

**Reflexive Identity Formation in University-Aged Irish:
A Selective Sample from Catholic and Non-Catholic Groups**

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CONTENTS

	<i>page</i>
Table of contents	1
Declaration	ii
Dedication	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Abstract	v
Chapter 1 <i>Introduction</i>	1
Chapter 2 <i>Methodology</i>	5
Chapter 3 <i>From Negation to Focusing on the Self</i>	16
Chapter 4 <i>Inglis' (IWP 2004) Research, Identity Formation, & My Study Participants</i>	26
Chapter 5 <i>Processes of Disaffiliation and the Importance of Familial Structure</i>	38
Chapter 6 <i>Irish Parental Socialization, National Context, and Religious Belief</i>	44
Chapter 7 <i>Modernization and Secularisation in Ireland and the Persistence of Traditional Values</i>	54
Chapter 8 <i>Spiritual Capital, Religious Values, and Increasing Individual Choice-making</i>	65
Chapter 9 <i>Conclusions</i>	71
Appendix <i>Works Cited and One Transcript as a Sample</i>	77

Declaration

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Signed.....*Wendy Fuller*

Date. *August 14, 2006*

I dedicate this work to my family. You are all I need. Always.

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Abstract

This study was undertaken with the intent to discover rich and in-depth personal details involved in the process of reflexive identity formation in a small, selected group of university-aged Irish young people. Under the basic canopy of Tom Inglis' (ISSC Working Paper 2004, hereafter "IWP 2004") research concerning Irish Catholic identity formation, this study was geared toward augmenting Inglis' (IWP 2004) findings and fleshing out some of the details concerning the generation to which many of Inglis' respondents were referring when discussing the religio-philosophical habits of their children.

Two groups of participants were chosen, totalling in 7 people as one respondent changed his mind and decided not to participate. One group were those individuals who identified themselves as "Catholic" and the other was comprised of people of various faith forms but who had actively disaffiliated from Catholicism. Respondents aged from 20-23 and all were either attending or had completed undergraduate study. Each participant was asked the same series of semi-structured, open-ended questions pertaining to life history details and the nature of their relationship with their spirituality or faith system and their identities. All respondents save one originated from various Dublin or outlying Dublin suburbs, the one exception originated from the West of Ireland

Overall, the data was gathered through in-depth, life history style interviews and showed support for several of Inglis' (IWP 2004) findings concerning Catholic identity. The data gave great insight into various non-institutionalised faith systems. The findings also support other theorists' work in the area of religion and identity formation, including Verter's (2003) research on spiritual capital as well as that which was conducted carried out by Kelley and De Graaf (1997) on the affects of parental socialization on value systems

Introduction

This research topic was chosen because Ireland today is experiencing a time of unique and unprecedented change. Since the veritable explosion of the Celtic Tiger phenomenon, Ireland and its people have undergone a remarkable and undeniably monumental process of transformation: economically, politically, socially and personally. My study focused on a small group of university-aged individuals' conceptualizations of self and society with respect to their faith. With the primacy of Catholicism historically held in Irish society, changes in the makeup of the religious field such as the increase in pluralism and the decrease in Catholic practice, may subsequently effect considerable transformations in both the manner in which individuals think about themselves as well as the way wider social structures are ordered.

With Ireland's increasingly powerhouse economic status, we can expect to find more and more postmaterialist values as the middle class grows and individual-based ethical systems move to the forefront of an increasingly diversified Irish populace. Individual-based ethical systems require the individual to develop the ability to effectively self-regulate as well as socially legitimate one's behavior and belief structure via both their conceived value system as well as aggregate social norms. This is a condition fundamentally different from that of Ireland's long held Catholic ethos.

This research was conducted with view to augmenting already existing work within the field of identity formation and religiosity in young people and with the hope of bolstering the position that further research in this area is needed. The extensive historical connection Ireland has with Catholicism is highly influential and of integral importance in order to fully understand the interrelatedness of the Irish social context and the religio-philosophical systems of the Catholic Church.

Along this line of investigation Tom Inglis (IWP 2004) conducted an extensive inquiry into the nature of Catholic identity, *habitus*, and practice in contemporary Ireland using data from the European Values Survey (EVS) and a series of in-depth, hfe-history style qualitative interviews. Inglis (IWP 2004) called attention to the fact that the institutional Catholic Church was no longer playing as large of a role in economic, political, and social life as it used to in Ireland (p. 2). Overall, Inglis (IWP 2004) brings to bear that:

Outside the family and education, the influence of the church is mainly confined to the religious field. Even within the religious field, the Church no longer has the same monopoly over spiritual and moral matters. There are numerous other sources and guides about how to connect with the supernatural and transcendental (p. 2)

With such assertions, Inglis (IWP 2004) delves into the transformed condition of Catholicism in Ireland and the various influences which go into formulating a Catholic identity. With the rich data gleaned through his personal interviews, Inglis (ibid.) was able to develop an in-depth understanding of Irish Catholic identity formation. On the whole, Inglis' (IWP 2004) participants were middle-aged or older and many had children whom they mentioned as disaffiliating or undergoing some struggle with their identity in terms of their Catholicism. As such, I felt that a study based on those people who belonged to roughly the same cohort group as the children whom Inglis' (IWP2004) respondents spoke about would serve to help broaden Inglis' (ibid.) study in terms of the generational gap.

This might also serve to afford data in order to potentially conduct comparative research between the two cohort groups. I sought out participants who had either actively remained within the Catholic fold or those who had disaffiliated in favor of another faith form, no data was collected on those who disaffiliated out of religion entirely. These two groups were chosen so as to highlight the continued manifestation of a spiritual ethos and or propensity towards religious involvement in some way shape of form, whether that being continued Catholicism or an engagement in alternative faith forms.

I conducted in-depth, personal interviews with my participants using mostly open-ended or semi-structured questions so as to encourage as much personal reflection as possible, much the same as Inglis (IWP 2004). The data I gathered was oftentimes extensive, sometimes articulate, and always very detailed concerning the choices and life-histories surrounding my participants' attempts at understanding, synthesizing, and developing conceptions of self they felt were "true", "real", and "genuine". The choices my respondents made concerning their faith were more often than not conscious, weighed, and reflexively analyzed, not simply donned out of convention but indeed subject to intense personal scrutiny.

What is more, Inglis (IWP 2004) introduced a phenomenon which he describes as "belonging without believing" as opposed to Davie's (1994) "believing without

belonging” (p.2). Inglis’ (IWP 2004) take on the condition proposes that rather than an increasingly privatized and intensely believed Catholicism, the situation in Ireland today is one wherein increasingly:

. being Catholic is not so much about believing—about living a godly or Christ-like life—and more about a sense of belonging to a cultural tradition and heritage, to a shared collective memory (Hervieu-Leger 2000)[] (p 2)

Catholicism or perhaps having a Catholic *identity* in Ireland today, Inglis (IWP 2004) argues, is more about what it means to be *Irish* and belonging to a particular cultural heritage rather than being about an authenticated and wholeheartedly practiced and internalized faith system (Inglis IWP 2004:2). This kind of socialized behavior is not so much on a linear scale ranging from disaffiliation to involvement, but rather on a stratified and multidimensional wavelength with at least four main types of Catholic identity: *Strong*, *Cultural*, *Creative*, and *Alienated* (Inglis IWP 2004:12-18).

Each type of Catholic identity has particular characteristics according to Inglis (ibid.), and from my findings I would argue that there are various degrees to which Catholics can be classified within one of the four typologies as well as the fact that there is need for another category. Indeed, I would posit that there are transitional phases wherein one can move from one type to another within the ongoing, reflexive, and dynamic process of identity formation as well as Catholics who exhibit particular amalgams of characteristics and so require a category Inglis (IWP 2004) does not provide.

Furthermore, my findings indicate that familial influence and status (married, divorced, homogamous, heterogamous, etc.) are of crucial significance when examining the variations in identity formation and the importance of core value systems. My findings support Inglis’ (IWP 2004 & 1998) assertions that the role of the mother in primary identity formation concerning religio-philosophical systems is one which is fundamentally changing with the increasing availability of alternative sources of symbolic, social, and cultural capital for women in modern day Ireland. The increase in individualism and the advent of voluntarism, especially in matters of faith, has worked towards eliminating the “scandal” surrounding a mother if her children rebelled against Catholicism and the Church (Inglis IWP 2004; 1998:178-200). It has also promoted Ireland’s increasing pluralism as a form of not just self-expression but general social

condition of individual-centered conceptions of society. This essentially means that the individual is viewed as the locus of being within a given social context and so is bestowed with enormous autonomy concerning their behavior, attitudes, and practices, though admittedly still within a structured societal context.

Overall, the findings of my study not only support many of those outlined by Inglis (IWP 2004) but also lend support to various other studies including those concerning disaffiliation processes between males and females (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990), the critical influence of parents on the religious attitudes and behaviors of their children (Hitlin 2003; Kelley and De Graaf 1997), the precipitous affects of rapid modernization (Meyer and Jepperson 2000; Lash and Friedman (eds.) 1992; Vento 2000 etc.), and the individualizing and privatizing influences of high capitalism (Verweij, Ester and Nauta 1997).

Methodology

With the shift from impoverished agrarian Catholicism to highly developed, wealthy Capitalism, conceptions of self and identity have changed markedly and not necessarily in an integrated manner. With the fluctuating institutional, social, economic, and political permutations of Ireland proper it is important to understand how Irish young people define and understand themselves within this vastly altered and continuously transitioning environment, especially in terms of their core value systems and ideal identity.¹ Understanding the identity-building process and the construction of identity itself gives a uniquely organic picture of societal permutations as well as showing the reflexive wrestling match today's Irish must undertake in finding a place, a name, and a self within an increasingly post-modern, pastiche world.² In turn, it gives us a singularly candid look at the motivational factors prompting and preventing various moral and ethical attitudes and behaviors, both in individual and social contexts.

In light of all the recent literature concerning secularization in highly developed societies and as young adults of this cohort group have largely grown up alongside the sweeping changes of Irish society over the past 20 years, I was curious as to how their value systems had developed and were subsequently situated. This was especially interesting in terms of their reflexive understanding of themselves as citizens of a highly developed Capitalist society. There has been much written of late concerning the Capitalist social structure's lean towards individualistic understandings of the self and one's interactions with others (see Putnam 2000; Bellah 1986); thus, I felt that an attempt to further flesh out Inglis' (IWP 2004)³ work would be greatly augmented by researching through a lens examining the affects of high modernity (and arguably post modernity) and the various processes of disaffiliation on identity development.

Inglis (1998) draws heavily on the extensive research of Emmet Larkin concerning the history of the Catholic Church in Ireland and considers the impact of new systems of Irish society, economics, and politics. Inglis (1998) also mentions the sex scandals, child sex abuse, and the general cover-ups which have gone on over the past 50

¹ See de Ruyter and Conroy 2003 and Hitlin 2003

² See Coulter, Colin and Steve Coleman (Eds) 2003, Giddens 1991

years or so concerning the activities of Irish priests. With such upheaval in all fields of existence, from changing economics to alterations in scholastic programs and massive increases of women in the paid labor market, it is no small wonder that the process of identity building in Irish youth today has moved from legalistic and linear design to new and convoluted structure. No longer do the Irish youth develop within a socializing framework of systematic and legalistic adherence to a hierarchic Catholic schema.

A considerable factor contributing to the changes in Irish identity formation may be found in what Inglehart and Flanagan (1987) describe as:

...a process of social mobilization, engendered by economic development (:) [prompts] industrialization [which] leads to urbanization and mass literacy, which facilitate the organization of labor unions and mass political parties and the enfranchisement of the working class... it enhances the chances of transforming the masses from isolated and illiterate peasants into organized citizens with the power to bargain for a more equal share of the pie. (1291)

Because of the economic development (and subsequent empowerment) the Irish people have experienced over the last twenty years, a newfound sense of self has followed, as have new social, political, and economic values. I would like to argue that this may be best seen in the reflexive conceptualizations of self and values found in Irish young people today, particularly those young people who have been privy to such advancements in economic, political, and social structures. I would put forward that these people are the university-aged youth. I suggest that this would be the case as the new forms of social and symbolic capital becoming present in Celtic Tiger Ireland would have been more readily internalized by those of this younger cohort group (born between 1975-1985) as they would have been encountering these shifts in value and normative systems during their initial formative development.

Also, given that many studies, including that of Tom Inglis (IWP 2004), focuses mostly on adult cohort groups aged 30+, a corresponding qualitative study of a younger cohort group might prove to show the some of the originating factors of various aggregate changes present in contemporary Irish identity research, and so bring potentially causal relationships to light for further investigation. Supporting the study of

³ Though Inglis (ISSP Workign Paper 2004) does include reference to some younger cohort groups, his literature tends to focus on those who would effectively represent the parent generation of those participants that I sought out.

younger cohort groups in order to discern value changes in social structures, Inglehart and Flanagan (1987) note that there should be “sizable and persisting differences between the value priorities of the young and old, reflecting their differing formative experiences” as at the wider societal level these changes will become visible slowly as the younger generation replaces the older (1296). This assertion promotes further research into cohort differences concerning value structures and the formation of norms, a topic well worth examining in today’s modern Irish context.

This project was dedicated to a young adult-centered focus and was geared towards achieving this concentration so as to develop a personal an integral role for the college-aged participants within it by the utilization of in-depth, life-history style interviews. This strategy was aimed at gleaning personalized and candid information, as it was the most important aspect of the study. By conducting in-depth research with college-aged people and asking them to think and talk reflexively about their identities, both personal and social, there was an opportunity to gain a richer understanding surrounding what religio-philosophical core values and norms the participants felt best encompassed them as well as the events and choices which led up to such attitudes.

Through qualitative structure, this project was able to show the multifaceted and mediated nature of the participants’ personal and social identity formation details which might have been missed with a more quantitative approach. This project highlighted a much smaller group of Irish young adults in the contemporary cultural, social, and economic context, through in-depth, qualitative study in an attempt to provide the wider research process with rich, personal data.

