Several studies have verified connections between religiousness and volunteering, especially when religiousness is measured against traditional religious activities such as attending mass. The number of people taking part in traditional religious activities is decreasing and beliefs and ways of being religious are becoming increasingly diverse. As religiousness changes, the connections between religiousness and volunteering can be assumed to change as well. This paper scrutinizes the associations between different styles of religiousness and volunteering in individuals’ lives. The analysis is based on 24 interviews of Finnish volunteers aged from 21 to 36. The results show that religion can be associated with volunteering by individuals on two levels: as an integral part right at the heart of volunteering, and also in the background associated with the values and worldviews of the individual volunteer. These results are discussed in relation to the theoretical perspective of dimensions of religious identification.

Keywords: Religiousness, volunteering

Introduction

Religious activity and belief in traditional religious teachings have lessened in Europe during the last decades. Moreover, the position of institutional religions has weakened in European countries, and religion has become an increasingly private matter (Davie 2002; Heelas and Woodhead 2005). This development can also be seen in Finland. Even though currently almost 80 per cent of Finns are members of the Evangelical-Lutheran majority Church, that proportion is decreasing, especially in the group of young adults (Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008). Belief in God or some higher being has not decreased noticeably but collective forms of religion in particular are eroding fast in this age group. For a majority of young adults connections with the Church have diminished to rites of passage (confirmation camp, marriage, baptism), and even some of these rites have become less popular. Religiousness is thus becoming increasingly individual, private, and separate from the Church. The individualization of religiousness, new individual ways of believing, alternative religions and meaning systems in addi-

Henrietta Grönlund

RELIGIOUSNESS AND VOLUNTEERING: SEARCHING FOR CONNECTIONS IN LATE MODERNITY

Abstract

Introduction

Religious activity and belief in traditional religious teachings have lessened in Europe during the last decades. Moreover, the position of institutional religions has weakened in European countries, and religion has become an increasingly private matter (Davie 2002; Heelas and Woodhead 2005). This development can also be seen in Finland. Even though currently almost 80 per cent of Finns are members of the Evangelical-Lutheran majority Church, that proportion is decreasing, especially in the group of young adults (Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008). Belief in God or some higher being has not decreased noticeably but collective forms of religion in particular are eroding fast in this age group. For a majority of young adults connections with the Church have diminished to rites of passage (confirmation camp, marriage, baptism), and even some of these rites have become less popular. Religiousness is thus becoming increasingly individual, private, and separate from the Church. The individualization of religiousness, new individual ways of believing, alternative religions and meaning systems in addi-
tion to the choice of abandoning religion altogether form the religious landscape of young adults in contemporary Finland (Yeung et al. 2006).

Religion has been a motivating force in volunteering, the unpaid, non-compulsory work for other people, organizations and societies (Musick and Wilson 2008). Nevertheless, qualitative approaches to understand the relationship between religiousness and volunteering in contemporary European societies of changing religious landscapes are scarce. The purpose of this article is to explore the role of religiousness in the lives of volunteering individuals in Finland, and especially search for connections between their religious worldviews and volunteering through interviews.

Connections of religion and volunteering in previous research

Several studies indicate connections between religion and volunteering. Traditional, public religious activity, especially active churchgoing, has been connected with volunteering in several studies (Cnaan et al. 1993; Monsma 2007; Park and Smith 2000; Smith and Stark 2009; Wuthnow 1990; Yeung 2004). Moreover private religiousness has been linked with volunteering in some studies, even though these results are not as consistent as in the case of public religiousness. Individuals, who read the Bible daily, pray, believe in traditional religious beliefs, and hold religious values important are more active in volunteering than those who do not (Monsma 2007; Wuthnow 2004). Both public (e.g. church attendance) and private religiousness (e.g. praying, belief in God, religious values) have been connected with higher rates of volunteering activity in studies among young age groups as well (Cnaan et al. 2010; Gibson 2008; Ozorak 2003). Wuthnow (2004) and Yeung (2004) have shown that also other forms of (private) religiousness than traditional Christianity can be linked with volunteering. In their studies meditation and the importance of spiritual growth for the individual predicted volunteering. Nevertheless, studies on the relationship between less conventional religiousness and private spirituality are scarce.

Religion or religiousness can predict volunteering within ones religious community and according to some studies also in secular fields of volunteering, although results on the relationship between religiousness and secular volunteering vary (Campbell and Yonish 2003; Park and Smith 2000; Ruiter and DeGraaf 2006; Yeung 2004). The connections between religiousness and volunteering have been explained in terms of psychological, social and societal factors. At the psychological level of an individual religion is believed to be connected with pro-social and altruistic values and motives (Cnaan et al. 2010; Yeung 2004). At the level of social ties religious communities are believed to encourage volunteering among their members with their values, norms, social pressure and practices (Park and Smith 2000). At the societal level the national religious culture can affect cultural values and increase opportunities and expectations for volunteering. Thus similar influences as described at the level of social ties can also be applied at the level of society in religious cultures, and these influences reach non-religious citizens as well (Becker and Dhingra 2001; Ruiter and DeGraaf 2006). In religious societies the differences in volunteering activity between members and non-
members of religious communities are smaller compared to more secular societies. Ruiter and DeGraaf (2006) even predict declining levels of volunteering in secularizing societies.

