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IN THE FAITH OF OUR FATHERS?
RELIGIOUS MINORITY SOCIALIZATION IN PLURALISTIC SOCIETIES

Abstract

Sociological research on religion places processes of socialization at the core of understanding not only individual religious adherence, but also the general transmission and survival of a religious culture. The thesis of collective amnesia in relation to religious tradition (Hervieu-Léger 1998) or the failure of religious socialization (Crockett and Voas 2006) has been much discussed in relation to the majority of the Christian churches in Europe. But what is the status of religious socialization in minority religions? Has minority status enabled (some) minority religions to develop tools for protecting the transmission of religion? And does a distinction between minority and majority strategies remain useful if societies are increasingly pluralistic? The article will take its point of departure in a number of empirical studies to suggest ways to address the issue of socialization among religious minorities in diverse societies.

Keywords: socialization, religion, minorities

Introduction

Religions are fragile constructions. Religion like other institutions in society crucially depends on transmission of its core aspects. In fact, it may be said that «the deepest crisis through which any institution, world-view, or religion can pass is the crisis of its transmission» (Sabe 2007:97). If a new generation does not adopt the religious ideas and practices of former generations, a religion will die out. In this respect, contemporary societies can be very challenging places for religions. According to French sociologist of religion Danièle Hervieu-Léger (1998):

Transmission has always been critical, but becomes almost impossible in the late modern world where the crisis of transmission correspond to global overhaul of collective references, to rupture of memory and to a reorganization of values, all of which questions the very foundations of the social bond (Hervieu-Léger 1998: 214).
The claim that religious socialization is failing in contemporary societies has been widely supported by sociologists of religion. In the view of, for instance, Crockett and Voas (2006) «failure in religious socialization has resulted in whole generations being less active and less believing than the ones that came before» (2006: 20). Both Crockett and Voas and Hervieu-Léger connect – though in somewhat different ways – these processes to secularization.

Theories of secularization have focused on the main religions (Chambers 2006) and have tended to regard religious minorities as exceptions to the general pattern. In a recent review of the field Boyatzis (2003) similarly noted that the existing published research on intergenerational religious transmission tends to be based on largely white, Christian examples. It is possible that religious minority socialization is a very different process, which «may require some distinctive theoretical insights» (Scourfield et al. 2012). The area of religious socialization among religious minorities – relating in particular to immigrant religions in Islam – is an area that is experiencing significant growth (Berglund 2012; Maliepaard 2012; Scourfield et al. 2012; Voas and Fleischmann 2012). Results are not unanimous, but researchers do tend to point to Islam as a possible exception to the generational decline of religious identification and practice. Though the high transmission of Muslim identification may not be unrelated to the critical position of apostasy in some parts of the Muslim world (Maliepaard 2012: 58), Islam has a remarkable tendency to uphold high levels of religious identification as well as practice and belief from generation to generation.

Sociologists of religion tend to regard religious socialization as key to understanding religiosity; general approaches to socialization tend to ignore religion almost completely. A literature review reveals that journals publishing articles on ‘human development’ very rarely include religion in their scope of interest (Boyatzis 2003: 216). Similarly, *Handbook of Socialization: Theory and Research* from 2006 edited by Joan E. Grusec and Paul D. Hastings includes only one reference to religion (namely in the chapter on acculturation). Studies of religious socialization from the point of view of sociology of religion, on the other hand, is a relatively underdeveloped area (Sherkat 2003: 162–163). While the importance of parental influence on the forming of religious identities is well-established, little is known of wider family dynamics, denominational and congregational influences as well as other sources of religious socialization. Research on socialization has in short suffered from being a «subspecialty with an applied focus and strong religious agendas in many funding agencies» (Sherkat 2003: 163). As is also the case in many other subdisciplines, it appears that a lot is to be gained from reestablishing a connection between sociology of religion/research on religion and research on socialization (Ebaugh 2002).

This article is structured around two arguments: First, I will argue that we must ensure that our definition of religious socialization is broad enough to mean more than religious transmission from one generation to the next. This is a reasonable suggestion, because sociological research on socialization in general tends to employ this approach. In contemporary societies in particular a one-sided focus on patterns of transmission may be unhelpful. As parental socialization appears to be both inter-
weaved and interacting with many other sources of socialization a focus on parent-
child transmission will only give us a very limited picture of what is going on.