A subject of great attention was the manner in which participants’ ideologies were translated into action in their daily lives and in their interactions with others. Special interest was paid to how participants made sense of the place their faith and its teachings has within the context of their actions and the processes by which they come to choosing and carrying out their actions and interactions. Using both semi-structured and open-ended questions, participants were encouraged to share their reflexive thoughts and feelings concerning their faith systems and practices. This method gave insight into the participants’ level of conscious reflection concerning their internalization of religio-philosophical messages, teachings, and conceptualization, especially in relation to their

identity formation and practical application of said values and concepts. This internalization process was examined with attention to the manner in which participants' personal identities were consciously and unconsciously informed and shaped by their creed or philosophy.

With the extensive data found during my project, the central and larger quantitative studies could be enhanced and supported through the rich and informative material. This data might help to facilitate a more full-bodied, conclusive perspective with its participant-based focus and will be able to be contributed to the research already in existence. Because this study looked at small, carefully chosen sample groups it will not claim to be statistically valid but considering the conscientious interviewing method, it provided unique and valuable insights into the personal identities, behaviors, attitudes, interests, and incentives of college-aged people in modern Ireland.

Through direct insight into the various ways and means young people manage the bombardment of messages they encounter today concerning value systems and the link between religious ideology and action, it may be possible to better understand the rising tide of pluralism in contemporary Ireland. Participants' responses gave personal details as to how they managed their identities within the fluid and sometimes-chaotic condition of high capitalist modernity.

It was my intention to ascertain the similarities and differences in the process of identity formation between participants with traditional Catholic beliefs and participants who had actively defected from Catholicism. I chose these two very different groups in order to attempt to discover discerning features in the experience of identity formation in today's Irish young adults in terms of religious activity (aged 20-30).

The research for this project began by contacting a student-organized society on the campus of NUI, Maynooth wherein open discussion and discourse concerning alternative and diverse faith forms was the central purpose of the group. This group was contacted via email as well as the group's mobile telephone number. The initial email sent to the group introduced the study as looking for participants who are of non-Catholic faith who would be willing to give an interview about their new philosophy, thoughts, or faith form. Complete confidentiality was assured for all participants and it was asked that people between the ages of 20 and 30 please respond if they were interested. I was

looking for a maximum of 5 interviews and a hopeful minimum of 4 for analysis in this study. A copy of the initial email can be found below:

Hello,

My name is Wendy Fuller and I'm a Postgrad in the Sociology department here at Maynooth. I'm doing research in the alternative forms of religious, faith, and philosophy in young Irish people and so I was wondering if you might have any members (I'm hoping for five but fewer is fine too) that would be willing to do an interview (completely confidential) with me about their life histories and the events and factors which led them to choose non-Catholic faith and or philosophical forms. I'm hoping to conduct these interviews before the summer break begins, as I'm sure everyone will be going home and so the logistics would get tricky. I'd be very grateful if someone could get back to me as soon as possible and I'd be even more grateful if anyone would be willing to help me with this project. Thanks in advance, Wendy Fuller (sent May 3, 2006)

I was able to get two participants who were formerly Catholic but had chosen new faith forms from the group. I was referred to another participant outside the group via one of these participants. In order to find participants with a strong allegiance to Catholicism, I contacted the Theology Department and made announcements to their Master's students via their Postgraduate's Room that I was looking for Catholic individuals between ages 20 and 30 who would be willing to give an interview. Again, I mentioned my maximum of 5 and minimum of 4. From this contact I was able to gain two interviews. I also made contact with other clubs and societies (both on and off NUIM's campus) and was able to locate two more participants with strong Catholic beliefs. I was also referred to a non-Catholic participant by one of the Theology postgraduates.

Despite this initial success, I had a few participants decide that they did not want to participate in the study after all when I attempted to schedule interview times with them and so had a grand total of four participants from Catholic and three participants from Non-Catholic groups. I was able to begin the in-depth interview process in just under three weeks from the day the email and announcement posters went out. The interviews were conducted in a quiet room and were recorded with a Dictaphone voice recorder. They were begun with the intention of only spending one hour per interview but as can be expected, some ran over that time while others were not quite the full hour.

The directed dialogue followed a set of general themes concerning social experience in the religious field, prominent memories and perceptions (so-called

“milestones”), and those messages and meanings which the participants felt influenced their conceptions of self, altered their choices concerning religious practice, and those ideas which prompted choice-making behavior both toward and away from Catholicism. With the inherently more intimate environment that one-to-one interviewing created, participants discussed candidly the rich and personal details of identity conceptualization and self-understanding that this study was pursuing.

After the interview process was finished, I transcribed each participant’s interview and worked from the transcripts analyzing the responses for similarities and difference between participants. I compared and contrasted both groups and studied each participant with attention to the findings from the studies I worked with during my review of literature. Overall, I believe that the interview process should have begun much sooner than was actually able due to time constraints. With more time to organize interviews around respondents’ schedules there may have been a bit more willingness to participate as well as the opportunity for interview itself. I also found that in attempting to provide open-ended questions, oftentimes participants moved in a direction not entirely intended in the question. Therefore, it might have been beneficial to have questions slightly more structured in order to better guide the participants in their responses

Further, if there had been some way to randomly select within the respective groups, this might have proved beneficial. Perhaps if student societies kept a record with the Office of the Registrar and if the Registrar were able to help in random sampling within said groups via student identification numbers, then a wider range of data and discursive opinion might have been available. The same principle could have been applied to sampling within the Theology Department as well. Also, a larger number of respondents would have been beneficial due to non-response—and indeed non-interest in many cases—again, the issue of time constraints should be addressed in further studies of this nature.

The Catholic Church, Social Control, and the Construction of the Catholic Ethos

The Catholic Church and Ireland have a relationship dating back at least 1500 years with the mythical arrival of St. Patrick, however, it is important to remember that Ireland was not miraculously transformed into a model Catholic nation overnight. This metamorphosis spanned centuries and took on many different forms of practice. This being said, Ireland experienced a marked and particular period in its history wherein the nation as a whole proceeded to specifically develop its Catholic ethos. Emmet Larkin's (1972) extensive work on the history of the Catholic Church in Ireland cites the years from 1850 to 1875 as being those where the greatest amount of Irish Catholic reformation and institutionalization began and occurred (p. 625). It was from these formative years onward that Ireland grew in Catholicism, not just as a majority or dominant religion, but as a country and people existing within a legalistic Catholic paradigm. This time has been identified as the *devotional revolution* of the 19th century, when the impoverished, "uncivilized" and increasingly oppressed island just off England's coast crystallized into a thoroughly orthodox, intensely pious nation of overwhelmingly Catholic majority and identity. This time and its particular impact upon Irish history is where our analysis will start.

While Larkin (1972 & 1962) suggests a slightly *deus ex machina* entrance of the Church onto the so-called needy emotional scene of the Irish peasantry other thinkers take a more ground-up approach. One of Larkin's (1972 & 1962) more prominent pitfalls in the analysis of Ireland's relationship with the Church and the social impact thereof is found in the insufficient weight he attributes to the ongoing occupation and colonization of Ireland by its larger neighbor, England. Many other thinkers address the devotional revolution as a time heavily influenced by the British occupation, underscoring the loss of cultural and social traits part of a distinctly Irish identity (Inglis 1998:6). During a time of immense social change with Britain introducing its language and prohibiting various aspects of what the Irish deemed to constitute them as a people, many assert that the Irish latched onto the Church in such a concerted way as a means of rejecting Anglicization (Inglis 1998:6).

As Inglis (1998) tells us, the Church first came to the forefront as a power block during the 19th century when England realized that all its economic and political

oppression were not succeeding in subduing the Irish people (pp. 12-13 & Chapter 5). Upon acknowledging this, Britain gradually changed its policy and took another route towards controlling the Irish, one through pacification and directly headed by the Catholic Church (pp. 12-13 & Chapter 5). Despite the power and money England gave to the Church (Larkin 1962) in these efforts it is important to also note the growth in interest that the Irish people themselves had in attaining symbolic and cultural capital (Inglis 1998:12-13 & Chapter 5).

The Irish began to gain interest in becoming as morally and civilly respectable as other modern Europeans due to the long-standing negative and denigrating conceptualizations the British had held and indeed applied to the Irish people (Inglis 1998:12-13 & Chapter 5). With the desire to shed such a repugnant and injurious ascribed identity ascriptions, the Irish were in need of vehicles for the acquisition of positive social and symbolic capital. The most direct, efficient, and indeed available method was Catholicism and the effort of proving that the Irish were a people just as pious, moderate, and controlled as their Protestant overlords (Inglis 1998:12-13 & Chapter 5). Our focus however will remain primarily on the nature of Catholicism and or spirituality as a locus of social power and identity sans military and nationalistic significance. This will help us to stay couched within framework concerned with familial structure, personal development, unprecedented influences stemming from modernization, and a rising ethos of individualism.

With bringing the civilizing process into Ireland, the Church garnered nearly full control over the constructs and mechanisms by which modern manners and civility were both formulated and developed among Irish Catholic people (Inglis 1998:12-13 & Chapter 5). Through the Irish Church gaining authority over virtually all means of thinking about the person, the self, and the social world via its control of the education, healthcare, and social welfare systems, an unprecedented level of centralization came over the Irish nation, the reins being in the grip of the Catholic Church (Inglis 1998:47-75) Inglis (1998) calls to our attention. Ultimately, the Catholic Church assumed and sustained its dominant position in Ireland not simply through religious discourse but rather via the practicality of everyday life, through the institutional control it held over the Irish educational, social welfare, and healthcare systems (Inglis 1998 12-13)

Inglis (1998) tells us that the essential dominance of the Church in Irish life and society has been a direct product of the combination of a deep sense of the supernatural cultivated via various devotional practices and the ability to completely confine the definitions of right and wrong, of good and evil, to exclusively within its own sphere of influence through its teachings, rules, and regulations (pp. 12-13). Put quite succinctly in another, later works, Inglis (IWP 2004) details much of his theory concerning this socio-historical process:

Throughout the long nineteenth century of Irish Catholicism—which effectively lasted up to the 1970s—Irish Catholics developed a very strong identification with the institutional Church. This was linked in with an interest in becoming part of an economically developed, nationally independent, modern, civilised society. It was also linked to a more specific religious interest in becoming as spiritual and moral as their Protestant colonial oppressors who during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries tried to symbolically dominate them. Irish Catholicism was an equal and opposite reaction to English Protestantism. (p. 18)

This being said, I would like to submit that it is also arguably the case that the Church derived much of its social and personal/individual clout from its crystallization as a distinctive and encompassing identity-marker for the Irish people. Inglis (1998) touches on this when discussing Ireland's desire for a "civil identity" and rejection of Anglicization (Chapter 5). But going further, effectively Catholicism became a personal identity that translated into the larger social context in just as cohesive, coherent, and stable a manner as it did on the level of a singular Irish person's self-identity. From this premise we can note that with the primary building block of Catholicism in Irish identity beginning to weaken in the modern era, new systems of meaning are beginning to replace this once substantial facet of Irish persona and social identity.

Inglis (1998) uses the term *habitus* to mean the beliefs, practices, and context within which the Church possessed a monopoly over what is determined to be good or bad, right or wrong etc. This also refers to the a continuous, somewhat flexible, and translatable orientation which situates Catholics so as to recognize, be conscious of, and actually *be* religious (1998:18). This condition in turn is embodied in the social being; this *habitus* tells one how to be pious, faithful, spiritual, and devotional as well as to completely accept the cardinal foundational aspects of their faith (beliefs, convictions, etc.) (Inglis 1998:18). This translates into understanding what acceptable and unacceptable behavior is accordingly, thus providing one with a moral template as well as a socially prescriptive one, an all-pervading system for understanding the world, Inglis'

well-named “moral monopoly” (1998:18).

Being an institution focused on the reform of the Irish people the Church quickly found that one of the most efficient, productive, and readily available means of transforming a populace was via the home and the mother (Inglis 1998: Chapter 8). The Catholic Church transformed the Irish nation by mobilizing the most intimate of relationships and environments. As the primary figure of learning throughout the most formative years of children’s development, mothers hold immense powers of tuition and discipline in their children’s lives (Inglis 1998: Chapter 8). The home is where concepts of good and bad, right and wrong are first acquired early in life, the same as basic concepts surrounding the body, the opposite sex, and general aspects of social acceptability and decorum (Inglis 1998: Chapter 8).

Inglis (1998) tells us that the Catholic Church cast the mother as the primary figure of morality in the home; she indoctrinated her children with the discipline necessary for a complete shift into a new form of family life, namely one dictated and monitored by Catholicism and the Church (pp.12-13 & Chapter 8). The systematic domination of women by the Catholic Church led to a significant loss of social, symbolic, and indeed any form of capital. This effectively provided a bottleneck of empowerment leaving Irish women with the only form of capital they had any real access to being that which they gained through association with the Church. A power alliance between Irish mothers and the Catholic Church, Inglis (1998) argues, is the proverbial linchpin in the process of the hegemonic domination of Ireland (Chapters 8 & 10). Irish women’s two choices for this association were either through donning the Nun’s habit or through motherhood and her embodiment of the Catholic female ideal therein, namely Jesus’ virgin mother Mary (Inglis 1998: Chapter 8).

This intimate and ultimately tutorial relationship between mothers, their children, and the home meant that subsequently Irish mothers became the direct arm of the Catholic Church in indoctrinating children into Catholicism and the new morals, values, and norms prescribed thereof (Inglis 1998: Chapter 8). As a mother, the Irish woman’s ability to instill Catholic habitus into her children and thus the next generation of Irish citizens was akin and indeed parallel to the ability of Nuns to indoctrinate children within the school systems. Therefore, Irish women socialized children to thoroughly situate

themselves as a Catholic person within a legalistic Catholic paradigm both within and outside the home (Inglis 1998:12-13 & Chapter 8).

From Negation to Focusing on the Self

Throughout the 19th and most of the 20th centuries Ireland has undergone the systematic negation of the individualized self and the inculcation of a *non*-individually based (or even situated) ethical system through Catholicism. Individually based ethics consist of the ability of the individual to interpret the morality of his or her own actions and behavior in terms of abstract principles (Inglis 1998:36-37). It also entails the ability to internalize said principles as his or her own, adapt them to particular situations and surroundings, as well as the ability to explain and justify them to others (Inglis 1998:36-37).

