a mishmash, but, according to my mind, thinking with your own brains is important. (Mother of three children, 52 years old, Orthodox)

Despite all the grief these separations may have caused, the mood of all the descriptions of the children’s alienation from Orthodoxy is approving and loving. There were not even any hints of disappointment or condemnation regarding the children’s religious choices reported in the letters.

Alongside the evident non-distinct attitude in the data, a minority status may direct parents towards a totally opposite view in terms of religious identity construction. Five parents emphasize that forming a solid Orthodox identity is the ultimate goal of a religious upbringing. This approach can be designated as having a distinctive attitude. One parent with such an attitude reveals the
painful aspect of her minority situation, while reflecting on her own childhood experiences in her current parenting:

I would like my child not to feel ashamed of being an Orthodox (I became distressed attending different classes in religious education), but to feel proud of being different, and of having a strong faith. (Mother of one child, 30 years old, Orthodox)

Several other parents with a distinct attitude find it important that their children are, since early childhood, aware of being Orthodox, and that Orthodoxy will become an inseparable part of their identity. There is, however, only one truly exclusive opinion found in the entire data: for one mother, Orthodoxy is the only true world view, and she hopes that her children can proudly express it. Also, being a convert to Orthodoxy, she defines Orthodox religious formation as being opposed to Lutheran education, which she found harmful and even erroneous. Such a strong negative ecumenical attitude is not represented by any other parent in the entire data set.

Parenting Orthodox children and youth in Finland gives rise to situations where minority values, beliefs and practices are challenged and questioned at the different levels of socialization. It seems, however, that most parents can relate to Finnish society without problems. For them, belonging to a religious minority is not a significant divider. In other words, macro-level socialization of Orthodox children and youth (i.e. socialization processes and realities outside of the micro-level socialization within the family) does not seem to bother the parents that much. This is witnessed in the fact that there are only two references in the entire data set to a harmful influence of the surrounding Finnish culture and society on Orthodoxy: one parent from Ostrobothnia, the western coastal region, finds the local non-Orthodox Easter traditions (e.g. witches and bonfires) greatly disturbing, and another one lists influences of atheism, other religions and materialism as hazardous to Orthodoxy.

Reasons that complicate religious upbringings

Even if the parents raise their Orthodox children more or less in harmony with the superstructure of Finnish society, the spheres of primary socialization (family and friends) and secondary socialization (school and parish) include complicating minority – majority dynamics. Based on the information emerging from the data, there are three main domains that cause problems in
religious upbringings: 1) family, home and friends; 2) school and RE; and 3) parish life.

Family, home and the circle of acquaintances

Due to the reality of mixed marriages and more minority – majority dynamics affecting family life, primary socialization at home brings forward factors that make the experience of religious upbringings hard for some Finnish parents. According to the analyses, the complicating issues are:

- A lack of support for an Orthodox religious upbringing from the non-Orthodox spouse. Non-supporting spouses’ attitudes vary from passivity and indifference towards religious parenting to hostility towards a religious upbringing.
- Hesitancy by the Orthodox parent in practising Orthodoxy in front of their non-Orthodox spouse. At least some accounts indicate that cautiousness in expressing Orthodoxy is a result of the Orthodox spouse’s insecurity rather than of complicating religious tensions in the family.
- A lack of support and negativity towards Orthodoxy from non-Orthodox relatives. In all such cases, such problematic relatives were kin to a non-Orthodox spouse.
- A lack of a strong Orthodox family tradition. This was voiced by converts to Orthodoxy, who had not themselves been raised as Orthodox. One converted mother wrote that she missed her non-existent Orthodox Grandma.
- A lack of Orthodox peers for the children and youth. Most parents simply state that the lack of other Orthodox children in their social life makes it hard to raise their children. A different worldview of the non-Orthodox friends of their Orthodox children was also reported as a complicating factor.

Many parents experience their family setting as complicating their capability to cultivate a religious upbringing. In most cases, these distractions result from religious tensions caused by a mixed marriage; the attitude of the non-Orthodox spouse or the insecurity of the Orthodox spouse worsens the ability to sustain a coherent religious upbringing in the family. A lack of Orthodox social contacts also makes a religious upbringing difficult.

Deprivation in terms of support is, however, only the other side of the coin. Many parents report that they get support especially from extra-family social structures and networks. This depends, however, on whether there is an Orthodox presence in connection to and outside of the family or not. Religious