Second, I will argue that religious socialization today takes place in more diverse
and, to a certain extent, more pluralistic societies. This means that differences between
religious minorities and majorities are less pronounced than they used to be. However,
this does not erase the differences between minority and majority socialization,
although we may have to find new ways of conceptualizing these. I will argue that
socialization can be achieved either through interaction with a socializer or through
self-socialization and that we can distinguish between two types of socialization:
socialization as self-expression (‘majority’) and socialization as domination (‘minor-
ity’). Some empirical examples will be presented at the end of the article.

Theories of socialization
Socialization is an absolute key word within the social sciences, although this is not
always made clear. Yet the concept of socialization is intimately connected with the
identity of sociology and sociologists and has played an important part in border con-
licts with other disciplines, recently in encounters with evolutionary psychology.
When sociologists assign ‘everything’ to socialization, it is not because they do not
recognize the importance of psychological or other processes, but because socializa-
tion theories are at the core of sociology and this is what sociologists do (Nash 2008:
50; Scott 2011: 41). Although sociologists thus share an interest in socialization, the
specifics of socialization vary enormously. For Durkheim individuals are homo
duplex, a mixture of nature and culture, and socialization is the key to understanding
the ‘cultural’ part (Van de Walle 2008). For G. H. Mead socialization allows the indi-
vidual to participate in society through the existence of a generalized other, a voice in
our head which directs our actions (Scott 2011: 120). Socialization processes through
which individuals attain motivational structures (2011: 43) connect the biological and
psychological aspects to the social (Wentworth 1980: 32–38; Scott 2011: 63). For
Bourdieu socialization produces habitus, an embodiment of generative structures
(Nash 2008: 44), and for Foucault socialization is related to discipline, while sociali-
zation for the feminist scholar is connected to a universal system of male domination
(Scott 2011: 79).

Within sociology there have been two major orientations toward socialization. The
first strand of approaches is formed by structural functionalism, personified by Parsons
who viewed socialization in terms of learning to perform the roles required by society.
This strand puts emphasis on social constraint. The second strand of approaches to
socialization is formed by symbolic interactionism which associates socialization with
self-concept formation. This strand focuses on negotiation (Gecas 2001: 14526). To
dissociate socialization from other social forces it is emphasized that processes, which
may form practices and ideas, amount to socialization «only to the extent that they
become part of the way in which we think of ourselves» (2001: 14526).
Transmission, internalization and socialization

Both the interpretive (negotiation) and the normative (societal restraint) position have been criticized for their one-sided emphasis on either agency or structure. Wentworth’s (1980) work on socialization is one way of bridging the gap between the two research traditions. Wentworth’s approach to avoiding the oversocialized individual and the overdirective society is to distinguish between socialization and internalization (GrBich 1990: 529). The concepts of transmission, internalization, and socialization are often used interchangeably. When Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) for instance define socialization as «the comprehensive and consistent induction of an individual into the objective world of a society or a sector of a society» (1966: 150) and when they distinguish between ‘successful’ and ‘unsuccessful’ socialization, the process they discuss is really internalization (of the institutional program of that society) (1966: 81). In fact, Berger and Luckmann’s approach to socialization is categorized by Wentworth (1980: 63) as one of the many ‘socialization-as-internalization’ models. In Wentworth’s line of thinking this model is problematic for two main reasons. First, it is preoccupied with the results of socialization, i.e. the extent to which societal values have been internalized by the individual: «Understanding socialization by its outcome has drawn sociological attention away from the interaction that in fact constitutes the process» (Wentworth 1980: 29). Second, focus on internalization underestimates the active voice of the individual: In Wentworth’s words, «we are more than norm followers – we are rule–and-system users and rule-and-system breakers as well» (1980: 40).

In discussions on religious socialization the model of a transmission of religious traditions from parents to children often assumes command of the concept of socialization. When Berger in The Sacred Canopy (1967) defines socialization as «the processes by which a new generation is taught to live in accordance with the institutional programs of that society» (1967: 15), he is presenting a model of ‘transmission-as-socialization’. Scholars like Danièle Hervieu-Léger (1998) have been highly critical of this model:

Research that insists on measuring the gaps between children and their parents refers back, at least implicitly, to an unequal model of socialization which makes an opposition between, on the one hand (active) transmitters of a heritage of knowledge and religious references and, on the other, passive or semipassive recipients of their inheritance (Hervieu-Léger 1998: 215).

The fact that, for instance, adolescents can work as effective socializers of their parents in terms of politics, sport, and religion, among other things, both in terms of attitude and behaviour (Peters 1985), is overlooked as a result of overly emphasis on generations and one-side transmissions.