Catholicism is fundamentally juxtaposed to individually based ethics. With its rigid hierarchic structure, requirements for legalistic adherence, as well as various teachings including papal infallibility and the near absolutism of sacred tradition, Catholicism is the complete rejection of any form of personal- and individual-based thought. Catholicism results in an intensely extra-individual centered notion of the self. It also creates almost complete dependency upon the institutional Church to provide the self with adequate systems of meaning so as to function within the world as an acceptable member of society. This renders the individual all but powerless within the social, political, economic, and ultimately cosmological structure, leaving one utterly reliant and subordinate to the institutional Catholic Church and its prescribed paradigmatic structure. This however, is increasingly no longer the case in modern Irish society.

Modernity is a different time (and arguably difficult time) due to several of its definitive elements being those which are of uncertain character. These primary characteristics include being "post-traditional" such that the "sureties of tradition and habit" are no longer present but have not necessarily been replaced by any other stable or concrete reference points (Giddens 1991:2). The certainties which came from a traditionalistic, past-focused and habit ruled social construct have been squashed by the rise of scientific knowledge, technological advancements, and the increased emphasis on rationalized thought; however, these touchstones of both personal and social formation haven't been supplanted by any kind of solid certainty found in rational knowledge:

Doubt, a pervasive feature of modern critical reason, permeates into everyday life as well as philosophical consciousness, and forms a general existential dimension of the contemporary social world. Modernity institutionalises the principle of radical doubt and insists that all

knowledge takes the form of hypotheses—claims which may very well be true, but which are in principle always open to revision and may have at some point to be abandoned. Systems of accumulated expertise—which form important disembedding influences—represent multiple sources of authority, frequently internally contested and divergent in their implications. In the settings of what I call ‘high’ or ‘late’ modernity—our present day world—the self, like the broader institutional contexts in which it exists, has to be reflexively made. Yet this task has to be accomplished amid a puzzling diversity of options and possibilities (Giddens 1991:2-3)

In modern day the self is now the core element of the social world, “as an ultimate sovereign, beneficiary, and as a component of the collective” (Frank, Meyer, and Miyahara 1995:360). Meyer and Jepperson (2000) assert that the modern actor is “an *authorized agent*” in many different interests due to a prolific and decided shift of agency from a previously outside “transcendental authority” or natural social force, to the society itself and therefore the social agents *themselves* (p. 100).

Thus, within this cultural frame, individual and social actors are invested with great power, “functions and responsibilities” as they fill the shoes of an amorphous and disconnected conception of god as sources and upholders of those “higher principles” once vested in the incarnations of the infinite (Meyer and Jepperson 2000:105). The individual becomes a “responsible creature and carrier of purpose and the moral law” as individuals and societies are increasingly viewed as “the authorized centers and sources” of any and all social activity (Meyer and Jepperson 2000:105).

Modernity brings the shift towards *people* and *this life* as the new foci rather than god or the afterlife, bringing unprecedented empowerment, attention, and indeed responsibility to not just oneself but to others in society and the world around one (Meyer and Jepperson 2000:105). The investment in the individual brings about a newfound social powerhouse, the individual actor. The individual actor is one who not only reflexively dictates “higher principles” unto him or herself, but onto other social actors, and indeed, even sometimes comes to be an embodied representative of such abstract concepts (i.e. priests, nuns, pastoral figures, etc.) (Meyer and Jepperson 2000:106-108)

Furthermore, the development of this form of actor is not simply couched within the Western Christian paradigm but also fed via “the liberal model of sociopolitical organization that has dominated the post-World War II epoch, with its emphasis on individual rather than diffuse corporate or state authority, on democratic forms and the market economy and so on” (Meyer and Jepperson 2000:108-109).

Anthony Giddens (1991) illustrates this as such

Modern institutions differ from all preceding forms of social order in respect of their dynamism, the degree to which they undercut traditional habits and customs, and their global impact. However, these are not only extensional transformations: modernity radically alters the nature of day-to-day social life and affects the most personal aspects of our experience. Modernity must be understood on an institutional level; yet the transmutations introduced by modern institutions interlace in a direct way with individual life and therefore with the self. One of the distinctive features of modernity, in fact, is an increasing interconnection between the two 'extremes' of extensionality and intentionality: globalising influences on the one hand and personal dispositions on the other. (p. 1).

Over the past 200 years Ireland has undergone two great identity transformations. The first shift was the rejection of a degrading English-conceived identity of uncouth and uncultured ruffians through the fostering of an orthodox, deeply pious, and highly disciplined Catholic persona. The second change I would argue has been shift moving away from the formerly staple identity-marker of Catholicism towards a more fluid and individually centered conception of self. Essentially Ireland has evolved from *ascribed* forms of identity to *achieved* forms.

Today's citizens take decisions into their own agentic hands, searching perhaps for a mode of spiritual discourse which will simultaneously "guide" them via their own reflexively acquired value templates as well as allow them to actively critique and choose whether or not to follow such "guidance." This can be openly seen in M, A, and G's narratives in their critique of the current social climate, the Catholic Church, and mainstream values and norms. In this extended excerpt below, A details how she feels that the Catholic Church is outdated and unable to cater for the social development that has occurred in Ireland as well as having ultimately alienated the Irish people:

A:... I really believe that the corruption has lead to severe apathy, and you can see it now, it's been a delayed reaction in Ireland but you can see it now definitely and it's gonna go, it's definitely a dying religion, and it's pointless to kind of try and resurrect it because it's not a friendly religion, to me, it doesn't seem like it has many good qualities and I know that it stresses love and the whole thing but it has a lot of contradictions in it, the whole thing is rife with corruption as far as I can see, just contradictions and wrongs far outweigh the rights and as a religion, as an institution, a religious institution, they've done a lot of harm. And I just, I don't, I think for Christians, for a people, for like all over the world and everything, I think it's very important to keep their traditions going and that's their life, that's fine, that's their personal decision... Ehm, I really think that the resurgence in Paganism is definitely a reaction to the downfall of Catholicism. And, it's like Catholicism is like overshadowing it for so long and Paganism has come back, and we're borrowing it from pre-Christian times, and fair enough we're adapting it, nobody can actually say they're living a full Pagan life because that would require living in colonies with no money and things like that but it's a reconstruction of it to suit modern day and I think that it's a more personal religion and therefore more valid to people. So the traditions, the superstitions, that sort of thing, they hold a little bit more ehm, mystery and inspiration in them and therefore I think they're really important because it's easy to get disillusioned living where we do with all these scientific progresses, I just think that it's nice to have a little comfort zone whereby you can say, "yes,

this is me, this is my thing” it’s not a “you have to do this, you have to do that,” it’s very much kind of an undemanding religion, it just, it makes you feel like you come home when you commit to it, so the traditions have been for me a way of comfort, they’re just very comforting basically for people who’ve been upset and gotten very disillusioned about today because it’s not a very nice place to live (small laugh) They are just little comforts I think This is very similar to what G has also described as a “dying” of the Catholic faith.

He obliquely discusses how the Catholic Church is not an institution conducive to the individual development that has occurred in Ireland and how it is an institution which has proved to have somehow outlasted its usefulness in the progress of the human race:

G Ok, I think there’s a clear reason why neo-paganism, or Paganism is developing [W ok], and improving and widening .

W can you talk a little bit about that?

[further into interview]

G When I go to mass and sing at gospel choir, we sing at mass [W ok] and the mass is dreary, very dreary and horrible like [W ok] there’s no happiness in it at all and sex abuse is huge [W yeah?] ehm, not like everywhere but aside from the priests, but sex abuse is enormous in this country [W ok] And there is huge sexual repression which is improving now but still it entirely depends on where you go it has created the fuck-fests and the kinda the meat marts like the (name of a pub) and these places and to see girls and fellas like, who are obviously have such incredibly low confidence that they get so totally trashed drunk, there’s something imbalanced I think at least you know, and I think that’s a part of the sexual repression that’s created huge problems here Homosexuality is an issue and that’s so hard, everything is a debate, [W ok] from your childhood, which I’ve had my problems with and I know a good friend of mine who would have an instilled fear of being gay Like that is being left and they’re not cleaning it up which is why I *really* renounce a lot of Catholic doctrine But neo-paganism I think is freedom It’s, for me, it’s whatever you understand the universe to be and that’s Paganism is yeah, it’s a freedom of belief like Again, it’s just a word because what I’m talking about I think is hippies and a new age consciousness movement which I believe is an evolutionary step for higher forms of energy and higher forms of life

This excerpt shows several levels upon which G is basing his decision of Catholicism’s inadequacy in modern society. He cites homosexuality, repressive sexuality, forms of freethinking, and ultimately the freedom of the individual. Thus it becomes more than clear that Irish young people are seeking freer expressions to their newfound selves. They are looking for larger and more open avenues in order to actualize their budding conceptions of self through experiences, actions, atmospheres, and indeed entire fields of discourse which were previously unavailable or discouraged in Ireland.

M further bolsters this position with his attempts at describing how Catholicism has long dominated all fields of Irish life and that this should no longer be the case:

[speaking about religious people in public discourse and the power of Catholicism in Ireland]
M. ehm, I’m not sure you see, I’d be tempted to say that it’s ridiculous and it’s wrong and that you shouldn’t be overly religious you should just you know concentrate on the here and

now and not worry about life after death but at the same time a lot of people have got to that philosophy in the same way that I've come to mine, as a way of coping with loss so I'd say that I'd be very happy if people were given the information that I was given rather and they came to their own philosophy rather than say like being taught Catholicism and stuff like that in schools and then once they experience loss or something that makes them need an answer to all these questions they just automatically turn to this really political, overarching, misogynistic, Catholic faith and I'd say it's not so much that it's wrong that people turn to Catholicism in a big way, it's more wrong that Catholicism jumps on the opportunity to have people turn to it

These respondents' words give clear and open statements depicting young people who feel that their country, and ultimately their society, is on the verge of serious paradigmatic change. However, what is most interesting is that they are intensely in favor of such change. They view the Catholic paradigm under which Ireland has previously been blanketed as something that has not only stymied the individual but has in effect caused considerable pain, and has subsequently pushed many away from faith altogether. Below, C voices his concerns over Church wrongdoings and what he feels is the current climate of faith apathy:

C You know it, I, we've all, well you haven't you're American (laughs) [W (laughs)] but ehm, we've all studied Irish history through school and the Church just, the Catholic Church just has enormous control over society here (pause) and they weren't, they weren't bringing anyone closer to God with this control, they pushed people away, not everybody, but there was, if you go even to this day, if you go to mass, depending on the priest, there will be political ethos in the ceremony That's just wrong [W mmhmm] you know, the State gives us all freedom to practice what we believe in and (pause) the Church should respect the freedom it's given and just stay outside that Well I think the biggest negative in tradition definitely in the Irish sense, I don't know what it's like abroad, is that the element of choice isn't with people. People, while they get introduced to church, they also get coerced into God and Church. Tradition, that you have to go to mass, or it's, my parents would say that they weren't being good Catholics if they didn't bring us to mass and that's, again, the Church has cracked that ethos into society, it's trying to dictate And that has backfired big time cause not as many people go to mass

Robert Wuthnow (1992) attests that the distinctions between religions have become increasingly blurry in modern society, causing other "sources of identity" to come to the forefront and arguably, become more important to many in the process of their identity formation (p. 6). He stresses that as identity is now something which is *achieved* instead of *ascribed*, other various experiences, accomplishments, and attributes may now supercede religion as a means of constructing a definitive conceptualization of self (Wuthnow 1992:6-7).

This orientation towards achievement also puts religion in "direct competition with all the other sources of achievement from which identity can be acquired" and in today's increasingly secular, rational, and indeed worldly-concerned advanced capitalist

culture, it seems self-evident to say that religion might not do so well in such a match of strength (Wuthnow 1992:7). A ready example is found in M's assertions that he is not very concerned with whether or not people identify him with characteristics of his belief system. He notes that there are many other attributes he would like to be associated with and or identified by:

M I wouldn't say that I'd want them to identify me with, there's plenty of other things that I'd rather be identified with like, but there's worse things I could be identified with, like I'm sure there's numerous elements of my personality that people could feel are very key and might feel that they are bad, but this way of looking at religion and stuff, well, it wouldn't be too bad if people identified me with that I suppose but it wouldn't really be something I'd consider to be a real integral part of my identity

W ok, can you talk about the things you might feel are more integral parts?

M well, music plays a huge, huge role in it, I'd rather be considered a good musician than a key philosophical thinker! (laughing)

W (laughing) I can understand that, so music?

M music? I don't know, politics I suppose, I'm very interested in political thought and where that kind of comes from so philosophy yeah, they'd be my big passions

This is also the case for C when discussing his make up in terms of his religious tenets. He is openly "a Catholic" but would not exclusively describe himself as such and further attests to having several other attributes that he would like to identify himself with and would like others to perceive:

C. ehm, I guess very little really I don't, and perhaps I should, but I don't meet someone and, for example some Christians would say "God be with you" or you know I don't actively, while I don't hide anything I don't actively throw it out there I don't meet people and if they ask about me, it would probably be the 6th or 7th thing I would tell them on the list So in that, in that instance it's probably not a big part of my identity I don't, while you should, you should be a witness to your faith and people should, people should recognize that you have a faith, they should see it in your actions but at the end of the day it doesn't really matter what people think

Considering these examples of multiple attributes competing for expression in modern people's identities, Wuthnow (1992) notes that with respect to religion, modernity's "new voluntarism" prompts people to "pick and choose until they find the religion best suited to their tastes" (p. 7). This effectively shows direct evidence of this new "achieved" focus of identity formation in that "religion is a part of who [people] are, but it is not a part of their identity that consumes their time and energy" (Wuthnow 1992:7).

A makes an excellent example with her open depiction of her self-identity creation.

[discussing whether or not she feels that her moral code is something which can be termed "pagan" and whether or not it is something she has derived for herself as opposed to being ascribed for her]

A. for me yeah definitely Definitely yeah I am my morals, I am Paganism, my morals are

part of Paganism for me, because Paganism is so personal, everybody is going to have different things it's just so personalized that for me to have a conflict with Paganism would be for me to have a conflict with myself I don't really know how I see myself, I guess I just see myself as a naturey Pagan person I would say probably 99%, the 1% only because of course there's going to be little things, tiny little things [that make up her self-identity] but I'd say other than that I'd say that I'm thoroughly pagan but that 1% is just I mean, Paganism is such an abstract term anyway There's all sorts of denominations in that like to define it down more, like, there's that big long title but you have to give everybody a title, the Hedgewitch with Celtic Interests And you know you've got so many different types of Pagans, they're all different, you'll never find anybody with exactly the same beliefs as you because it's not really, "this is what you believe, this is what you believe in" there's no ten commandments that you're adopting I found Paganism, and I suppose with Paganism, my first kinda proper, like "oh yes, this is definitely me," was when I went to ehm, a place, it's like festival they do every year, it was called Witchfest the first year, and it's been running the past two years under the name Feile Draiochta, but ehm, when I went to Witchfest, I met other actual hkeminded people who *lived* Paganism and I went to the talks and there was a marketplace and you see all the little things and it just, it really felt like coming home pretty much, it just, the whole thing just definitely affirmed it for me, that I was Pagan, just that kind of thing and what I learned from that and just generally reading books and just every word that comes from pagans seems to suit me, so I was born Pagan but I never knew it until I was older, that kind of thing .