A majority of research on the relationship between religion or religiousness and volunteering is conducted in the United States (Musick and Wilson 2008), although similar results on the connections between religion and volunteering can also be found in studies conducted in Canada and Australia (Berger 2006; Lyons and Nivison-Smith 2006). It is noteworthy that the role of religious communities in civil society is very different in the United States compared to Europe. In the United States religious communities are an integral part of the civil society, and have actually been central in constituting the whole of civil society (Musick and Wilson 2008). Instead in European societies religious communities have been a part of the public sector and linked with political power. Only recently, as influenced by changes in societal differentiation have religion and religious communities been viewed increasingly as a part of the civil sector. Most research into the connections between religiousness and volunteering is quantitative and/or focuses on either the role of Church membership on volunteering or on the connections between traditional religious activity and volunteering. Research on the associations between different styles of religiousness or spirituality and volunteering is scarce as are qualitative studies, which aim at a deeper understanding on these connections. Further research has been called for on the relationship between individual religious beliefs and volunteering (Monsma 2007: 9). Therefore, the aim of this study was to focus on the subjective meanings of religiousness in the lives of individuals who volunteer and analyze the associations between these meanings and volunteering as understood by those individuals.

Definitions and theoretical frame of reference

Religion is often defined as belief in a (personal) God. It usually involves obedience and worship and is associated with tradition, institution, community, ritual, scripture and moral codes. Religiousness is an individual’s grounding within a religion. Spirituality, on the other hand, is usually described as personal. Its definition is less easily determined than that of religion, as it can involve characteristics of religion and be intertwined with it. Spirituality for some individuals can be based on a humanistic and psychological self-transformation, an experiential relationship with holiness in this world and in this life as an option to commitment to a transcendental truth (Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Roof 2003).

In Finland as in many European societies, collective expectations, traditions and authorities in general have lost some of their influence. Subjective goals, decisions, and feelings are becoming increasingly central (Giddens 1991). Moreover, religion is viewed as individually found and chosen and the individual’s relationship with it is «negotiated» (Heelas and Woodhead 2005). The same is true in relation to volunteering. Individual preferences, identities, and values are seen as increasingly central in individuals’ decisions to volunteer (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003).
In the context of individualization religious communities, which previously gave meaning and identity to individuals, are eroding (Hervieu-Léger 1998; Dobbelaere 2002). As summarized above, community and communal religious attendance are clearly connected with volunteering in previous research. Will new types of less communal religiousness and spirituality foster different associations between religiousness and volunteering, compared to that described in the existing body of literature?

In order to analyze the differing dimensions of religion in relation to volunteering, a versatile theoretical tool is needed. Hervieu-Léger (1998) has formulated dimensions by which individuals can form their religious identities in late modern contexts. The four dimensions are: communal, ethical, cultural and emotional. The communal (1) dimension in Hervieu-Léger’s theory emphasizes certain social and symbolic limits, which differentiate «us» from others. The willingness to help in-groups has been one central feature in previous research on the associations between religion and volunteering (Yeung 2004). The ethical (2) dimension implies accepting the values of the religion or the tradition. Values in general motivate actions (Schwartz 1992), and the associations between certain values and volunteering have been verified in several studies (Musick and Wilson 2008). According to Hervieu-Léger (1998), the ethical dimension is increasingly separate from the communal dimension. An individual can thus accept the values of a religion or a religious group without taking part in communal action and without identification with the group.

The cultural (3) dimension refers to identification with the symbols, practices and knowledge, which form the tradition of the religion. Dogma, rituals and ways of thinking related to dressing and family, inter alia, are parts of this cultural dimension in addition to their symbolic expressions. In contemporary societies it is possible to identify with the cultural dimension without committing to the teachings of the tradition. The cultural dimension has traditionally been central in the Finnish context, but it is increasingly contested (Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008). The emotional (4) dimension refers to an emotional experience of belonging to the tradition. This experience can also occur without the other dimensions. For instance, in the Taizé community there can be strong feelings of belonging within a large group of people even though they do not share a religious community or dogma (Hervieu-Léger 1998). The dimensions of religious identification in this study have been used to understand the religious identification of individuals and especially the associations between religious identification and volunteering.