A similar criticism concerns the picture of religious traditions, which risk being too static. Building on the work of Alasdair McIntyre and Talal Asad, Schirin Amir-Moazami and Armando Salvatore (2003) propose to «conceive of religious traditions as both institutionally and discursively grounded and as a set of moral and social references, which shapes discourses and social policies» (2003: 53), and they emphasize
that traditions are not in opposition to modernity, transformation, and reform. Overly emphasis on generational transmission can make us overlook that traditions are not only transmitted, but as ‘living traditions’ also constantly reformulated and reformed.

**Religious socialization in contemporary societies**

The statement that religious socialization in contemporary societies takes place under ‘new’ circumstances has become a truism. Elements like secularization, pluralism, deinstitutionalization, and the new forms of religious identities deeply influence the socialization of religious belief (Sabe 2007:98). The question of whether we have entered a whole new era is just as important, though difficult to answer. According to Hervieu-Léger (1998), the socialization-as-transmission model comes under further pressure in late modern societies. In late modern societies, she suggests,

> the objective of a sociology of religious transmission is not to measure what displacements and distortions the receivers of the transmission inflict on the heritage which is transmitted to them. For precisely, socioreligious identities can no longer be considered, in modernity, like some inherited identities, even if one admits that the inheritance is always adapted (Hervieu-Léger 1998: 218).

What Hervieu-Léger points to here can be called ‘The Crisis of the Model of Transmission of Religious Beliefs’ (Sabe 2007: 107). The classical ideal for socialization was transmission, where a qualified person (a family member, a teacher, a priest) attempted to transmit «a ‘closed block’ of attitudes, values, norms, and familiarities or experiences» (2007: 102).

Today many traditional agents of socialization no longer believe that socialization-as-transmission is possible, say desirable. For example, among mainstream Christian churches the significance ascribed to the orthodoxy of beliefs has declined (Beckford 2010: xxiii), and one may argue that the importance of emotions and affections is paramount if the content is going to be transmitted (Sabe 2007: 108–109); the experience can occasionally outshine the content. It remains an open question whether this also applies to religious minorities. A study of newly orthodox Jews and converted Muslims concluded that as the new members became habituated to the religious experience, they often lamented this and pursued ways to re-enchant their religious lives (Tavory and Winchester 2012: 352–353). Emotions should, like religious practices and ideas, be included in research on socialization, even if externalization has become more important than internalization in contemporary societies (Riis and Woodhead 2010: 199–204).

To summarize: It is obvious that some kind of religious transmission is crucial for the survival of a religion. As Hervieu-Léger (1998) puts it, «transmission is the very movement by which religion constitutes itself as religion across time: it is the ongoing foundation of the religious institution itself» (1998: 216–217). Studies of religious transmission are therefore not unimportant, but the transmission of beliefs or practices does not exhaust the content of the concept of socialization.
Socialization: between reflexivity and habitus

Among the more contemporary ‘grand’ sociologists, the French sociologist of religion Pierre Bourdieu is probably the one who has focused more directly on socialization. For Bourdieu socialization is the process through which habitus, «a sense of the game» (Bourdieu 2000: 11), is created. Bourdieu describes habitus as a set of dispositions or as a «structuring structures», principles and classifications that generate and organize practices (Bourdieu 1987a: 23).

Habitus gives «disproportionate weight to early experiences» (Bourdieu 1990: 55), but they may be modified throughout due to interactions as well as inclusion into new fields, though not always in an apt way as an «immediate fit between habitus and field is only one modality of action, if the most prevalent one» (Wacquant 1989: 218).