G also discusses how he has come to understand himself in terms of his faith and the manner in which that has been an intensively reflexive and personal process of development rather than anything that has been ascribed or dictated to him:

G I don't think I know what I'm doing [W ok] I think I'm learning, I think I'm learning too slowly, like I think I'm learning what it is I'm doing, I mean I think it's to do with the integration of the Eastern spirituality into Western science that type of thing It's like I have a purpose, and that I'm generally finding out that purpose as I live it, through dreams, through looking back at the entire process of my life, and I'm living

M depicts how he "knows that he doesn't know" much like Socrates but that his journey and his "philosophy" is constantly reaffirming itself and that he finds great fulfillment simply via his journey of exploration into the nature of the esoteric and what happens after you die. However, it is most interesting that even after death M maintains that it is ultimately the individual who dictates his or her own condition after looking back over their life, retaining any and all power of "judgment" and or moral authority within the sphere of the individual agent:

[speaking about a book he has read]

M that influenced my view on the world and that he came back with the explanation that he wasn't judged by someone, he judged himself, he was shown all the things he did and he had to sort of ask himself did he do go and he said "no," [W right] so that's where I view, I wouldn't see the afterlife as being somewhere where you're judged by someone else, it's more where you'd look back on your own life and

That being said, it is perhaps G who presents the most individual centered ethos

of all the respondents. While M maintains that one is not judged externally after death, one is still “guided” by some form of celestial being, denoting some form of supernatural or ethereal life form which stands over/against humanity, G describes a spiritual system entirely constructed around his personal experience, manifestation, and individual autonomy. Despite naming the earth as a locus of supernatural power, a Goddess or Mother Earth figure identified with the Greek Goddess Gaya, G describes a supernatural power which for the most part does not act upon the individual with any definitive moral structure or system of judgement. It is up to the individual to “tap into” communion with this deity, the individual must become aware and interact with the earth.

Appropriating notions from Eastern cyclical conceptions of time and reincarnation, G does mention “guides”, some form of spiritual helmsmen along his conception of some sort of karmic order. However, these entities seem to only be nudging G towards paths which he alone is able to discern and comprehend as he feels he is privileged with special capabilities, comprehension, and agency. This is a spiritual conception sans many of the Hindu/Mahayana Buddhist attributes of supernatural power and abilities to influence empirical reality⁴ Of all the respondents, G presents the most individually self-promoting and self-sustaining narrative of spiritual discourse:

W ok, now can you just talk to me a little bit about the structure of your spirituality, who are the people with power there and who are without power, is it solely based in yourself or?
G no, no, ehm, as I said before, souls travel in groups, [W ok] and I experienced that so I’ve taken that on board as a fact if you will [W mmhmm] that souls travel in groups and that family is a group of souls that travel together and there are still a lot of souls that are travelling with us that might not be physically represented [W ok] they might be spiritual or there are actually spirits travelling with us so they might be in a different incarnation at the moment and so reincarnation is something I’ve taken on board through experience [W: mmhmm] Ehm, I’ve understood and I’ve been given understanding of at least one past life [W ok]. And I think that I can understand more [W mmhmm] and in that sense that is self determined, [W ok] and that still the perception of the dream, like whatever dream you wake up into, that is the self that you’re living [W mmhmm] Like there’s my family and there’s the souls, like in the earth, which is god, well Gaya, god might be the earth on a larger scale [W mmhmm] you know, at one, like the earth is the yin yang, the central brain that still communicates with the external because there’s always going to be the external, little shooting, on these paths, information networks ehm, everyone I meet, is significantly connected in this soul group

This position shows much of G’s idea that he alone is creator, narrator, and indeed, purveyor of his faith system. There are great outside structures which he

⁴ For detailed synopses of many of Hinduism’s primary tenets, see Gavin Flood, *An Introduction to Hinduism* New York Cambridge University Press, 1996

acknowledges on the level of a deity, but this seems to be an afterthought of the assertions about his ability to perceive and understand this wider structure as such. Though he discusses his faith with friends and others who are spiritually minded, ultimately G himself remains the sole adjudicator and translator of the faith system he both conceives of and follows. Arguably, G's understanding of his faith and his identity via said faith, is a direct manifestation of a social ethos wherein the pastiche can not only exist but, indeed, thrive.

The question now is whether or not modern people are actually searching for exogenous spiritual avenues or doctrines, or if they are non-consciously seeking to worship their own distanced, projected and objectified selves. Kellner (1992) explains that within modernity, identity nearly *must* become more "mobile, multiple, personal, self-reflexive, and subject to change and innovation" (p. 141). However, Kellner (1992) is quick to note, identity in contemporary society are still very much "circumscribed" by social mores, values, and norms despite definitive "boundaries" of both personal and social identities being in near constant flux (p. 141). This is exhibited well through what G shares as his conflict between his own conception of moral behavior and what is socially acceptable wherein he follows the later due to wider social expectations:

[speaking about morality]

G: but certain structures of morality like pedophilia or these topical terms like, there are societies all over the world that do everything [W: ok]. And personally I think I'm, I think, I'm polyamorous, I think I'm a polygamist. But, I have very little ability or confidence to do that in this society [W: right] so, the morals of the society are telling that I have to be monogamous, as is my girlfriend [W: right], and then, I get confused and I get angry because it's not what I want, so what I want is moral [W: ok]. In relation, if it's in relation [inaudible] or in this particular case with my girlfriend, I have to consider her emotions and her feelings in the issue which is consideration of being moral, and in which case morals are an overall element which is why I've decided to stay monogamous at the moment [W: ok, right] and then see how it progresses, so in that sense I'm maintaining some kind of moral ground so as to reduce my libidity. [W: ok] ehm, but, I think it's still a construct that's taught, most of it, like this is the thing that I think, that there's something innate, moral is the dharma, it's something, it's hard to learn because you have to get through all the other social structures.

However, Wuthnow (1992) cautions us against throwing out religion entirely in one's quest for self-identity for within the modern *mélange*, religion situates one in time and space (p. 7). Religion provides signposts and reference points, as well as gives one an understanding of meaning and purpose within the Capitalist whirlwind of value and

symbolic fluidity because it claims “an external reality...operating in history through communities of people” (Wuthnow 1992:7-8).

Further, as Inglis (IWP 2004) notes, there is an undeniable ability for religion to define and actualize a particular and potentially durable identity (pp. 7-11). However, with respect to the recent changes in Irish society, we must beg the question of how this ability has changed over the years, the nature of the change, and what form the ability takes now

Inglis' (IWP 2004) Research, Identity Formation, & My Study Participants

Addressing identity formation in Ireland, Inglis (IWP 2004) tells us:

Identity is about how individuals see and understand themselves, the people with whom they have a sense of commonality and belonging. In everyday social life, identity revolves around an ongoing ontological sense of self, the sense of being different from other individuals and the sense of being the same. For most people, seeing and understanding oneself as a Catholic is an inherited social identity. The question is to what extent this self-understanding permeates everyday social life, when, where and among whom does it manifest itself (p. 13)

Considering the intricate linkage between self and society, Inglis (IWP 2004) conducted research concerning the changing nature of Catholic identity in Ireland and came up with some very compelling conclusions. Overall, Inglis (IWP 2004) finds that there are four main forms of Catholic identity in modern Ireland today, these include: *Strong Catholics, Cultural Catholics, Creative Catholics, and Alienated Catholics* (p. 12-18).

Strong Catholics are those who deeply identify with the institutional Church. They are those believers who not only accept but also internalize basic Christian beliefs and most teachings of the Church. They carry out Church practices and rituals on a regular basis and they follow "its rules and regulations" (Inglis IWP 2004:12). Strong Catholics involve themselves with "the life of the Church" on a deep level and take pride as well as derive happiness from being "Catholic", for their identity as being Catholic is something which they display openly and with both commitment and fervor (Inglis IWP 2004:12). A Strong Catholic's identity as being Catholic is a public matter, it is not kept to him or herself with a private and sequestered attitude for it is threaded throughout all aspects of their lives. It is not a single patch in the great tapestry of their existence but rather a constant lining woven throughout, an overarching theme if you will. Strong Catholics are loyal to the institutional Church, oftentimes putting it first in their lives when there may be conflict between it and another facet such as "family, work, or social life" and continue to have faith in the institutional Church "despite the recent scandals" (Inglis IWP 2004:12).

Only one Catholic respondent in my study I would label as a Strong Catholic and that would be S. S is a 23-year-old devout Catholic who, at the time of the study, was earning her Master's Degree in Theology. She held a BA in Theology but had done an

MA in English before she returned to study Theology at the Postgraduate level. She was from a Dublin suburb and her parents were both formerly members of religious orders. Her mother used to be a nun with the Sisters of Mercy and her father was once a Missionary Brother before they both left the cloth, later met, and were married. She is the only child of the union and details a very happy childhood growing up active in her local parish and being read Bible stories by her father at night before bedtime.

S attended an all-girls secondary school with a faculty of nuns, priests, and lay people alike but which had a very strong Church influence. She has always done very well academically and performed exceptionally well during her undergraduate work as well as throughout her postgraduate years. She is bright, friendly, and extraordinarily articulate. S prays independently several times a day, attends the World Youth Days every year as well as many religious retreats and seminars. Throughout the interview she made frequent reference to God when she spoke even when discussing non-Church or non-faith issues. She also says daily prayers such as the rosary and the Angelus alone as well as with her parents and is carefully observant of Church doctrine and teaching concerning daily activities. Also, S is very open about how she defines herself via her Catholic faith:

S: You know, God is the source of who I am, God is the source of the world and I know if, through loving God that I also love the rest of the world in a different way. So you know, that, is, they are all very much connected together. I will I could make the claim that God is the center of my life. In many ways He is but not in all the way that he could and should be.

Interviewer: ok

S: You know what I mean?

W: I do, right

S: Like I said to you before, God is hugely important to me and would that He was more so. Which is not to say about you know, kind of casting out everything else but rather everything else you treat better and see better if you love God, I think.

S was quite exuberant when speaking about the Church, her involvement in her local parish, and her experience with Catholicism. She has contemplated taking sacred vows and becoming a nun though she also feels very attracted to the idea of getting married and raising a family. The juxtaposition of these two paths poses a considerable conundrum for S. She struggles with her inclination towards living a life glorying God through sacred vows and her own deep personal desire for a partner and a family. However, she has felt stymied in her experience with young men because she is both very devout and will not compromise her adherence to Church teaching concerning pre-marital sex, which with today's sexed up social climate she reports "makes them run a

mile.” Her difficulties reconciling her faith system and identity with the wider social and peer group structure will be discussed later.

The next category Inglis (IWP 2004) names is that of *Cultural Catholics* (p. 13). Cultural Catholics are those who do not identify as much with the institutional Catholic Church as the Strong Catholics, but who very much identify with their “Catholic heritage and being Catholic” (p. 14). These people are not very involved with the institutional Church and do not legalistically follow the rules, regulations, or teachings of the Church. In fact, these people are very open to discursive debate concerning the doctrine and nature of Catholicism though they are not interested in disaffiliating, “being Catholic is like some indelible mark that they have accepted and have no desire to change” (Inglis IWP 2004:14). Being Catholic for Cultural Catholics is viewed as simply “part of what they are in the same way that they are, for example, white, male and Irish” (Inglis IWP 2004:14). Cultural Catholics do not think about *being* Catholic in the critical, reflexive sense, and nor do they really question it, it is simply a part of what makes them who they are and there is no real desire to delve any further into it or to seek other forms of religious-philosophical identity (Inglis IWP 2004:14).

These types of Catholics encounter strain in their relationship with the institutional Church due in large part to their maintained interest and activity in going to rituals and engaging in Catholic practice at least on some level while other parts of their lives or attitudes remain unorthodox (Inglis IWP 2004:15). Cultural Catholics, unlike Strong Catholics, may have been negatively affected in terms of their loyalty to the Church due to the recent scandals but they “are not in favor of radical change in their lives” in terms of their religion (Inglis IWP 2004:15).

Creative Catholics on the other hand are described as being “*a la carte*” due to their non-orthodox, non-adherence and sometimes outright rejection of rules and regulations of Catholic doctrine (Inglis IWP 2004:16). They are also classified by their active “[choice-making as to] which beliefs, teachings and practices to adhere to and follow, and which to ignore” (Inglis IWP 2004:16). Succinctly put Inglis (IWP 2004) tells us that:

The *a la carte* Catholic could be someone who may go to Mass regularly and receive Holy Communion, but who would distance themselves from the Church when it came to issues such as using contraceptives, having sex before marriage, obtaining a divorce, going to Confession, observing days of fast and abstinence, and accepting belief in hell and the

infallibility of the Pope. these Catholics no longer, so to speak, confine themselves to the Catholic menu as to how to live a spiritual and moral life, but look at other religious menus and mix and match according to their tastes and preferences (p 16)

Creative Catholics are different from Cultural Catholics because they are both interested and engaged in religious life “without being orthodox or legalistic” (Inglis IWP 2004:16). These people are still able to identify strongly as being a Catholic but they are much more “adventurous” when it comes to other religious doctrines and practices, both in learning about them as well as adopting them because Creative Catholics “are anxious and willing to explore alternative ways of being spiritual and moral” whereas Cultural Catholics are not (Inglis IWP 2004:16).

Creative Catholics are just that, creative; they are willing to pull ideas and doctrines, practices and behaviors from many different faiths and mix them in with Catholicism in their attempts to be moral and spiritual not just within the religious field (Inglis IWP 2004:16). Creative Catholics are much more able to “blend their Catholicism with what may appear to be sometimes incompatible or contradictory philosophies and fields of knowledge⁵ (Inglis IWP 2004:16) within the public sphere as well as within their interactions with others. None of the Catholic respondents of my study fitted this description, however, it is still important for a complete look at Inglis’ (IWP 2004) analytic frames of Catholic identity.