Data and method of analysis

The interviewees of this study were recruited through a survey (N=1000) conducted by the Church research institute of the Lutheran Church of Finland in 2004. The respondents of the survey were chosen randomly, and they represented the population of young adults aged 20–39 in the metropolitan area of Helsinki. The survey consisted of questions related to religion, religiousness, values, and volunteering. Religiousness and spirituality were measured using propositions related to religious and spiritual beliefs
The respondents were clustered into four groups based on religiousness using the aforementioned propositions and SPSS statistics software. Interviewees with different religious and spiritual beliefs were identified. The test used for cluster analysis was the K Means Cluster for large data of more than 200 respondents. Variables that represent conventional religion (Christianity) and variables that represent spirituality, an unconventional, open belief, do not exclude one another. This is why a solution of four groups in the cluster analysis turned out to be the most applicable. In an analysis of three groups the respondents who had some characteristics that indicated spirituality became obscured (statistically confounded) by the less spiritual respondents. In the analysis of four clusters spirituality occurred together with religiousness, but could still be differentiated from the other two clusters that represented religiousness. Therefore the propositions used in this study provide a rough measure of religiousness. The propositions mainly differentiate between religiousness and nonreligiousness, and deal with spiritual questions to some extent. A more nuanced way of approaching religiousness is provided by the interview data.

Of all respondents 29 per cent reported they volunteered. Interviewees were recruited from among them. Six volunteering interviewees (three women, three men) were recruited from each religiousness cluster to search for connections between different kinds of religiousness and volunteering. The number of interviewees from each religiousness type cluster was not proportioned according to the number of respondents in each cluster. Thus the interviewees’ religiousness does not represent the variation of religiousness in the group of Finnish, urban young adults or the respondents of the survey. Generalisation is not an aim of qualitative research. Therefore the method of recruiting interviewees provided more variety in the specific motivations experienced by the interviewees, and was chosen because of that.

Life course themed interviews for these 24 volunteers (aged 21–36) were carried out in 2005. (About using life story interviews in research into volunteering: Jakob 1993 and religiousness: Furseth 1999) The interviewees volunteered in different fields, in religious communities, outside them, or in both. The interviews were analyzed with qualitative content analysis. Each interview was first analyzed individually to form a holistic picture of the interviewee’s religiousness and religious identification. After this, types of religiousness were formed and interviewees were categorized according to their type. Each interview was again analyzed individually to holistically understand the possible connections between their religiousness and volunteering. The research design is summarized in table 1.
### Table 1: Research design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data used in interviewee selection</th>
<th>Focus of analysis</th>
<th>Method of analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Survey (N=1000)</strong></td>
<td>• Respondents</td>
<td>• K Means Cluster – statistical cluster analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 females, 500 males</td>
<td>religiousness (belief and interest in Christianity and other worldviews)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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### Data used for qualitative analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data used for qualitative analysis</th>
<th>Focus of analysis</th>
<th>Method of analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Life course themed interviews (N=24)</strong></td>
<td>• Religious beliefs and activity (Evangelical-Lutheran Church, other religions and worldviews)</td>
<td>• Qualitative content analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 females, 12 males</td>
<td>• The connections of volunteering with religiousness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the following, an overview of the religiousness of urban young adults in Finland will be demonstrated first using the quantitative data. After this the religiousness of the 24 volunteers and the connections between religiousness and volunteering will be scrutinized using the interview data.

The four religiousness clusters are presented in Table 2. The cluster centers demonstrate the differences in the means of respondents’ answers in different clusters.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Propositions</th>
<th>The religious (n=195)</th>
<th>The spiritual religious (n=188)</th>
<th>The uncertain religious (n=352)</th>
<th>The nonreligious (n=265)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is only one true religion</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>4.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One must take responsibility for his/her actions after death</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God exists</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>4.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a higher power</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supernatural things, which cannot be explained with reason happen in the world</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>3.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am interested in matters concerning spirituality and like to search for new parts for my worldview</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am interested in meditation</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>4.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am interested in alternative religious movements and worldviews</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>4.49</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death is the end of everything</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 = Agree fully, 2 = Agree somewhat, 3 = Do not agree nor disagree, 4 = Disagree somewhat, 5 = Disagree fully.

The distances between the cluster centers characterize the association between one cluster and another. The distances were: 6.873, 5.377, 3.793, 3.518 and 3.283 for groups 1 to 4, 2 to 4, 1 to 2, 3 to 4 and 2 to 3 respectively.