Bourdieu’s theory of socialization may entail precisely aspects of those ‘socialization-as-transmission’ or ‘socialization-as-internalization’ models which are problematic in general, but become more problematic in late modern societies. In the opinion of Margaret Archer (2010: 272), the importance of habitus has become less and less relevant since the end of the 20th century. But because Bourdieu’s work has been hailed as providing a much-needed critical foundation for research on education in particular and socialization in general, arguments have been made that his work is in need of a critical reworking rather than a dismissal (Adams 2006; Elder-Vass 2007; Nash 2008; Swartz 1977). In an attempt to engage in such a reworking Dave Elder-Vass (2007: 327–328) argues that Bourdieu frequently, not always, neglects the role of conscious thought and decision-making. Bourdieu’s framework may therefore, according to Elder-Vass, be recast in a way that assigns a more prominent position to reflectivity «without losing its inherent structure of strengths» (2007: 326). Similarly, Matthew Adams (2006) argues for the need to reconcile what he calls the «[t]wo dominant tropes […] broadly clustered around notions of self-reflexivity and habitus» (2006: 511–512). Whereas the former camp with names like Giddens, Beck, and Castells asserted that reflexivity increasingly is the foundation for self-identity in late modern societies, the latter understands agency to be subjected to structural restraints. Adams indirectly takes issue with Archer’s claim that the role of habitus is disappearing in contemporary societies by asserting that in scientific and academic fields «the reflexive process, paradoxically, is itself a form of habitus» (Adams 2006: 515). Bourdieu, Adams furthermore suggests, finds that in situations of ‘crisis’ reflexivity can potentially emerge anywhere. A reformulation of Bourdieu’s theory that is suitable for late modern societies must take its point of departure in a situation of rapid change (and thus a crisis in terms of the relations between habitus and field) and the widespread dispersion of scientific and academic values, methods, and insights into mass culture. Therefore it should see no contradiction between habitus and reflexivity. Although there is some truth to the argument that «the young of the new millennium are no longer Bourdieu’s people because they no longer live in Bourdieu’s world» (Archer 2010: 282), their ‘feel for the game’ may still be described by the concept of habitus.
A model of socialization

The added value of employing (a reworked version of) Bourdieu’s theory of socialization is that it embeds socialization in a complete sociological theory: The formation of habitus is simply a crucial aspect of social life. Socialization understood as adaptation of habitus may happen in different ways and different spheres (fields) of society, and it allows for socialization to be formal as well as informal. Some areas of society are, however, more likely to be sources of socialization. Among the most important sources of socialization are family, peers, school, workplace, community, the media, the state, and the cultural belief system (Arnett 1995). The sources of socialization may take two forms. First, there is the family, schools, and religious organizations. These places for socialization, traditionally the most important ones, are characterized primarily (but not only) by the presence of adult socializers aiming to transmit religious content to the new generations. Other sources of socialization, in particular media and peer groups, have increasingly become arenas for a different kind of socialization, namely what Jeffrey Arnett calls ‘self-socialization’, socialization which does not have a specific socialization goal from the ‘socializer’ (if such an entity can be identified at all) (Arnett 1995: 521).

Religion and socialization according to Bourdieu

Furthermore, Bourdieu’s concept of habitus comes with an – unfulfilled – sketch for a theory of religion (Kühle 2009, 2012). Taking point of departure in ‘religious socialization’, as processes through which religious habitus is created, two important distinctions with reference to religious socialization may be fleshed out. Religious habitus is dispositions to act, perceive, and assess in accordance with religious schemata – for instance, the tendency to pray, to evaluate sex before marriage as sinful, or, as Terry Rey (2007), author to an introduction to Bourdieu, puts it: With the concept of religious habitus «we can finally say that religious belief has a home» (2007: 128). Religious habitus is shaped by relations of power within the religious field. Struggles between the religious ‘professionals’ within the religious field concern «the monopoly of the legitimate exercise of the power to modify, in a deep and lasting fashion, the practice and world-view of lay people, by imposing on and inculcating in them a particular religious habitus» (Bourdieu 1987b: 126). Bourdieu’s writing on the religious field has been criticized for assuming a hierarchical relationship between experts and a (passive) group of laypeople. I have elsewhere (Kühle 2012) argued that this – at least partly – is due to a mistranslation and that Bourdieu finds relations between experts and laypeople to be placed on a continuum from complete monopolization of religious production to ‘religious self-sufficiency’ as the two extreme ends. In religiously diverse societies different religious fields exist (Kühle 2012). The structures of fields tend to resemble each other, but due to the relative autonomy of fields, the role of the specialist varies. Some fields may subscribe to more monopolized structures of religious production. The first insight is that a Bourdieuan approach to contemporary religion easily can encompass Giddens’ (1991) description of the late modern religious expert as «quite
different from the ‘authority’, where this term is understood in the traditional sense; he or she offers «specialist advice» (1991: 195) rather than salvation. This change may be understood as a change from transmission/socialization to self-socialization. This observation would, however, always come with the qualification that the truth of this depends on the particular configuration of the local field. Even if established for the Christian field (within a certain geographical area) this may not apply to the Muslim or Buddhist fields; the ability to make general remarks on what happens to religion in contemporary societies is becoming increasingly difficult in religiously diverse societies.