I could not classify the other three Catholic respondents readily within any of Inglis’ (IWP 2004) above-mentioned categories exclusively for there are several attributes these young men exhibit which make naming them singularly to one of Inglis’ (IWP 2004) categories outright ill fitting. P, D, and C are all very open to discussion concerning their faith and the faiths of others but have no interest whatsoever in disaffiliating, direct examples of both Inglis’ (IWP 2004) Creative and Cultural Catholicism respectively. Though these young men readily identify themselves as being Catholic, they are not as detached as Inglis’ (IWP 2004) Cultural Catholics are described. All three men participate in church activities, attend mass frequently, and are involved in church organizations like Inglis’ (IWP 2004) Creative Catholics.

P and D both came from outlying suburbs of Dublin while C hailed from a more inner-city Dublin suburb/housing estate. All three men grew up in homogamous homes

⁵ Inglis notes here the unlikely union of feminism and Catholicism, citing Condon (1989)

where both parents were Catholic and interestingly enough all had two brothers each. P and C were the eldest children while D was a middle child. All three spoke of loving and supportive homes, though C's father was often working and living away from home as his family struggled throughout the work shortages of the 1980's.

All three men have been educated in university and have found deeper groundings in their faith systems because of this experience. The question of education in young people and the disaffiliation process shows an interesting characteristic. Sandomirsky and Wilson (1990) find that if an individual has already made a commitment to a particular religion, then the more education, "the greater literacy, articulateness, and organizational skills" the person acquires, usually, the more the person becomes committed to the religion he or she has originally committed to (p. 1224). This can clearly be seen through the interviews of both P and D. For P, his experience and learning within the university atmosphere and throughout graduate study in the very dynamic and discursive field of philosophy has only served to strengthen his bond with the Catholic Church and underscore his Catholicity:

P:... like serious basic questioning I left until I was in college but by then I had a greater avenue for exploration basically. Because I mean I took philosophy as one of my subjects, and if you don't question faith while doing philosophy I mean you're wasting your time in either avenue, you're just, I mean, especially in philosophy it teaches you to question everything. I mean, especially in, I did courses in Moral Philosophy where it teaches you to try to discern what you've grown up with what actually rings true, or what is true. What's accustomed and what's, what's actual moral fact and what's custom. Like standing in queues, is it an actual moral thing or is it just something we're used to [W: right]. So and it's, no but that sort of questioning and looking at religion and looking at beliefs and going well is it actually something that I just believe or is it, or do I see that it's something that suits a lot of needs, well that's fine, and the more I investigated the more I found that, yeah, this is grand, that's for me and it's the way to go, for me anyway.

For D, it is much the same, especially when he discusses the manner in which he struggles with certain aspects of his faith with respect to his field of undergraduate and postgraduate study, namely the social sciences:

D:... I mean, I did like, I do, you would struggle with it like sometimes in certain aspects of your life, you weigh it up, you'd be trying to weigh it up on you know, in certain ways and on certain moral issues and whatnot, it's very, it creates a bit of conflict in your life as well within you in that you're, I did a Master's and the further you go on you know the more young that you're not supposed to take anything as say, you read a bit and you think about yourself where in the Catholic Church it's very much "this is it, this is the way it is, don't ask questions [W: right] you are, you're bad and you're going to Hell" you know (laughs). So I mean, and that after being bet into ya, it does have a, ehm, it does ehm, have conflict like in the way you feel you should be going about things, and you do try and apply your ehm, ah, liberal attitudes even, your own reflexive attitudes towards them and you always have this

conflict of well, “should I be doing this or should I take it” and that’s always there. So it would, it’s something that’s always there, it’s always in the background.

C details that throughout college he didn’t have the time to go to mass because he was working on Sundays, this however facilitated him taking a step back and reflecting on the condition of his faith and ultimately helped to solidify it more for him:

C: ehm, [W: and what prompted that choice?] yeah... ehm, well I think it would be quite easy growing up in Ireland to just follow the faith. [W: mmhmm] ahm, you know, you go to mass every Sunday, it’s part of a ritual. You just, you see the same faces there every Sunday, but whether they’re actually following their faith or following their parents, you’ll never know. [W: mmhmm] and, I guess, definitely there was ehm, with going to college and I was going to say, broadening my horizons, there was plenty of time where I couldn’t go to mass on the weekends cause I worked. And that sort of broke, broke the link between me and structured religion or mass or whatever you want to call it and it was definitely a constructed thought of my own to get back towards some sort of worship.

P, D, and C all openly admit to disagreeing with several teachings of the Church, most readily with the assertion that Catholicism is the “one true faith”. Each man is well seasoned with a positive attitude toward learning about other faiths, an attribute described in Creative Catholics, though none have a desire to disaffiliate a sentiment found in Cultural Catholics. What is more, like Creative Catholics, P, D, and C show considerable selectivity in following Catholic doctrine, overtly showing their feelings concerning the Church’s ban on pre-marital sex. All three men have been sexually active. However, while C discusses his desire to remain celibate until marriage despite his previous experiences, P and D openly describe how they feel negatively about Church’s teachings on such and actively acknowledge that they specifically choose not to follow this particular teaching.

Though these three respondents had different relationships with the institutional Catholic Church but still felt a deep connection to “being Catholic”:

C: ehm, I don’t necessarily think I’m right. That’s the biggest thing. I believe I’m right to believe in God, but there are probably hundreds of thousands of different ways to go about that...I’m not saying everyone that’s Catholic is wrong, I was brought up Catholic, you know that will be my label for life, you know you go into a hospital and it’s written on your file, you know “Catholic” or whatever, you know I, I’m quite happy with that, I still go to Catholic mass but at the same time I think it’s more the failings of structured religion that I see rather than an ideology... Well I think the biggest negative in tradition definitely in the Irish sense, I don’t know what it’s like abroad, is that the element of choice isn’t with people. People, while they get introduced to church, they also get coerced into God and Church. And any hormonal teenager is going to be turned away from that... Tradition, that you have to go to mass, or it’s, my parents would say that they weren’t being good Catholics if they didn’t bring us to mass and that’s, again, the Church has cracked that ethos into society, it’s trying to dictate. And that has backfired big time cause not as many people go to mass.

P: ... I'll be the first to say that I'm not a very good Catholic, I'm not a very good Christian in most areas of my life (laughs) really there are things, I think most of it is in the struggle, I try to do, I mean generally my views on morality and whatnot are definitely in the, I do try to put my Catholic beliefs into how I conduct myself with other people ... There are questions of, especially in your personal beliefs especially, I mean in Catholic morality with sexual relations and stuff it does come up but I mean it doesn't come up in discussions but it is something that one does have to, I mean growing up with, one does have to be aware of it. But to put it blatantly which I ignore most of the time. But at least I'm aware I'm ignoring it! (laughs)

D: ... And it would ehm, play a fairly important role, I mean, I did like, I do, you would struggle with it like sometimes in certain aspects of your life, you weigh it up, you'd be trying to weigh it up on you know, in certain ways and on certain moral issues and whatnot, it's very, it creates a bit of conflict in your life as well within you in that you're, I did a Master's and the further you go on you know the more young that you're not supposed to take anything as say, you read a bit and you think about yourself where in the Catholic Church it's very much "this is it, this is the way it is, don't ask questions [W: right] you are, you're bad and you're going to Hell" you know (laughs). So I mean, and that after being bet into ya, it does have a, ehm, it does ehm, have conflict like in the way you feel you should be going about things, and you do try and apply your ehm, ah, liberal attitudes even, your own reflexive attitudes towards them and you always have this conflict of well, "should I be doing this or should I take it" and that's always there. So it would, it's something that's always there, it's always in the background. ...

[discussing if there have been any challenges to his faith]

D: yeah, ehm, the big thing now I suppose would be I suppose the main thing, the main conflict, the big conflict area is ehm, the main conflict would be I suppose sex and all that you know. [W: mmhmm] that would be very clear, the position of the Catholic Church is very clear on that point [W: right] but I mean, you think about it yourself and all and you're looking at how old these things are [W: right] and all that ehm, that would be the main source, the hang up, the only real break I have with it.

W: so about sex *and* contraception or just sex?

D: eh, and, yeah, and contraception.

W: yeah that seems to be a large issue for lots of people

D: yeah, yeah, but ehm, yeah I am, eh I would look at something like stem cell research you know something like that and that's a bit of conflict for myself as well you know I can see on one side you know this is fantastic, this is great, this can do all these things but then on the other side, it's like the anti-abortion, and the whole conflict there, it's a very murky issue and it's, there's some other thing that I haven't made my mind up about yet, it's something that you do struggle with. [W: right] so maybe the main areas that I would really be or that would push me the way that I would to have me torn, these are murky waters and as I said it's an ongoing thing and (dramatic joking voice) sure I'll figure it out someday! (laughs)

As is evident in C's comments on morality and then later through his candid admission that he would like to abstain from sex until marriage, we see a young man who consciously struggles with his faith and actively reflects upon his actions in the attempt to reconcile this faith with his lifestyle and conceptions of his identity. Below, extended excerpts from throughout C's interview best illustrate this dynamic and multifaceted relationship between his faith and identity:

[Discussing morality]

C: ... To just, to use the example of sex for instance, somewhere, I'd imagine everyone would struggle with it, I struggle with it, but ehm, is it right to sleep with loads of people, it's not.

Regardless of whether you believe in God or not, morality isn't necessarily tied into your faith, but ehm, (pause) where, where no sex before marriage comes in to it, in the Bible, you, you save yourself for that one person because you love them Jesus saved us all because he loved us It's not saying "don't ever have sex" in fact, in Corinthians, it says, once married you should never ever deny your partner, it's not anti-sex, but where a lot of, and particularly the media, they get morality—"oh do I want to have sex do I not want to have sex?" it's just, I think society in general, not just the media, looks for the ideas or the answers that they want to hear [W mmhmm] There are people in the Youth Group and Bible Study that will look, scour the pages and they'll say "oh look, it says here that Jesus had a glass of wine so it's ok to drink!" And yes I do drink, I probably drink to excess *way* too often and that's wrong And that's another example of where my own morality is still only an idea rather than an action to accompany that idea and that's the challenge we set ourselves, God doesn't set us that challenge, we set ourselves that challenge to say if we love God and so we'll do this We will act in a way that pleases God

[discussing his thoughts on his future and his desire to remain celibate until marriage]

C ehm, (pause) well I suppose it would be ideal to marry someone who believes in God And the Bible talks about not being yoked with unbelievers so, but it also says in other passages it says that if you're a believer then she is too, if you are married then God will accept that but whether it can be a workable relationship, you can't really plan that cause you have to see, you have to be in the situation Ideally, I would *like* to not have sex again until I'm married [W ok] (long pause) But, humans being humans (laughs) [W (laughs)] you know I mean, you know it's a test I'd like to pass But again, that depends on your relationship situations or even on a silly drunken night it could be, who knows but I think, I, it's not something I've really thought about long term

With obvious conscientiousness throughout his interview C made it clear several times that though he attempts to live a more "Christian life", he fully understands that he does not always follow through with his actions. C discusses his thoughts on his attempts to adhere to Christian moral precepts and is very open concerning his feelings that goodness lays in the attempts to make one's actions follow one's ideas concerning the ideals of a faith system. C utilizes his faith in order to construct his conceptions of himself as well as his understanding of the world; and though he may not attribute this solely to his faith, it is clearly a major touchstone in C's personal and social development.

These three young men's development with their faith effectively illustrates a position discussed by Dillon (1996). Dillon (1996) addresses many factors which show *persistent* religious affiliation as an identity marker in college-aged Catholics.

Acknowledging the fact that regardless of any other compliant religious behaviors, the vast majority of American Catholics do not heed the Church's prescriptions concerning sexual morality (Dillon 1996:165). Dillon (1996) goes on to assert that this may lead to other deviations in orthodox doctrine such as views on abortion and what constitutes proper sexual conduct (p. 165). Through his study, Dillon (1996) found that not only was church attendance a powerful influence when concerning "respondents' attitudes towards institutionalized religion", it was also a "strong positive predictor" as to whether or not

respondents would attribute the influence of their Catholic background in their decision making processes concerning “sexual behavior, use of alcohol, career aspirations, and volunteer activities” (Dillon 1996:168).

Ultimately, Dillon’s (1996) findings suggest that religious identity is still very important to college-aged Catholics and that actively practicing some of the more overt forms of their faith such as mass attendance, plays a considerable role in both their personal identity formation as a Catholic and in differentiating them from “their less involved peers” (p. 169). However, most interesting of all in Dillon’s (1996) final conclusions is his last sentence:

The cultural relevance of church attendance clearly may vary from denomination to denomination, but for Catholics *the systematic selective rejection of the Church’s moral authority* appears in large part to signify what it means to be a committed Catholic [emphasis added] (p 169)

This is clearly the case for both P, C, and D as they attend mass regularly with their families and indeed make a concerted effort to participate with Church functions, organizations, and activities while freely admitting that they are both in sexually active relationships and disagree openly with Church doctrine concerning sex and contraception.

What stands out the most overall, is that ultimately all three of these men both exhibited and indeed described conscious and considerable reflexive thought going into their identity formation *as Catholic*. They delved deeply into their religio-philosophical identities and they thought critically about their faith regularly in their everyday lives, readily embracing religious practice, discussion, and learning, as would Creative Catholics. With strong undertones of generational consistency through tradition and upbringing, P, D, and C show Cultural Catholic characteristics in their understanding of their faith as a part of their identities via heritage. Virtually they understand themselves to be infused with Catholicism as well as consciously choosing to remain under Catholic auspices.

Lastly, there remains a serious and deeply committed condition of Catholicism within all three men, a loyalty to the faith system despite pluralistic environs and arguments of non-believers aplenty, showing marked characteristics of Inglis’ (IWP 2004) Strong Catholics. Thus, I would contest that perhaps these young men should

belong to a group somewhere between all three of Inglis' (IWP 2004) categories. This amalgamated category would underscore P, C, and D's highly reflexive thought involved in the formation of their respective religious identities, their willingness to learn, grow, and explore their faith to while remaining within a Catholic identity, and their deep-seated identification with being "Catholic". What P, C, and D exhibit in terms of their critical thought processes, analytic capabilities, and open-minded approach to discourse within the religious field all while remaining under the umbrella of being "Catholic" far exceeds any of Inglis' (IWP 2004) categories. Perhaps they should be called *Reflexive Catholics* due to the time, effort, exploration, and personal scrutiny obvious in the formation of these three young men's personal identities.