The respondents that belonged to the group religious (20 per cent of respondents) can be defined as conventionally religious. They agreed fully or somewhat with the propositions of keeping to one’s Christian religion and were not interested in alternative religious movements or worldviews. The group of nonreligious (26 per cent of respondents) was almost completely opposite to group 1 in many ways. The respondents in this group disagreed fully or somewhat with the propositions that represent all kinds of religiousness and spirituality. Moreover, they agreed somewhat with the proposition «Death is the end of everything.» The spiritual religious (19 per cent of respondents) and the uncertain religious (35 per cent of respondents) were positioned between these two opposites. The «uncertain religious» can be characterized as uncertain, indifferent or sceptical in relation to religion. They were not interested in alternative religious move-
ments or spirituality in general, but they did not exclude a higher power, supernatural things or life after death as strongly as the nonreligious group. Among the «spiritual religious» spirituality and religiousness occurred simultaneously. They were more interested in meditation and alternative religious movements and worldviews than the respondents in the three other groups, but did not exclude the more conventional religiousness outright. Openness and interest in spirituality may also appear together with openness to one’s religious heritage.

Findings

Interviewees’ religiousness

The reality of the interviewees’ religiousness or spirituality was more nuanced compared to the results of a statistical analysis presented above. Five different religiousness groups were formed in the qualitative analysis of interviews.

Religion as a central worldview

Four (two women, two men) of the interviewees represented this all-encompassing worldview, which defined who they were, what they did and what was important for them. They were very active in their religious communities and in their personal piety, as indicated by the following quote from one of them.

«I go to the parish every week, and do all sorts of things. And I am really happy to have found my husband from the parish. We pray and read the Bible together.» (F5, A 24-year-old woman who volunteered for children in Russia through her religious community.)

For three of these four the religious background was Pentecostalism. The fourth interviewee belonged to the Evangelical-Lutheran church but also visited events held by charismatic communities. They can be said to represent all of the dimensions of religious identification by Hervieu-Léger (1998). The communal dimension was relatively central for at least three of them.

Moderate religiousness

Eight (four women, four men) of the interviewees expressed a more moderate belief compared to the aforementioned type. They believed in God, were somewhat religiously active (usually privately) and defined themselves as religious to some extent. One of them described her religiosity by saying: «I’m not a fanatic but believe anyway» (F2, a 32-year-old woman who volunteered for youth and prisoners). For seven out of these eight the religious community was the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, whereas one belonged to the Pentecostal community. Identification with the cultural and ethical dimensions of Christianity (Hervieu-Léger 1998) was common in this group. They valued the rites and traditions of Christianity, and identified with the values of loving ones neighbour and helping those in need, as described in the following quote.
«I believe in a God who tells me how to act in a way that benefits humankind, to share the love, friendship, and be social. … My Christianity is not about the community, I don’t need the community to be a Christian.» (M8, A 36-year-old man who volunteered for different tasks in his religious community and for a religious organization.)

In general, the communal and emotional dimensions could be described as latent or weak for these interviewees.

**Uncertain religiousness**

Five (four men, one woman) of the interviewees represented a latent, uncertain or uninterested religiousness. They had not really thought about what they believed in or had not come to a conclusion, but usually expressed they believed in something, «a guiding power» (F12, a 26-year-old woman who volunteered for a political party) or «something – I really can’t say what» (M5, a 32-year-old man who volunteered for children’s sports and music). They were all members of the Evangelical-Lutheran church. The membership of the Church was often considered to be important, and they also shared the values of the Church. One of the interviewees describes this in the following quote.

«I don’t believe in all those things [that the Church teaches], but the Lutheran religion is really great, they emphasize exactly the right values I too have in life.» (M1, a 25-year-old man who volunteered for developmental cooperation and student activities.)

Thus the dimensions of cultural and ethical religiousness as described by Hervieu-Léger (1998) were identified in such cases. Emotional and communal identification on the other hand seemed strange or difficult for many of them. They can be said to represent a national church type of religiousness, vicarious religiousness (Davie 2000), by which belonging to the Church is a part of the Finnish culture, tradition or custom even though the individual is not an active participant of religion.

**Individual spirituality**

Three of the interviewees (all women) represented a more spiritual, individual outlook on religiousness. Two of the interviewees were intrigued by Buddhism. One had combined Christianity and other worldviews to a worldview of her own. All three interviewees believed in some kind of force or spirit, but the relationship to the Evangelical-Lutheran Church was negative or indifferent. The interviewees described the Church as «stiff and uptight» (F4, a 26-year-old woman who volunteered for nature conservation and organic food.) In addition, its views were described as «terrible and old fashioned». (F3, a 29-year-old woman volunteered for sports and with immigrants.) One of the three had left the Church and not found a new community, as two were members of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church but passive regarding all its activity. These cases can be said to represent identification with the ethical and cultural dimensions as espoused by Hervieu-Léger (1998) to some extent, as they valued the diaconal work of the Church and also the Church as a tradition. Instead, emotional and communal identifications were seen as unfamiliar or even unwanted.
Agnostic or atheistic worldview

Four (two men, two women) of the interviewees did not believe in anything supernatural. One of them described his unfamiliarity with religion, as being typical for all interviewees in this group, in the following way: «I think it’s weird. I don’t find it natural to go to a building with a big picture I should worship. It seems really strange to me.» (M11, a 28-year-old man who volunteered for the disabled and for nature conservation.)