Religious minority socialization in diverse societies

Canadian sociologist of religion Peter Beyer (2007: 98) argues that under global circumstances all other processes – secularization, differentiation, privatization – may be subsumed under the processes of pluralization. Berger (2012) seems to agree. In a tone of self-reproach he argues:

We confused secularization with pluralization, secularity with plurality. It turns out that modernity does not necessarily produce a decline of religion; it does necessarily produce a deepening process of pluralization—a historically unprecedented situation in which more and more people live amid competing beliefs, values and lifestyles (Berger 2012: 313).

Among scholars there seems to be widespread agreement that contemporary societies are characterized by plurality (which some scholars prefer to call diversity). British anthropologist Stephen Vertovec (2007: 1049) has successfully coined the concept of ‘superdiversity’ to describe a situation where diversity is multidimensional – a diversity of diversities if you like. The consequences of pluralization are, according to Berger (2012: 313), that religion becomes a choice. The same argument is made, among others, by Grace Davie (2007), who talks about the transformation from obligation to consumption and choice. Similarly Hervieu-Léger (1998) finds that in late modernity:

One can claim ‘Jewish roots or ‘Christian roots’ without defining oneself as a member of any particular community, or as a believer in any faith. The reference to this cultural patrimony is an identity marker that no longer directly incorporates the merely interested person into membership in an identifiable religious group and does not impose on him or her any specific choices or ethical behavior (Hervieu-Léger 1998: 220).

Research on Muslim minorities in Western societies consistently claims that for individuals with a Muslim background identities cannot be freely chosen (Cesari 2004, 2007; Peek 2005; Schmidt 2002; Spielhaus 2010; Voas and Fleischmann 2012). A whole framework of images and stereotypes is imposed on Muslims and affect their processes of identification (see for instance Cesari 2007: 49–50). I think we do right to assume not only that this goes for all religious (not just Muslim) identities and that any kind of public narrative and image (not just negative) may impact on religious identities. Bourdieu describes famously in Distinction (1979/1984) how also taste/prefer-
ences (habitus) are achieved through socialization and mark people off (distinguish them) in accordance to class background. And their habitus/preferences are not only class mark; they also function as capital, a potential power resource which tends to favor social and cultural reproduction. Religious habitus thereby comes to be included in a system of social categorization originating from «categorizing discourses of power/knowledge such as marketing, administrative allocation, social policy, official classification and science […]» (Jenkins 2000: 23). The habitus is constructed in a dialectical process of self- and group-identification (the internal identification) and categorization (external identification) – or self-image and public image, if we follow the terminology used by Richard Jenkins (2000). Sometimes self-image and public image coincide; in other cases they are miles apart. Whereas a situation of similarity between categorization and self-identification may leave the individual with a feeling of freedom to choose identities, «the acceleration press of categorization» may impose strong restrictions on processes of identification, even if it is sometimes still celebrated as self-reflexivity rhetorically (2000: 23).

An important insight is therefore that, according to the structures of power, ‘the distribution of capital’, the processes of the formation of habitus, and ‘socialization’ tend to occur in situations of self-determination or domination, respectively. Socialization which takes the form of self-determination can be identified as majority socialization, while socialization in the form of domination will be referred to as minority socialization.

A research agenda for studies on religious socialization

Religious socialization has for some years lived a life at the margin of sociological research on religion. To understand religious socialization in contemporary times better, it is important that issues of religious socialization receive more focus. In many cases new research is needed, while already available research in other cases may be reinterpreted in the light of the concept of socialization.

There are, therefore, two groups of distinctions which must be made. First, socialization may take place through interaction with a purposeful, goal-oriented socializer or as a process of self-socialization. Second, socialization may take the form of self-determination (if categorization fits the identification) or domination (if it does fit). The following will contain a few examples of the occurrence of the question of socialization in the different areas. The longer examples are mostly from Denmark, because they reflect my work and interest. My aim is not to provide specific results, though, but to make examples of how one can think of the religious minority socialization available.