Finally, Inglis (IWP 2004) introduces us to *Alienated Catholics*, people who feel that religion does not play a role in their lives but still might tick the "Catholic" box on a survey or Census document (p. 17-18). Inglis (IWP 2004) does not say much about this group but what I gathered from his text these people appear to have very little identification with the institutional Catholic Church and do not participate more often than special occasions such as weddings, Christenings, funerals, First Communion, Confirmations, and perhaps not even then (pp. 17-18). Alienated Catholics are those who "made reference to the recent scandals in the Catholic Church, particularly in relation to child sexual abuse" but reported that this did not really affect their faith (Inglis IWP 2004.18). Thus, Inglis (IWP 2004) puts forward the idea that these are people who (a) no longer identify themselves with the institutional Catholic Church and (b) no longer identified themselves "with being Catholic" were people who had "become alienated before the scandals" (p. 18).

Again, none of my respondents could be categorized as such, however, I would argue that Alienated Catholics might actually embody the first stage of the disaffiliation process. Those who are alienated from the institutional Church but still feel a need for spirituality may indeed choose to engage in different religio-philosophical systems as the other members of my study did. Despite no longer identifying himself as Catholic, I would say that M was the only participant who came close to exhibiting Inglis' (IWP 2004) above-mentioned characteristics.

M was a 21-year-old disaffiliated individual who could not put a definitive name to

his new spirituality. He too was from a suburb of Dublin but grew up in a home where his mother was Protestant and his father Catholic. M is the eldest child of two and remembers how his mother could not participate in many holiday events particular to Catholicism because she was a Protestant. Though she would go to mass with them occasionally, she could not take Communion and did not go to Confession. Further, M recalls that growing up his family did not go to mass frequently as his mother was not able to participate and his father was not overly religious. M details going to mass only in order to make his Confirmation due to his father being Catholic, but not frequently even before then due to his mothers Protestantism and never really other than special occasions after that for the same reason coupled with disagreement with Church Doctrine. These facets shall be discussed later however.

It was when M's father passed away when M was 15 that M's interest in spirituality began in earnest. While M would not classify his spirituality as "faith", he titles it as a "philosophy cause like I associate faith with ehm, something you believe in without proof, but ehm, I tend to look at the world and my experience to kind of reaffirm the philosophy that I have so..."

Inglis (IWP 2004) briefly discusses the abandonment of the traditional Irish Catholic image of the mother in modern society as being a primary source of increases in Alienate Catholics and decreases in Strong Catholics (p. 18). Referring to Hillard (2003), Inglis (IWP 2004) says that this abandonment clearly has considerable footing in the Church's stance on contraceptives and family planning (p. 18). This is evident as shown above in all three Reflexive Catholic's responses concerning their difficulties with the Catholic Church's teachings in this area and is openly shown through their outright disregard as such. Without a strong religio-philosophical presence in his mother, M also may be an example of this new decrease in the primacy of Catholicism. What is more, G, another disaffiliated male, also discusses his mother as not being overly concerned with whether or not he and his siblings grew up "as Catholics". In fact, G notes that his mother did not "make us go to mass" after he was 10 or 11. G tells us that she felt that they could "make up [their] own minds" about their faith.

Considering the congruence between much of my respondents' input and Inglis' (IWP 2004) analysis, it is entirely plausible to assert that the Catholic Church in Ireland is

losing its ability to persuade and indeed convince people to think of themselves as Catholic and to legalistically follow its rules and regulations. There no longer seems to be such an emphasis on conducting oneself with orthodox behavior and exhibiting legalistic adherence in order to remain within the community with any form of status. Status, and capital for that matter may be increasingly derived from other sources. P, C, and D are prime examples of people who would still overtly lay claim to a Catholic identity but who simultaneously critique and disregard several Church teachings.

These young men showing forthrightly that orthodox adherence might not be particularly necessarily in order to maintain a Catholic personal identity and or high levels of capital within the religious field. However, what Inglis' (IWP 2004) work suggests and what my research supports, is that this Catholic identity is one that though still in existence, is not one which translates omni presently and unquestionmgly throughout individuals' lives any longer (p. 19). Rather, for many, Catholic identity remains within the religious field almost exclusively; effectively it is an identity which is consciously (and arguably unconsciously) activated almost only when prompted outright (Inglis IWP 2004:19-20) and which is increasingly tailored to modern day social and personal demands.

Processes of Disaffiliation and the Importance of Familial Structure

Sandomirsky and Wilson (1990) conducted a study concerning how men and women went about the process of disaffiliation respectively. They put forward a very compelling argument based upon family formation which concerns two different processes of disaffiliation, one being apostasy, a complete leave-taking of religion altogether, and one for the switching of religious affiliations (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990:1211). Sandomirsky and Wilson (1990) found that “changes in family status [affected] apostasy but not switching, the latter being more influenced by denomination of origin” (p. 1211). Further findings concluded that women were most influenced by religious variables while for men it was those in the family which carried the most weight and also that religious variables held more sway in the direction of switching than in the choice of apostasy (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990:1211).

Secondary group affiliation gives people a “network of ties to the public sphere” and thereby is a large contributor to one’s social position (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990:1211). Given that, it is important to look at such network ties as not simply a singular linkage but rather as a connective tissue, joining the individual and the group on many different levels and in many different ways and each of these linkages must be severed if the individual is to disconnect with the group (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990:1211). One of the first things we must acknowledge is that when one belongs to a particular religious group, there are “typically a mixture of ascriptive and achieved statuses” similar to what we have discussed with respect to Wuthnow (1992) (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990:1212). However, when one claims affiliation to a religion that lacks an “established church” and or institutional body, this is the highest embodiment of voluntarism (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990:1212).

Today there is an increasing level and ability of choice-making behavior available to the Irish people. Pluralism is increasing at a dramatic rate which arguably leads to an increase in religious competitiveness unprecedented in Irish history. From 1981 to 2002, the number of persons who identified themselves as belonging to a religion other than the stated Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland (including Protestant), Presbyterian, Methodist, or Jewish, went up from 10,843 to 89223, an increase of some 820% (www.cso.ie). The number of people who identified “No Religion” increased by 350% and those who chose

to not state when up by 11% (www.cso.ie). Such statistics are thought provoking and might indeed indicate an increased competitive atmosphere within the religious field.

One of the most compelling points that Sandomirsky and Wilson (1990) make is that switching religions and dropping out of religion are two very distinct behaviors motivated by particular and divergent variables (p.1213). What is more, these two variables have long been lumped together as simple disaffiliation and this should most definitely not be the case according to Sandomirsky and Wilson (1990). These two processes of disaffiliation are fundamentally different in that:

Someone could drop out of religion and still keep the quasi-ethnic ties of family, neighborhood, language, and culture that also formed part of that affiliation. When people *change* their religion, however, this is much less likely to happen. In this case, quasi-ethnic ties will create role strain and people will be unlikely to embark on this step unless they are also prepared to sever these other ties (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990 1213)

Family and religion are the most congruent of the social institutions and social theory has long viewed the family as “an agent of social control, or more benignly, as one of several socializing institutions,” and as such, the family is one of the loci for core value transmission cross-generationally (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990:1213). This view adds credence to the findings discussed about concerning Kelley and De Graaf (1997) concerning the power of parental influence in young people’s attitudes and behaviors surrounding systems of value. This makes it all the more clear as to why those who change their religions “anticipate some kind of sanction from relatives” (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990:1213). Therefore, it is often viewed as an act of non-conformity when young adults leave their “parental or adolescent religion” in favor of a new form or simply in apostasy, and as the family is usually viewed as a locus of social control, the family might be seen as a means of preventing or stifling such non-conformity (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990:1213-1214).

Such behavior is seen in all three participants of my study who had switched religions. They were not switching from Catholicism to Protestantism, or into another Abrahamic faith, or even into an established school of Buddhism or Hinduism. Rather, each made a shift into a non-institutional and mostly self-defined faith system, with the exception of A who had indeed done extensive research into her faith form and who attends regular gatherings of likeminded people who identify themselves under the blanket term of “Paganism.”

A is a disaffiliated 20 year old woman. She is from a Dublin suburb and details her childhood as being:

A: it was pretty average, ehm, I had a good childhood, nothing traumatic or anything like that, my dad was in the army so he wasn't there just like around the time of my birth but he was there the whole childhood and then we got moved to Israel for a year [W: wow] but like that was just one year, there wasn't anything traumatic about the whole thing whatsoever, so yeah, an average normal childhood.

A describes how she went through a time when she was younger wherein she was searching for meaning and when she threw herself into Catholicism with great conviction. She is bright, very open, and clear in the way she describes herself as a "Naturey Pagan Person." She entitles herself as "a Hedgewitch with Celtic Interests" and makes specific reference to the fact that it was only after she had gone through a time when she felt that she was an atheist that she found her "place...like coming home" with Paganism. Despite her faith being one which she calls "solitary by nature" A still displays a heartfelt desire to commune with others like herself while simultaneously maintaining her autonomy and authority within her faith system.

Though she attends gatherings, A still stresses the individually geared nature of Paganism and so makes careful note of underscoring that. However, A feels lonely because there are not others of her faith form readily around her and she actively seeks out those whom she might identify with. So, despite extolling the virtues of such a "free" system of meaning, A still appears to long for the support and connective structure of a network based around a definitive faith system:

A: ...But I've started, well in the last few years I like that I've been accepted with my friends and I like that I've been accepted and nobody really challenges me anymore about life, but it's starting to get to me a bit about how I don't really know anybody else with the same beliefs as me. And ehm, like I said, there's that girl that I was working with, she really disillusioned me and when I was doing my leaving cert, I had to repeat my leaving cert, I came across two people who were pagan both who disillusioned me as well, so you just find a lot of people who bring you down, like it's just taken as a fashionable fad and that nobody actually believes it. But when you do go to things like Witchfest, Feile Draiochta which it's now called, you feel good about it, because everybody there wants to talk about, they want to laugh about it, to communicate about it, just to know about it. The internet has probably been a big crutch for me because I've found a few forums where I can talk to people about it from all over the world who have similar beliefs to me, so basically I just wish I could meet them in my life, that sort of thing, but ehm, yeah, I just use, I'm a Hedgewitch, my religion is solitary and I have no problem with that, I'm not into covens or anything like that where I don't really, I would never practice with somebody else when I'm doing my rituals or anything like that but it would be great to have somebody to discuss it with occasionally...

What is more, Sandomirsky and Wilson (1990) find that daughters of mixed

marriages, where one parent originates from a different religion than the other, are more likely to disaffiliate than are those whose parents have married endogamously (p. 1215). What is more, the findings concerning switching of religions show to be influenced primarily by the characteristics of the religion, if there are “quasi-ethnic” ties, then switching out of the religion in favor of another becomes more difficult than from one unfettered in these multifaceted ways (Sandomirsky and Wilson 1990:1222-1223).

This may be somewhat evident in A’s family situation as well however in that she views her mother’s spirituality as inherently different from that of her father:

A: ...I mean, my dad, it still very Catholic in that he goes to church and everything but I’ve never really gotten the feeling from him that he *is*, he just does it out of habit or something. My mom, eh, I admire her because she believes in God. She actually *believes* it, she doesn’t just do it like dad does and go to church every Sunday and that kind of thing like, I mean, she will go to church but it’s to be with God it’s not necessarily Catholicism, it’s just God, whoever that god might be, she just believes in a higher power and this is her way of expressing it. So, whatever has happened in the past and though I might disagree with her, I respect her because of that, ehm, so there never really was kind of a person that I looked up to as a Catholic.

S, a Catholic woman cites the manner in which her parents were “equal partners” in her upbringing with respect to her introduction to the Church. P, D, and C all discuss childhoods featuring parents who were involved with their local churches and who advocated—and indeed coerced sometimes—their children to be active members of their parish. All those who remained within the Catholic fold were those participants who could cite parents who actively facilitated their children’s education and indoctrination into the Catholic faith.

However, A openly speaks about the multiple attempts her parents made to keep her within the Catholic faith system. In fact, she had a very difficult time throughout her disaffiliation process:

[Discussing whether or not she made a conscious choice to follow her faith]

A: Definitely! (laughs) I know because I was a pretty rebellious teen, but making the transition from, the official transition from being Catholic to being Pagan was really hard, because my dad, my family, people in general, do not take kindly to it. My dad, ehm, I remember, this one ridiculous occasion, I tried to stop going to mass and he wouldn’t let me and it took about I’d say a year to a year and a half to actually finally say “right fine, I’m gonna leave ya” and it’s just, it was, it took me so long to be able to say “no, I’m not going to mass anymore. I don’t believe it and I don’t think I should go if I don’t believe it” ...and ehm, but I remember this one time I promised him that I would go with my friend to the evening mass, and I remember, he actually drove into the village to make sure that I would go to the evening mass and when he saw me coming out of the shop with my friend, he took me into the church and made me sit there and go to the mass.... I just, I don’t know, I’ll just never understand it I don’t think why he was so kind of like “you’re definitely going to mass”

I don't know, I guess it was upsetting for him to have the routine broken or something. But ehm, when the moment when he actually like, my whole family went to church, the 10 00 mass on Sunday like we had always done, and I woke up at a quarter to 11 and I hadn't been called and I hadn't gone to mass and I was like "yes! Finally! They're leaving me!" (laughing) He had just left it but like, me and my dad still don't have a great relationship and I think a large part of it was all the trouble that I had trying to go vegetarian and trying to ehm, you know stop going to mass, trying to, like my tattoos, I have two tattoos, I have Pagan symbols, ehm, it's just, he wasn't accepting any of it and he never has and it's just definitely caused loads of rows between the two of us, but then again I did go about it very bull-like, I'm a Taurus that's what I do so (laughing)

This type of "sanction" is clearly seen in A's interview and her details concerning the difficulty she has had with her father concerning her switching to Paganism from Catholicism. She has encountered considerable resistance from her family and has even removed herself from certain familial activities such as going to mass together on Sundays, eating different foods, using different household cleaning products, and cooking different meals in order to eat with her family. She has had considerable tension with him as well concerning discussions about her behavior as well as his, and the nature of his strident resistance of her disaffiliation.