Three of the four interviewees in this group had left the church, and one of them was still a member of the Evangelical-Lutheran church. He describes the reasons for this in this following quote.

«There’s a lot in the teachings of the Church that I think we Finns have inherited in our nature, we believe in things that way, maybe the ethical side. I think these things are important for us.» (M12, a 27-year-old man who volunteered for student organizations and to be on the board of his apartment building.)

Ethical and cultural dimensions as by Hervieu-Léger (1998) were thus identified with by some of them. On the other hand, communal and emotional dimensions were viewed as unfamiliar by all of them.

Understanding the connections between religiousness and volunteering

The connections between religiousness and volunteering were evaluated at the second stage of the analysis of the interviews. Three types of association between religiousness and volunteering were found: Volunteering as part of religiousness, religiousness as a value behind volunteering, and no association between religiousness and volunteering. They are presented in the following with quotations from the interviews.

Volunteering as part of religiousness

An intertwined connection between volunteering and religiousness was identified in seven (F1, F5, F6, M2, M3, M6, M8) of the 24 interviews. Four of the 24 interviewees were representative of the qualitative categorization of religiousness as a central worldview and three of them represented moderate religiousness, which was connected to a clearly religious motivation. These interviewees were highly committed to their religion and also to volunteering. They all volunteered in a religious community and the role of the community was extremely central for six of them, as presented in the following quote:

«when you have difficulties you go to all kinds of Christian things and you want the prayer and you want to be around people like that [other Christians] so you go to do things like that [volunteer] also.» (F1: A 33-year-old woman who volunteered for different tasks in her religious community.)

Volunteering could thus be a way to be in the company of other Christians, and in the middle of religious activity. For some volunteering was an indivisible part of their reli-
religious life in the parish, analogous to worship or prayer. For all of the seven, the volunteering community was also their religious community. Most felt they would not want to volunteer anywhere else since the common ground of values was so important. One volunteer describes this as follows:

«No… no, I couldn’t imagine that [volunteering outside the church context] at the moment. … It is like you have a safety belt on. Somehow I feel like going somewhere else is like: what’s the point? No, no.» (M8: A 36-year-old man who volunteered for different tasks in his religious community and for a religious organization.)

The interviewee indicated that volunteering specifically in a religious context is the actual point of his volunteering. It is thus pertinent to ask whether this interviewee volunteered in a religious community or rather took part in religious activity through the act of volunteering. One interviewee expressed the intertwined connection between religiousness and volunteering by using the word «calling».

«The only reason [for volunteering] is my religious faith. I believe that I have received a calling from God, and that I serve God with these things that I do.» (M2: A 26-year-old man who volunteered for different tasks in his religious community and for a religious organization.)

The power of religious motivation is clear in this quotation. If volunteering is seen as a direct calling from God it can scarcely be given up for trivial reasons. The meaning of volunteering for such an individual is thoroughly religious. Volunteering is serving God. Many of the volunteers in this group also volunteered because they wanted to help their parish or religious organization or the people in it. Volunteering was enabling some activities in the community or a way of giving back to ones community. Four of the interviewees expressed religion and/or the community had been important in a crisis, which had led to volunteering directly as a means of biographical re-orientation or as a result of becoming committed to the community as described in the following quotation.

«My husband left me for another woman. In a way my faith helped me survive the divorce. So I started to spend a lot of time in the parish after that. After the kids were born it was a bit more passive. But now that they’re a bit older, I’ve been more active, and involved in this volunteering.» (F6: A 32-year-old woman who volunteered for a Sunday school in her religious community.)

Volunteering was thus one way of spending time in the parish for this volunteer who had initially needed the community’s faith in her own crises. The interviewees also linked volunteering with the values of their faith. Christian love for ones neighbor was seen as a motivating value, and volunteering was one way of carrying it out. For four volunteers in this group religious identity was dominant and religiousness was such a strong worldview that everything was given a theological meaning. Everything they did was related to religion in some way, and volunteering was one part of this religious life style. Were the interviewees’ commitment to their religious communities not so high, this way of thinking could lead them to volunteer outside the religious commu-
nities. The commitment provided by religious practice and/or loyalty to the community, which had helped or helps when one self was in need seemed to bind these interviewees to this frame of reference. Similar commitment to any community was only rarely found in the interviews of other, less religious volunteers.