Religious minority socialization in the family

In religious minorities as well as majorities it is likely that parents have less of a monopoly than they used to in relation to religious socialization (Keysar et al. 2000: 5). This is partly due to the fact that contemporary childhood may include extensive
exposure from an early age to socialization by, for instance, the media and in day care centers. As children as young as four years old is identifying with their religious backgrounds (Gupta 2008: 36), religious socialization by parents never stands alone, but always happens in interaction with other kinds of religious socialization. Through the choices parents are forced to make in regard to for instance their children’s participation in calendar rites in day care centers and schools, the societal images and stereotypes of religion may enter into family negotiations of how to relate to their own minority background as well as to the majority religion (Pedersen 2004). Family background appears to remain the most important predictor for religious identities. A British study, utilizing data from the 2003 Home Office Citizenship Survey (of adults in England and Wales) and its accompanying Young People’s Survey (11–15 years)⁵, has shown high levels of intergenerational transmission for all religions, though the process of transmission for the Muslim group is more efficient than for the other groups: as more than 85 percent of first-generation Muslims continue into the second generation, almost 100 percent of second-generation Muslims continue into the third generation (Scourfield et al. 2012: 99). For other religions the transmission from first to second generation was almost 75 percent and 98 percent for the second to the third generation, while for Christians the transmission rates were ‘only’ about 39 percent and 86 percent, respectively. The high transmission rates may partly reflect the age of the respondents in the Young People’s Survey (11–15 years). In his study of ‘emerging adults’ (young people between 18 and 25 years) Arnett (2000: 174) points to the weak (even ‘missing’) influence of organized religious training, including service attendance, for the religiosity of his respondents as the most interesting and surprising aspect of his study. This contrasts with the findings in relation to adolescents, where there is a strong connection between the religious beliefs and practices of parents and children. Even if Arnett (2004: 176) finds evidence that suggests that some of the emerging adults return to the religion of their parents, his point is that parental socialization efforts do not stand alone. The under-researched mixed-faith families (Arweck and Nesbitt 2010: 155) may provide an interesting laboratory for probing the different inputs. Parents tended to give their children a choice rather than impose one tradition on them. Children did not feel special, but their looks occasionally gave rise to wrong categorizations (Arweck and Nesbitt 2010: 174). Like youth in general children generally tend to accept and practice what they were told by their parents, while young people in their teens tended to be more influenced by their peers. Young people in their late teens and early 20s tended to have formed a stance toward religion, either having opted for a tradition or none (Arweck and Nesbitt 2010).

For many parents the time and effort spent on religious socialization is very limited. In a study of Swedish youth between 16 and 24 years, the 60 percent who were categorized as non-religious met questions of religion primarily in media and school, and that had occurred on average only a few times the last six months and not in relation to family or friends. For the about eight percent of the young informants who were engaged in organized religion, religion was something they met on several occasions – with friends in the local church or mosque and in the family. About 20 percent were individually religious, and they met religion more often than the non-religious in rela-

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tion to media and with friends, but not with family (Sjöborg 2012: 117). Religion as a family-based activity was therefore something only a small minority of Swedish youth would engage in.

What is taking place within the family setting may be more complicated than a simple pattern of parental transmission. In a youthful revivalist Islamic milieu in Aarhus it is not uncommon that a teenager from a Muslim background, while becoming a practising Muslim, will inspire her or his parents to revive their prayer practice (Kühle and Lindekilde 2010). But regardless of whether a religious identity is transmitted or not, the question of the importance of reflexivity and choice does enter. According to Arnett’s (2004) study of emerging adults, the rhetoric of choice was always used

simply to accept what their parents have taught them about religion and carry on the same religious tradition as their parents would represent a kind of failure, an abdication of their responsibility to think for themselves, become independent from their parents, and decide on their own beliefs (Arnett 2004: 177).

This, however, does not make families unimportant as arenas for religious socialization, but the emphasis may have changed from parents as socializers to self-socialization.

Religious minority socialization among peers

The increasing importance of religious minority socialization among peers is also widely accepted (see for instance Anthony et al. 2007; Arnett 2004; Arweck and Nesbitt 2010; Cesari 2007; Sjöborg 2012). The influence of peers on religious identities can be a small part of everyday interaction or it can provide the foundation for a youth milieu. Along with my colleague Lasse Lindekilde I have conducted a study (through fieldwork and interviews) of a youthful Islamic revivalist milieu in Aarhus, mainly consisting of young Muslim men and women with Arab, Somali, or convert backgrounds. In its countercultural position and loose structure it resembled a ‘cultic milieu’ described by Colin Campbell in 1972. This environment was considered by many of the people we talked with as a radical environment and was one of the milieus targeted by policies of prevention of radicalization employed by the Danish authorities. The milieu was structured by friendship relations within a certain push-pull dynamic. The young Muslims felt excluded from the general youth culture with its emphasis on drinking and dating and found peer group friendships in the milieu. Many of the activities in the milieu were ‘purely’ social: sports, barbecue, shopping, but many of the activities in the milieu would provide opportunities to participate or witness – read a poem aloud or share a story. Thirst for knowledge was one of the determining aspects of the milieu. Participants would eagerly engage in learning processes, in self-socialization aiming at self-expression. Equally strong were attempts to avoid the domination of ‘majority categorization’, whether from the larger Muslim environment or the greater society. Efforts not to be labeled as salafis (the name some representatives of the Muslim society would use) or radicals (the category used by the majority commu-
nity) were strong. The youth environment clearly showed the interaction of different sources of socialization. Some but by far not all of the participants would engage eagerly with digital media, being active in chat rooms or posting videos on YouTube. Some – again not all – of the participants would be involved in classes on Islam and/or actively seeking guidance from the several authorities available in the milieu (Kühle and Lindekilde 2010). More research is needed on the role of the relation between discrimination and salience of religious identities. Research on Muslim youth has tended to assume that discrimination and stereotypes make religious identities stronger, but more research is needed to establish whether it may also have the opposite effect or none at all (Voas and Fleischmann 2012: 537).