Essentially, Sandomirsky and Wilson (1990) tell us that the "family of origin" has enormous power in the processes of disaffiliation, and that as the family is a structure of differentiated power, it is most often the case that daughters are "controlled more extensively than sons" (p. 1214). On the whole, young women do not exhibit as much risk-taking behavior as young men do and as "religious disaffiliation is a form of risk-taking, an expression of freedom", one can easily see how Sandomirsky and Wilson's (1990) findings simultaneously show that women are more influenced by familial status than men are when concerned with the disaffiliation process (p. 1214).

However, despite A being a disaffiliated woman, she still feels strongly about giving her children both a religious and moral education as well as teaching them particular things which she feels are pertinent to Pagan lifestyle though she might not label as such in terms of her plans for raising her family. She talks about the importance of vegetarianism to her as a manifestation of her faith but asserts that she would not foist this decision on her children in entirety, though she will not have meat products in her home:

[On raising her children vegetarian]

A Ehm, I'd like to raise my children to be vegetarian if I can, I'm not, you know, my friends have been kind of at me about this one, in that would you raise your kid to be a

vegetarian and then when they go to a kid's party and they're not allowed to have any jelly babies or anything like that because of all the gelatin in them but as far as I can see, I don't think it's right to inflict that on my kids. But as long as there's no meat stored in my house or cooked in my house they can have what they like, so I'm not going to begrudge them trips to McDonald's or at a kid's party if they want to have cocktail sausages or you know fair enough, that's grand, and then when they're old enough to be able to make their own decisions, if they choose to go back to eating meat, I have no problem with that, it's just that I want to raise them vegetarian because I think that's what's best for them and a mother is supposed to do what's best for her children so this is what I believe is what's best so for me that's kind of part of my Pagan thing
[On raising her children Pagan]

A: As far as raising my kids Pagan, I think it's good for children to have something to practice. I'm not going to immerse them completely in it and make them do all this weird stuff, but I think that to get them into the mode of you know not being lazy about it, because I really think that's a big problem is to be apathetic and lazy. I really don't like that when it comes to religion. So I mean just to raise them so that they're aware that there are religions and that they're kind of in the mode of respecting that and living that a little bit. Then when they're old enough to make their own decision whatever religion they want to go with I'll back them up 100%. If they choose to go back to being Catholic, I have no problem with that if that is what they actually want.

Here we see A feeling that she wants to take an active approach to teaching her children about her faith while at the same time allowing them to "make their own decision", a trait which was previously unheard of in Catholic Ireland. Though A is outright a non-Catholic, there still seems to be an inclination for her to raise her children with some form of religious education.

This is further supported by the various studies Sandomirsky and Wilson cite including Hagan (1989), Martin (1967), and Troll and Bengtson (1979), concerning the facets surrounding how most often the role of connecting family and religion falls to women (p. 1214). This is also apparent in M's case for his mother was Protestant while his father was a Catholic, openly citing his propensity towards a new faith coming from a disconnect between his mother and wider Irish society. G also details that it was perhaps more the fact that he lacked a primary facilitating individual during his introduction to Catholicism and the addition that his mother allowed him as his siblings to "make up [their] own minds" concerning their faith that he found his new spirituality. This data points towards the assertion that family life plays a paramount role in whether or not young people will (a) disaffiliate from Catholicism and (b) feel that religion plays a significant role in their personal and social identities. These points will be explored in the next chapter.

Irish Parental Socialization, National Context, and Religious Belief

Using data collected from the 1991 International Social Survey Program (ISSP), Jonathan Kelley and Nan Dirk De Graaf (1997) explored the “degree to which religious beliefs are passed on from generation to generation in different nations” (p. 639). Kelley and De Graaf (1997) assert that faithful parents will indoctrinate religious beliefs in their children by direct teaching, showing by example, and also indirectly by influencing their children’s views (p. 640). This is also the case for ethical and moral systems, politics, and many other facets of children’s behavior and attitudes (Kelley and De Graaf 1997:640). They also note that parents do not have exclusive access to influencing their children on such matters for as children develop they are apt to form friendships outside of their family and enter into peer groups which will prove highly influential to their religious beliefs and value systems, especially throughout adolescence (Kelley and De Graaf 1997:640).

I would argue along with Kelley and De Graaf as those respondents who had disaffiliated from Catholicism uniformly attested that they either did not have significant parental influences or were without primary figures of influence during their religious education. Again, though parents do not play the only role in religious identity formation, they do play a large one as Kelley and De Graaf (1997) expand:

Children are exposed to religious values (or their absence) in school curricula, the mass media, and the nation’s culture. Some are exposed to government sponsored propaganda that can shape their views—either pro-religious (as in Ireland and many Islamic nations) or antireligious (as in Easter Europe in Communist times)(Stark and Iannaccone 1994:236-39)...Religious beliefs thus depend not only on parents’ religious beliefs, but also on the religious content of school curricula and the mass media, on the religious policies of the government and churches, on the general religious content of the nation’s culture and dominant values, and especially on the religious “environment” that people live in—their friends, peer groups, schools, teachers, and marriage partners. (p. 640)

The two main hypotheses concerning religious belief Kelley and De Graaf (1997) offer are:

- 1.) People who are born into “religious nations, in proportion to the orthodoxy of their fellow-citizens” are those who will have more orthodox belief systems than otherwise like people born in secular nations (Kelley and De Graaf 1997:641).

This is arguably supported by Inglis’ (IWP 2004) findings concerning the numbers of

Irish who continued to identify themselves as “Catholic” despite low levels of practice and or participation (pp. 1-8).

- 2.) In “relatively secular societies, devout families” will often attempt to protect their children from secular influences and pressures.

This shows how in religious households, family climate and or background largely affects religious beliefs while those of national culture remain somewhat marginal (Kelley and De Graaf 1997:642).⁶

While my data cannot necessarily support this position, it can effectively show that those respondents who identified themselves as “Catholic” were raised in families who were very involved with the institutional Church, who encouraged their involvement and who facilitated a relationship with the faith system beyond personal practice and into institutionally involved organizations.

S, P, D, and C are all excellent examples of highly involved Catholic young people. This may be the fact simply because in my search for participants I made clear that I was looking for people who would “identify themselves as Catholic” and so might have encouraged those who are more involved to volunteer for the research. Nevertheless, all four individuals described their families and parents as people who were very supportive of the Church, actively participated regularly and were oftentimes involved with Church organizations etc. Despite the above-mentioned concerns about the sample group, the data they provided proves an apt example of Kelley and De Graaf’s (1997) assertion that religious families have higher rates of success in transmitting their faith structure to their children.

P is an active member of his church’s folk group choir and is also on the Parish Pastoral Council which is intimately involved with both deciding and effecting the “direction of the parish.” C is a member of two different Bible Study groups and tries to attend mass several times per week. Both men are members of Catholic families and remember their parents being important figures in their introduction to Catholicism as well as helping to build their relationship with Catholicism through getting them to go to

⁶ This hypothesis is supplemented with the position that “in relatively devout societies, secular families do not usually insulate their children from” religious influences and pressures. This in turn shows how the secular families’ backgrounds have hardly any influence on religious beliefs and the national cultural affects have a much larger one (Kelley and De Graaf 1997:642).

mass and be involved in religious organizations like choirs, Scouts, Bible Study groups, Youth groups etc.

C describes his early experiences with faith as such:

C: no ehm, no major milestones, obviously growing up in Ireland we made our First Communion at 7 and ehm, I would have been going to mass with the parents every week since I was born so it was definitely facilitated by my parents. Ehm, the religious ethos in the schools I suppose, the Scouts were a religious organization. [W: so you did Scouts?] yeah it was, well, yeah, religion was a big part of it and community life in those days in comparison to now.

When asked about P's experience with faith and whether or not he could name a primary figure who might have facilitated his relationship with Catholicism, he is very candid in saying that he feels that it was *both* of his parents who *equally* played this role:

W: ok. All right, so can you talk to me a little bit about who the primary figure was for you who facilitated your experience with religion? Was it your mom or your dad or?

P: I actually have to say both, they both, they both are actually strong Catholics and they both basically cater to that part of my life, of our whole family life, they both take care of it. I mean they both, they both had a good education especially in religion and they both made sure they passed that on to us.

The fact that P notes that he feels his parents "passed [Catholicism] on to" him is a crucial point. The generational transmission of the faith system is and has been a vital part of the Catholic Church's maintenance of its "moral monopoly" as Inglis (1998) puts it.

A very interesting comparison is easily found within M's response concerning the lack of a primary figure of his early religious upbringing and that he feels this resulted in what he then describes as a lack of "passing down" a faith system:

M:... We never used to go to church actually, you know you go to church up to your Holy Communion [W: yeah] and your Confirmation and then weddings and stuff that was it [W: yeah] maybe once in a while, we'd go for Christmas Eve [W: yeah, Christmas or Easter or yeah one of those] yeah, Easter. But ehm, we never really went and still don't but anyways yeah [W: mmhmm]...

[later in the interview]

W:...ok, so can you tell me a little more about, so who was kind of the primary figure facilitating your experience with religion when you were young?

M: well, the teachers I think, [W: ok] cause my mother's a Protestant, [W: oh] yeah, and she's from Scotland so if we'd ever be attending church she wouldn't go for Communion [W: mmhmm] and she wouldn't know too many of the prayers so she, and she wasn't a very religion person herself but when she was a child she would have had very strict rules and stuff with religion you know [W: ok] and she never really carried that... [W: carried that to you?] yeah.

These two young men detail very different life histories and also have very distinct faith forms from one another, however, they both note a "passing on" or a

“carrying on” of faith system, in P’s case this was very active, in M’s case, the opposite.

D discusses his primary figure as being his mother though he mentions both his father and his grandfather as being “religious people” in his life:

D: so ehm, my earliest memory now of religion, I think, I suppose would be going to mass, the Children’s Mass at 12 o’clock on a Sunday morning. Ehm, and it would have been my mam who would have been the main person in the involvement, it was always her, I’ll always remember she would be the one obviously trying to get us out the door and whatnot, it was, my dad actually, he always went to mass on his own, he’d always go to the half 8 mass on a Sunday morning so it was mostly my mam and ehm, she got us involved around the time of our Communion, she got us involved in reading at the Children’s Mass. And she became an organizer of that and she still is today so that’s, she’s doing that a good long while now so, I did that til I was about 13, 12 or 13 I think I went to it.

D: my dad, (laughs) yeah, he has some really, fairly conservative points of view yeah let me tell ya. I remember I showed him my religion book from school and he was shocked at what we were learning. “You should all still be learning the Catechism you know like they did back in his day” but ehm, yeah, my mam of course you know eh, she’s pretty involved and she knows the parish priest pretty well and eh she does a lot for the Church, organizing and she reads in the Mass and all that sort of stuff you know what I mean.

As D’s mother was involved in Church organizations and in the mass service itself as well as D’s father participating, there is clearly a strong structure of not just involvement but of outright inculcation throughout the process of D’s introduction to Catholicism.

S also depicts a highly involved family-church life. Though S has the unique condition of being the sole offspring of two former members of the Catholic cloth, the details she gives concerning her religious education are much the same as those D mentions. This can be seen below in her thoughts concerning any primary figures in her religious experience:

[S’s memories about her initial introduction to Catholicism]

S: ...let me think, well, from a very young age in school, like in primary school there was a good religious education program and you know we had books, I don’t remember very much about the books but I remember most of the sections in the back in blue print which was all songs and we had a tape and we’d play the tape and sing the songs about how Jesus loves us and all that kind of stuff that was excellent and I still remember all the songs that we learned for our First Communion and our Confirmation they are etched that indelibly. My parents gave me, I can’t remember when they did, something called The Children’s Illustrated Bible, it had lots of oil drawings [W: oh my brother had one of those!] yeah aren’t they great! [W: yeah the pictures] yeah all the drawings and the stories are told in a much more simple way and I read a lot and I still do and I you know, I would read it and find it very interesting and so that was kind of a basis for my knowledge in that sense [W: yeah]... S: I think it was more equal. In you know, we said prayers together, we would say when we were younger, I mean when I was younger, we would say a decet of The Rosary everyday, now we say The Office together. Um, I can’t think, I don’t think either Mum or Dad had a more significant role in that sense [W: ok] I can’t remember if it was one of the other of them who gave me the Bible [W: ok] Even now I mean, to be honest I can’t, even now we don’t actually talk about faith

very much, it's just something that we do, you know you might talk about it in theology but it's not something you discuss very much at home at all.

[D's memories about his initial introduction to Catholicism]

D:...So I mean, I used to think it was everybody and I think I still do but I would like, think that ehm, there would be more knowledge maybe in my family in some of ehm like other eh, Catholicism and the Bible and all of that you know what I mean. I mean like I can remember myself when I was a young lad (laughs) I like to read and I read the Children's Bible we had lying around you know and I read that more than my older brother but ah, it was at the time, it was something to read and yeah, we'd always read and we were always talking about it as well and having many you know, philosophical conversations, yeah, I think that would be the main thing...

Thus it is clear to see that despite S's unique circumstances concerning her parentage, both she and D cite reading a Children's Bible as being a prominent memory of their childhood upbringing within the Catholic ethos. This seems to have been a ready tool for their parents to use in introducing and teaching them about the faith and getting them involved in Catholic world views at very early stages of their development.

The startling similarities of A, G, and M's answers when asked whether or not they had a primary figure who influenced their early religious experiences may point towards that the familial influence concerning religious transmission being just as crucial as Kelley and De Graaf's (1997) suggests:

[Discussing who was the primary faith facilitator in her childhood]

A: ok, well, I suppose, though I don't think there ever really was which is why I think I left it so early, well there was just this kind of "this is what you do" rather than any one particular person. I mean, my dad, it still very Catholic in that he goes to church and everything but I've never really gotten the feeling from him that he *is*, he just does it out of habit or something. My mom, eh, I admire her because she believes in God. She actually *believes* it, she doesn't just do it like dad does and go to church every Sunday and that kind of thing like, I mean, she will go to church but it's to be with God it's not necessarily Catholicism, it's just God, whoever that god might be, she just believes in a higher power and this is her way of expressing it. So, whatever has happened in the past and though I might disagree with her, I respect her because of that, ehm, so there never really was kind of a person that I looked up to as a Catholic.