**Religiousness as a value behind volunteering**

Religiousness could also affect in the background of volunteering, in a less direct and committed way. This was the case for six interviewees (F2, F4, M4, M9, F7, F9). Four of them represented the moderate type of religiousness, two represented individual spirituality. Religiousness or spirituality was an extra motivation in addition to other, stronger, more central motives for volunteering, which stemmed from the cause volunteered for or values attached to the cause or volunteering in general. Religiousness or a looser spirituality supported this motivation by affecting ones values and morals and through them actions. One interviewee describes the way Christian religiousness affects her values and way of thinking and through them her wish to volunteer to help others in the following quote:

«You think more about is this right and can one do this. It’s this general way of thinking, for example, do to others as you would have them do to you.» (N2: A 32-year-old woman who volunteered for children and youth, prisoners and alcohol addicts in different organizations.)

Even though this volunteer was not active in any religious community, she was religious and found connections between Christian teachings and her own values and way of thinking. Similarly, another interviewee describes how his religious values affect his decisions.

«My values are to a great extent these Christian ground values. In general you think about things from the point of view of what you remember it says in the Bible or you pray sometimes. I would say it is quite visible in many things, maybe in choices like these [volunteering]. You need a pretty strong impulse to get you to start to do things [volunteer], to organize the time for it. But I assume that if these impulses appear, I will [volunteer in the future].» (M4: A 24-year-old man who volunteered for a «marriage course» organized by a parish.)

Thus, religiousness alone would not motivate him to volunteer but he needs a «pretty strong impulse». But when this impulse appears, his religious values are put into action. The role of the religious community was not as central as for the previous group of interviewees but did have some meaning. Religious organizational settings were seen as trustworthy and well-organized. Some of the respondents felt the values of the religious organization they identified with were best put to action in the religious context.

«It wouldn’t be the same [volunteering outside the religious frame of reference]. The spiritual work does have such a big meaning for me, that if I had to choose, I’d rather do something spiritual. But I’m not a preacher or anything. I’m more of a servant.» (M9: A 33-year-old man who volunteered in the field of music in religious communities.)
For him volunteering seemed to be a perfect way of taking part in the life of a religious community. He did not take part in religious activities outside volunteering but nevertheless found the religious context so important he would not volunteer anywhere else. Volunteering can thus offer a suitable way of expressing one’s religiousness and living in the religious atmosphere or community for those not that interested in preaching and possibly other more traditional ways of religious activity. For the three volunteers in this group that volunteered in a religious community, volunteering was the strongest link with the religious community they had. This is very different from the previous group of interviewees in which other commitments to the religious community preceded volunteering in it.

As mentioned above, a looser spirituality could have a background affect on volunteering in a similar manner as Christianity. One interviewee representing individual spirituality described the influence of her worldview on volunteering in the following manner.

«A part of my worldview is to treat other people as well as possible. To somehow grow the love that’s in me, and hope it could shine further. And I hope I could influence things that are important like in these [volunteering] organizations, even though that's just a small part. In Buddhism I’m drawn to the idea that in life you will face things which you can influence and at that point you have to be strong and act.» (F4: A 26-year-old woman who volunteered for environmental issues and organic food.)

As can be seen in the quote, the way the interviewees’ worldview affects the background of volunteering is very similar to how Christianity affects the volunteering of moderately religious Christians. Despite the effect of religiousness or spirituality in the background or in the choice of the volunteer community, the most important thing for most of these interviewees was that the organization was efficient and worked well whether or not it was a religious organization. The level of commitment in general varied in this group. Some of the volunteers with religion in the background were as committed and enthusiastic about their cause as those in the previous group where religiousness and volunteering were intertwined. However they were first and foremost committed to their cause, not religiousness or a religious community. For others in this group commitment was lower. Religiousness as a background value did not promote continuous commitment or intensive motivation. The motivation had to stem from some other source such as the cause for which the individual volunteered for. Volunteering also depended more on the individual’s life phases and personal needs. Religiousness could thus give meaning and motivation to volunteering, but not promote action alone.

No association between religiousness and volunteering
Eleven interviewees (N3, N8, N10, N11, N12, M1, M5, M7, M10, M11, M12) did not associate volunteering with religiousness in any way. They had been categorized into the groups of moderate religiousness (1 interviewee), uncertain religiousness (5), individual spirituality (2) and agnostic or atheistic worldview (6). For those two interviewees who had an atheistic or an agnostic worldview it is logical that there would be no
association between religiousness and volunteering since they do not recognize religiousness. On the other hand, five interviewees who professed some type of religious or spiritual identification also made no association between their religiousness or spirituality and act of volunteering. They valued the Evangelical-Lutheran Church, its values and work, and were members of it, but volunteering stemmed from different motives. Some volunteers in these groups identified with the dimensions described by Hervieu-Léger (1998) namely: the ethical, cultural, and/or the communal dimension, but did not relate these identifications with their own reasons for volunteering.