Religious minority socialization by religious organizations

Religious education in terms of Bible classes or Koran schools is probably one of the first pictures which pop up, when the concept of religious socialization is mentioned. This kind of religious education offered by religious communities may, on the one hand, suffer from the decreasing demand for religious education in a secular society, but it may, on the other hand, re-emerge as the primary agent of religious socialization in an increasingly multi-religious, secularized world, because few others possess sufficient knowledge about religion (Anthony et al. 2007: 122). The Centre for Contemporary Religion at Aarhus University has since 2009 published information on recognized religious communities in Denmark. In 2011 the theme was religious education. A large majority of the recognized religious communities offer religious teaching for children and youth. Only two of the Christian communities indicate that they do not offer any religious instruction, while only four of the Muslim communities state that they do not offer religious education for children and youth. Buddhist and Hindu religious communities, on the other hand, are much less inclined to offer religious instruction. Only half of the Buddhist communities offer religious education, and none of the Hindu communities do (Centre for Contemporary Religion 2011). The recognized religious communities in Denmark do not constitute the entire religious landscape of Denmark, but a significant part hereof. One important conclusion is that many religious minority communities care about religious socialization in terms of formalized religious training of the young generation.

Another conclusion may be that religious minority communities engage differently with religious education: Christians, Muslims, and Jews tend to do it more than Hindus and Buddhists. The study did not reveal much about the content of the religious education, but a supplementary project was launched: the Koran school project. According to this project 83 percent of mosques and Islamic associations offer religious education; almost all have classes for children (5–12 years), while 90 percent have classes for youth (13–18 years). Relating the estimated number of participants in the teaching activities to the estimated number of Muslim children in the relevant age group, it is estimated that about 10 percent of Islamic youth currently follow religious education (Bisbjerg 2011). Because children typically attend Koran school for 5–7-year-olds a very cautious estimate would be that about 20–30 percent of Muslim youth in Denmark
have attended Koran school. Over half of the Koran schools report that an increasing number of children attend Koran schools; therefore, a second conclusion is that interest in Muslim education is increasing (Bisbjerg 2011: 6). A third conclusion is that what the children are taught is almost exclusively ‘practice’, whereas youth education tends to focus more on theology. Unlike the changes which have taken place in education in general, the model for socialization in Koran schools is usually transmission.

A fourth conclusion which may be drawn from this study is that religion is not singled out, but taught along with language and culture, whether that of a minority culture or a majority culture (integration). We also know this to be the case in many Buddhist groups. This is in contrast to the argument by French sociologist Olivier Roy (2010) that religion is becoming separated from culture and that religions that remain associated with culture, such as Catholicism and the Nordic Lutheran churches, lose their significance. It may be that the French Muslims which Roy built his work on are different from Danish Muslims, but it may also reflect the fact that when parents choose a socializer, they appreciate that this socializer also teaches tradition and culture (even if their children don’t), or it may simply illustrate the large diversity within the Muslim environment, where different products are in demand.

Religious minority socialization in other arenas: the media, school, work, and the state

Schools are primary areas of formal socialization. Workplaces may also, to a lesser extent though, be regarded as areas of formal secondary socialization, in terms of training, rarely in terms of religious socialization. However, both places are (along with families, communal life, and peer groups) also important places of informal socialization, particularly with respect to categorizations such as gender, ethnicity, and ‘race’ (Jenkins 2000: 17). Religion is of course also a part of this. One interesting study argues that men in social, health, and education professions value spirituality higher than other men, because they are socialized into this by their work environment (Warburg et al. 1999). Otherwise most of the research has focused on religious minority children in schools. Research on Muslim children in Danish state-funded schools has established that religion, Islam in particular, can play a surprisingly prominent role in how Muslim as well as non-Muslim pupils understand their social and academic role in the school (Gilliam 2009). Aspects of the acquired Muslim identity of some Muslim boys impede their ability to accept the school as a legitimate socializer, and the issue of trouble-making boys with Muslim backgrounds has ranked high on the problem barometer of the school system.