Nevertheless, some interviewees who had professed no association between religiousness and volunteering had other values and ideologies (volunteering as part of an ideology or ideology as a value on which volunteering is based), which they associated with volunteering in a similar manner as religion did for other volunteers. For example, global justice and human rights were values that could be identified by some interviewees in a similar manner as other interviewees identified with religion. The ideology of global justice can be used as an example of this. The ethical and communal dimensions of values and differentiation between «us» and «them» are identified in the following quote.

«Most people watch television and want loads of money and material things, and they don’t understand that this world is drowning in waste, and what’s more for me is less for someone else». (M1, a 24-year-old man who volunteered for developmental cooperation and student organizations.)

He describes the majority with «wrong» values and contrasts them with the «right» understanding of the situation of the world. Moreover, the identification with the emotional dimension is apparent in the following quote from the same interviewee as he described the feeling of belonging with like-minded peers.

«There [in his volunteer community] were these really great people. They thought and said out loud what I had been thinking about for a long time. … If you’re greedy and rude, you can get pretty far in this world. But I don’t want to be greedy and rude. One should do something useful, not just for money. So through that I noticed that there were other people like me, and that’s how it started. And I haven’t regretted it once.» (M1, see above)

Moreover, the identification with the cultural dimension is prevalent in the way he describes the knowledge and the way of thinking within the global justice movement or ideology to which he was committed.

«After I went to Africa my worldview, my attitude towards life has changed completely. --- I don’t think my basic values will change anymore. We need to make this world a bit more fair.» (M1, see above)

The same interviewee pondered Lutheranism in the following manner.
«The Lutheran religion is really great, they emphasize exactly the right values I too have in life. But then the part that we’re all sinners and everything… I don’t know about that…» (M1, see above)

Thus the interviewee identified with the ethical dimension, namely the values of Lutheranism but did not associate them with his volunteering per se. Instead he identified with the ideology of global justice on all dimensions as described by Hervieu-Léger (1998), and that ideology was integrally intertwined with his volunteering.

Substantive definitions of religion focus on the beliefs and activity of traditional religions, whereas functional definitions of religion focus on their social or psychological functions (Berger 1974). From the perspective of the functional definition of religion, other ideologies such as the ideology of global justice can act in a similar manner as traditional religions in relation to how the functions of religions have motivated individuals to volunteer. At the psychological level different ideologies can provide the belief in one’s own cause and values, and be the motivation for action. At the social level social pressure, expectations, norms, and commitment to community can promote action by an individual to volunteer in a similar manner to that of traditional religions. The societal levels of other ideologies, which are equivalent to functional religion should be further studied. However, they can be assumed to adopt similar functions in promoting volunteering as religion. For other ideologies to take on comparable functions of religion in regard to volunteering, their values and social structures should also encourage volunteering. This is not the case for all ideologies.

Discussion

In this study, religiousness could be associated with volunteering on two levels. First, religiousness as an integral part at the very heart of volunteering. Second, religiousness as being more in the background associated with the values and worldviews of the individual. At this second level religiousness gives the individual extra motivation or facilitates volunteering by making the individual more active in a religious community. Similar associations have been demonstrated in the Finnish context (Grönlund 2004; Yeung 2004). In addition, there were volunteers who were religious to some extent, but their religiousness was not directly associated with volunteering. Thus in these cases religiousness was not viewed as promoting action at all or when it did, not necessarily in the field of volunteering. Only when religion was considered as a central worldview it was without exception strongly associated with volunteering by the interviewees. A more moderate type of religiousness could have had the role of providing a background value or an additional motivation to volunteer or have no connection to volunteering or other common day activity in any way.

The role of religiousness in volunteering varied between individual interviewees according to the dimensions of religious identification that the volunteer perceived. Identification with the communal and emotional dimensions of Christianity as described by Hervieu-Léger (1998) promoted a close relationship between religiousness and volunteering. The norms, expectations and needs for volunteering are facili-
tated in certain communities, and sharing religious emotions can also strengthen this dimension of identification. This can increase the motivation of an individual to carry out the values of his or her religion, spend time in different ways within the community and with its members and act in a manner that benefits that community. Similar results within the Finnish context have been analyzed from the perspective of social capital by Yeung (2004). However, volunteering outside a community can also be seen as religious volunteering, in that it is a way to do missionary work and testify to the volunteer’s faith.

Volunteers, who did not identify with religion on the communal dimension of Christianity, were more interested in volunteering outside their religious communities compared to those with a strong communal identification. Emotional identification supported them to realize their religious precepts. The teachings of their religious community had some effect, but their orientation to volunteering and its religious motivation component were less rigid.

In addition, other types and dimensions of religious identification were associated with volunteering, although religion was not such a central a motivating factor in these cases. Identification with the ethical and cultural dimensions of Christianity did not motivate volunteering alone but supported voluntary work through enhancing other motivating factors such as a wish to help others. Identification with these particular dimensions can also impact on the choice of the volunteering community. The interviewees who identified with the emotional and cultural dimensions (referred to as «Humanistic Christianity» by Hervieu-Léger 1998) viewed their religious community positively and volunteering in it could represent an active way to participate in jointly held values.

In the case of the interviewees who identified only with the cultural dimension, the association with religion was rather distant. The cultural dimension of Lutheranism was associated with Finnish society and being Finnish. This type of identification alone was not associated with volunteering by the interviewees of this research. As religious knowledge in the population becomes sparser, identification with this dimension might even become impossible for many. The same is also true in the case of the ethical dimension. If the level of knowledge about the values of the Church decreases, then these values will not be identified. The individualism that is central to late modernity also encourages the questioning of values and of ethical views. The spiritual interviewees criticized the moral stands taken by the church towards sexual minorities, for example. Even though they shared the same values of justice, helping and loving ones neighbor, the Church was viewed as being hypocritical in terms of its statements. This perception may estrange those who in other ways could identify with the ethical dimension.

Thus the dimensions of emotional and communal religious identification were the most strongly associated with volunteering in this study especially when they were combined. However, the combination of emotional and communal identification («Emotional Christianity» as described by Hervieu-Léger 1998) is becoming less common in many Western societies (Heelas and Woodhead 2005; Monikasvoinen kirkko 2008). The cluster analysis used this study facilitated the finding that only one
fifth of the respondents represented a traditional form or religiousness i.e. with beliefs tied to the teachings of Christianity and an exclusive understanding of salvation.

Identification with the ethical and the cultural dimensions, and especially a combination of both were also associated with volunteering as they supported other motives for volunteering. Even though traditionally the most effective motivational structures of religion (communal and emotional identification) in volunteering are becoming less common, the different types of associations between religiousness and volunteering can be found. The role that the cultural and especially the ethical dimension of religious identification have in empowering other volunteering motives is one example of this.

A novel way to investigate the associations between changing religiousness and volunteering, is to use functional definitions instead of substantive definitions. Substantive definitions of religion mainly focus on the components of religion, whereas functional definitions of religion focus on the social or psychological functions of religion (Berger 1974). Volunteers who were not religious, as understood in terms of the substantive definition, could have some other ideology or a set of values, which motivated them to do their voluntary work in the place of religion. The functions of emotional and communal dimensions of religious identification as defined by Hervieu-Léger (1998) can be found in relation to some ideology or meaning system other than Christianity (e.g. the ideology of global justice).

Volunteers can indicate an emotional experience in belonging to a tradition, and a communal identification including social and symbolic limits, which differentiate between the communities of the volunteer from other individuals. These other ideologies can also promote action to volunteer in a similar way as defined substantive religion. The power of religion to promote and implement voluntary action is strongly linked to the ethical dimension and its contents. When the values of a religion emphasize helping others and love for ones neighbor, the power of religion to motivate individuals to voluntary work is strong. The same is true in any other ideology or worldview with similar values when individuals identify with it on the basis of the communal and emotional dimensions.

Quantitative methods might not be adequate in describing the multi-dimensional routes religion and religious identifications are associated with volunteering in late modernity. Qualitative approaches are further needed to investigate the individual ways of negotiating and reflecting upon the associations between beliefs, values and actions. They provide means to understand the associations between changing religiousness and volunteering and to understand the enduring functions of religion and other ideologies in volunteering.

Conclusion

This study aimed at understanding better the associations between religiousness and volunteering in the lives of individuals. A qualitative, holistic approach was used to meet this aim. The results showed nuanced ways in which religious questions and dimensions of religious identification were associated with volunteering at different
levels. Much of previous research focused on the associations that church membership, religious activity, and traditional religious beliefs have with volunteering. This study showed that religiousness promotes volunteering in many different and also less obvious ways. These ways should be further studied to understand the associations between religiousness and volunteering in changing religious landscapes.

The role of qualitative research is not to make generalizations about its results but rather to add in depth understanding and raise questions. These questions can subsequently be tested with both qualitative and quantitative approaches. This study focused on one country and on one age group. Further studies are needed to investigate and understand the associations between different styles of religiousness and volunteering in different contexts and different age groups. For instance, the associations between new age type spirituality or in general non-communal religiousness or spirituality with volunteering should be studied further. Qualitative approaches to study the associations between religiousness and volunteering are especially encouraged. Such approaches can add to our understanding about the rich, nuanced and mixed reality of how religiousness motivates action.

This study also found that religion and other ideologies can have similar structures, which motivate volunteering. This indicates that other ideologies can take on similar roles as religion in promoting volunteering when an individual identifies with an ideology on different dimensions, and the values of that ideology promote volunteering. Other ideologies should be further studied from the viewpoint of functional religion in volunteering.

References