The topic of religious minority socialization in relation to the media is quite different. Although the media is an important vehicle for stereotypes which may influence the formation of habitus, the media can also represent channels through which religious minorities can negotiate rights and represent themselves in ways so that public image and self-identification do not clash (Lövheim and Axner 2011). And access to the new media does not require negotiation, and it thus provides an opportunity for Muslims. Danish Muslims are more present on YouTube than Danish Christians, though Chris-
tians constitute more than 80 percent of the population against a mere four percent of Muslims. This shows how this challenge has been received by some Muslims (Kühle and Fischer-Nielsen 2012). Religious minority socialization by the state paints yet another picture of religious minority socialization. Historically, under absolutism for instance, states have been preoccupied with the religious upbringing of children and the religious legitimacy of adults’ religious convictions. The state no longer directly controls religious minority socialization; but it has been argued that the state still and perhaps increasingly so impacts on religious minority socialization, though in a less conspicuous way than previously. The state may in fact play a major role in religious minority socialization via the legitimacy it lends to social categorizations through the formulation of official categories used in formulations and implementation of social policy: «The targeting of resources and interventions at a section of the population which is perceived to have particular urgent or specialized ‘needs’, may call into existence a new social categorization, or strengthen existing categorizations» (Jenkins 2000: 19). European states have long been engaged with molding religious minorities, for instance Jews and different Christian groups. However, in recent years the main focus has been on Islam, where efforts have focused on forming a moderate Euro-compatible Islam (Haddad and Golson 2007). A recent example is the policies of radicalization, where government images of the ‘young radical’ may interfere in different ways with the targeted youth’s processes of identification (Kühle and Lindekilde 2010). If the official image of these persons’ identities clashes with their self-identification, the policies of prevention can be counterproductive.

Conclusion

The thesis of the failure of religious socialization has become prominent in explaining the religious identities of the religious majority populations in Europe. Whether the socialization processes of minorities follow the same patterns remains largely an unanswered question, as many of those who belong to third-generations often ‘return’ to the religion of their first-generation ancestors (Scourfield et al. 2012: 99).

The argument presented in this article, however, is that we need to go beyond the kinds of definitions of socialization provided by for instance Peter Berger (1967) as «the processes by which a new generation is taught to live in accordance with the institutional programs of that society» (1967: 15). We must look more closely into the wider processes of socialization which take place in different spheres of society. The main idea is that a new research agenda with promising new insights will emerge if we connect minority religious socialization to general sociology of socialization (in this article mediated by the concept of habitus associated with Bourdieu) as well as to general themes in sociology of religion. Socialization in the family remains important, but religious socialization in religious organizations and schools and among peers and increasingly perhaps through the media is also part of the picture, as is the state’s contribution to social categorization via different policies. It has become a truism that contemporary societies are mostly diverse societies. As we are just beginning to grapple
with the methodological challenges of studying diversity (Aspinall 2012), it is important not to gloss over the continued pattern of minority and majority positions and how this pattern influences the freedom to construct a self-identity. Research on religious minority socialization can help clarify this.

Notes

1 It is also true that some kind of internalization is crucial for the survival of society.
2 «Structure structurante, qui organise les pratiques et la perception des pratiques» (Bourdieu 1979:191).
3 This point is also made by Giddens, who emphasizes how «academic disciplines, sociology and psychology are thus bound up in a direct way with the reflexivity of the self» (1991:33).
4 Arnett puts the legal system here, but I find that there are good reasons to expand this category to any socialization activities by the state.
5 The study is based on face-to-face interviews with 14,057 adults across England and Wales and included interviews conducted in participants’ homes. Because of the existence of 1,278 child-parent matches, and because the adults had been asked which religion they had been raised in, it was possible to ‘construct’ three generations. Because the material included ‘an ethnic-boosted sample’, it was possible to divide the material into four groups: Christians, Muslims, those from non-Christian non-Muslim religions, and those with no religion.
6 The recognized religious communities are minority religious communities which have engaged in a relationship with the Danish state.

References