[Talking about who was a significant figure in his early relationship with faith]

M: yeah, yeah, I think that people *not* effecting how I think about religion would have been the biggest influence [W: ok] for in daily life really for most of my childhood most of my teenage years, religion, faith wouldn't have come up at all [W: oh, ok] we were pretty much completely non-religious. I mean so I suppose that would have been the reason why when I started to think about this stuff I was completely unprepared I didn't have an explanation that I believed in so I had to sort of formulate one for myself [W: right] cause I'd always suppose, there was always the assumption that what was in the Bible was gospel truth [W: yeah] and I never thought about did I believe in it, I never really questioned it [W: mmhmm] so when I started questioning it and realized that I didn't actually believe in it, it was very distressin' [W: yeah]. So there wouldn't have been anyone that would have formed or influenced my beliefs, but the fact that there wasn't anyone that formed my beliefs would have made the biggest impact.

W yeah, so the absence of influence did the most to influence you?

M yeah exactly

[speaking about his mother]

[Discussing his mother]

G she definitely facilitated it [W ok] but she never wanted to emphasize it [W ok] because of the Catholic system All the schools in Ireland were Catholic, we did, we did Catholic CCD, I think that's what they call it in America [W mmhmm] that kind of Sunday school thing, I made my Communion in America and so all of, everything here in Ireland would have been Catholic in schools [W right] but after a certain age she stopped like forcing us to go to mass and encouraging us to go to mass, we could make our own decision She was never a Catholic, I wouldn't consider, I certainly wouldn't consider myself a Catholic [W ok] and I wouldn't consider any of us Catholic

W ok, can you tell me what age she kind of stopped making that something that you had to do?

G let's see, between nine and ten, but it was something I chose at that age actually When I was ten I moved out to [inaudible] island which is where I really discovered what I term spirituality, I found God in the nature of the island and I was an alter boy at the time and I took great enthusiasm in it at that time, I really enjoyed it, I saw a statue blink even though nobody believed me and so I enjoyed it and then I renounced it all around the time of my Confirmation around the time I was twelve, 11, 11 I think

These remarkably similar descriptions indicate the importance of strong familial influences carrying on a given institutional faith system in terms of practice as well as in terms of identification. Without strong familial indoctrination, Irish young people lack a vital component in the aggregate Catholic inculcation process. Without the added familial watchdog over morality and indeed religiousness, Irish young people may be effectively leaking out of the Catholic sphere of influence at a rapid rate.

Kelley and De Graaf's (1997) findings show that the religious atmosphere of a given nation has an enormous influence on the belief schema of its citizens (Kelley and De Graaf 1997: 654). Supporting many of Inglis' (1998) descriptive positions concerning the nature of the Catholic Church in Irish society, Kelley and De Graaf (1997) show that:

. religious beliefs endure in large part because the religious environment of a nation shapes the beliefs of its citizens even when parental socialization failed, the religious atmosphere of the nation and the devout beliefs of the overwhelming majority of potential friends, teachers, colleagues, and marriage partners inculcated belief Not until external forces like modernization, the Enlightenment, the growth of education, or the rise of science bring the average levels of belief in the nation down appreciably do things begin to change Our results suggest that religiosity then changes rapidly—not declining slowly and gradually but dropping precipitously . a self-reinforcing spiral of secularization then sets in, shifting the nation's average religiosity ever further away from orthodoxy. So after generations of stability, religious belief declines abruptly in the course of a few generations to the modest levels seen in many Western European nations today

(Kelley and De Graaf 1997:656)

What is most important to my study however is Kelley and De Graaf's (1997) work shows that individuals themselves shape their religious lives in that they choose "religiously compatible" peer groups, colleagues, friends, and marriage partners and as such, their religious environment is a product of "prior religious convictions, and not an influence on them" (pp. 640-641). This draws our attention to the current cultural changes present in Ireland concerning the primacy of Catholicism as well as the rise of individualistic ethical systems.

Both of these factors can be clearly seen through A and G's emphasis on spending time with and surrounding themselves with people *they feel compatible with*:

[speaking about plans for his future in terms of his faith system]

G: ...I'm going to be living with two guys next year at my house and I deliberately set forth this year to live with people that I knew would be chilled out and would be alright, and one of them I knew had spiritual knowledge and he would help me, we'd bounce off each other. Eh, I'm living with two guys next year, one of whom I've had a lot of spiritually significant experiences with and one of whom I was talking to the other day and I asked him kind of directly about his spirituality and he asked me at some point in the conversation if I'd ever thought of being a priest and I said yeah I had (inaudible) and then I thought we'd get on perfectly fine [W: mmhmm]. So in that sense, living with tightly close personalities, I would make a conscious effort, so that's near future...

[speaking about obstacles or challenges to her faith]

A: well, as far as obstacles go I definitely, my close friends have been very accepting of it and kinda you find that in general though, to tell people though, to just say it "I'm a witch" it just, it's not taken seriously whatsoever, they laugh or whatever and say "yeah right" and things like that, it's just not, so in general I don't tend to say it, like I'm never going to deny it if people ask me, like a few people have asked me, like I carry a pentacle around and people have asked me about that, and I obviously would say, well, you can kind of judge by people how they're going to react... But I've started, well in the last few years I like that I've been accepted with my friends and I like that I've been accepted and nobody really challenges me anymore about life, but it's starting to get to me a bit about how I don't really know anybody else with the same beliefs as me. And ehm, like I said, there's that girl that I was working with, she really disillusioned me and when I was doing my leaving cert, I had to repeat my leaving cert, I came across two people who were pagan both who disillusioned me as well, so you just find a lot of people who bring you down, like it's just taken as a fashionable fad and that nobody actually believes it. But when you do go to things like Witchfest, Feile Draiochta which it's now called, you feel good about it, because everybody there wants to talk about, they want to laugh about it, to communicate about it, just to know about it. The internet has probably been a big crutch for me because I've found a few forums where I can talk to people about it from all over the world who have similar beliefs to me, so basically I just wish I could meet them in my life, that sort of thing, but ehm, yeah, I just use, I'm a Hedgewitch, my religion is solitary and I have no problem with that, I'm not into covens or anything like that where I don't really, I would never practice with somebody else when I'm doing my rituals or anything like that but it would be great to have somebody to discuss it with occasionally...

From these two excerpts alone one can see that these new-faith-followers struggle

with finding a compatible religio-philosophical community, hinting at increased diversity in both their search as well as their condition requiring the search. These are not young Catholic Irish people, they are young Irish people of differing faith and individual persuasions. They choose actively to seek out those who share their views or who are accepting of their value system. Despite perhaps adverse social conditions as A mentions in her search for others like herself, A follows her faith form in that search. She is actively looking for those people who will share *her* thoughts, feelings, and beliefs as well as *her* interests and *her* taste. Thus perhaps we can see and good example of Kelley and De Graaf's (1997) assertions concerning the efforts individuals will go to in order to find compatible peer groups and relationship partners with respect to their value systems as well as an apt instance of highly individualist thought and behavior.

Kelley and De Graaf (1997) show that while the aggregate social climate must be attended to in terms of understanding new generations' religious behaviour, it is also crucial to understand individual choice making within the religious and social fields of a given nation. It is at this level of individual thought where cultural change emerges through peer group association, colleague interaction, friendship choices, and selection of compatible marriage partners.

Thus, within such a time of ongoing instability and omnipresent choice, ideas of "trust and risk" have very important social and personal roles (Giddens 1991:3). Trust, Giddens (1991) argues, is a central and fundamental aspect of one's personal formation of self and has particular relevance to today's environment of abstract systems (symbolic tokens and expert systems) as well as disembedding mechanisms which "separate interaction from the particularities of locales" (p. 20). This trust is formed during our most vulnerable years, our infancy and early childhood and ultimately is the primary foundation of both our understanding of the outside world as well as ourselves within it (Giddens 1991: Chapter 2).

Essentially, this basic trust (derived from D. W. Winnicott's work) is so fundamental to our understanding of identity formation because it is the foundational beginning of the individual's understanding of the self and his or her active reflexive modification, as well as being the starting point of his or her comprehension of the outside world and of other social agents (Giddens 1991:41-42). However, it is not just

basic trust which presents hurdles in the process of reflexive self-identity construction, many theorists argue that anxiety also plays a crucial role:

One is never certain one has made the right choice, that one has chosen one's 'true' identity, or even constituted an identity at all. The modern self is aware of the constructed nature of identity and that one can always change and modify one's identity at will. One is also anxious concerning recognition and validation of one's identity by others. Further, modernity also involves a process of innovation, of constant turnover and novelty. Modernity signifies the destruction of past forms of life, values, and identities, combined with the production of ever new ones. Thus, in modernity, the problem of identity consisted in how we constitute, perceive, interpret, and present our self to ourselves and to others. Identity is a discovery and affirmation of an innate essence which determines what I am, while for others identity is a construct and a creation from available social roles and material. (Kellner 1992:142-143)

Simply because there is an "external reality" which we all live within does not mean that we all interpret this reality in the same fashion nor do we interpret our place within it necessarily in the same manner (Giddens 1991:42). When we encounter external reality, this is an experience which is mediated by several factors, not least of which include "differentiated linguistic details," conceptions of time and space, ideas concerning the nature of the outside world, and differing understandings of what it means to be a human agent (Giddens 1991:43).

Thus, these respondents show a glimpse of the kind of unrest that may be brewing in Irish young adults' conceptions of self and society. What is more however is that these testaments may prove to be examples of a new kind of Irish identity. These participants' accounts may point towards a larger social trend of fledgling attempts at individually constructed, personally tailored, and autonomously empowered identity formations. It may be the case that these interviews show a forging ahead into the previously uncharted territory of individually constructed self-identities outrightly rejecting those previously ascribed via a Catholic paradigm. Ultimately, the subject requires much more study and would greatly benefit from wider sampling pools, ongoing interviews over an extended period of time, and perhaps a quantitative aspect so as to attempt analysis on a larger national level.

This integrated look at religious behavior prompts questions concerning how members of particular nations conceptualize themselves in terms of their religious background as well as with respect to their national context. This points at once towards the need for further research into personal identity construction with respect to both religious and national cultural contexts. This being said, I would argue that there is a well-built understanding of Irish Catholic Identity formation of the individual as well as

social levels up until the advent of the Celtic Tiger as can be witnessed through Inglis' (1998 & 2004) work as well as that of many others.⁷ However, perhaps what needs more attention is the nature of identity formation and maintenance in those who have disaffiliated, chosen other faith forms, and thus exist in Irish society within a framework of values sometimes entirely alien to Catholicism. In either case, there remains pressing need to address the development of the abovementioned relationships both within the Irish social context as well as the Irish persona.

⁷ See Coulter and Coleman (eds) (2003), Corcoran and Peillon (2006), Cassidy (ed) (2002)

Modernization and Secularization in Ireland and the Persistence of Traditional Values

In Ireland there has undoubtedly been significant industrialization and at an astoundingly rapid pace, education has increased, and women's roles seem to be changing by the minute. The number of persons over age 15 at work in the labor force has increased by about 42% from 1981 to 2002. While the number of women over 15 in the labor force has jumped from 358,627 to 737,422, a whopping 210%, while men have climbed as well by 16% (Census statistics www.cso.ie). What is more, numbers working in agrarian fields such as farming, fishing, and forestry from 1996 to 2002 have fallen by 82% in women and by 40% for men, while building workers have increased by 63% in males and by 3% for females⁸ (www.cso.ie). Managers and executives have increased by 72% overall and business and commerce laborers have grown by 60% while computer software occupations lead the charge by an astounding 90% increase all between the years of 1996 and 2002 (www.cso.ie). The number of students aged 15 and above has increased by 75% from 1981 to 2002⁹

What is more, from 1996 to 2002 there was an increase of about 40% in the number of people aged 15 and over enrolled in or having completed third level education (www.cso.ie). The Household Budget Survey analysis of 1999-2000 included details of prior surveys and showed that overall private income growth was up by and large:

The estimated average weekly expenditure in 1999-2000 for all households in the State was £455.47. This was over 46% higher than five years earlier. The corresponding increase in retail price levels, as recorded by the consumer Price Index, was just over 11%. As a result, there was a real increase of approximately 325% in the volume of average household consumption over this five-year period after allowing for the effects of price change (Household Budget Survey 1999-2000 6)

With the rise of the middle class, Inglehart and Flanagan (1987) show through massive quantitative study that postmaterialist values such as social solidarity, ecological concerns, gender equality, and social tolerance go hand in hand with a more individualistic ethos and pluralistic social structure (pp. 1292-1293). Just as C said above, people are thinking for themselves and may not like being dictated to any longer.

C goes on to illustrate this shift quite concisely. Ireland has made a fundamental

⁸ This line of labor is historically dominated by men and so should be gauged primarily by the increase in male labor workers

⁹ Between 1996 and 2002 there was only a 3% increase, showing the greatest amount of change being between the years of 1981 to 1986 at 22%

jump in the manner in which it views the world and many feel that this change has been largely due to economic development. C makes reference to why the Catholic Church is losing popularity in Ireland and how it is deriving support from more “ethnic” groups:

C:... . A lot of people who go to mass now are all ethnic communities and that's the only way the churches are surviving in Ireland, because there has been a large increase in the ethnic population. Poland's a very Catholic country, a few of the Eastern countries around Asia, Africa, Africa's very religious. What all these countries have in common with what Ireland did 30, 40 years ago, it was *poor*. [W: right] they, they turned to the Church, they were led by the Church and the Church ultimately failed them. And tradition, tradition drags people along with that, it doesn't say “I have eyes and ears, I have a brain I'm going to do it this way” and that's how so many people get turned away from it.

However, Verweij, Ester, and Nauta's (1997) study shows that Ireland was still one of the most religious countries surveyed by the 1990 EVS (p. 315). This however may have changed over the past 15 years but other parts of their argument are still worth mentioning. In this study Ireland scores very high on their “masculinity index” which is directly correlated to levels of religious commitment (Verweij, Ester, and Nauta 1997:317). Ireland also scores high on their “uncertainty index” showing a need for stability directly connected with identification with Catholicism (Verweij, Ester, and Nauta 1997:317). This study ultimately shows that modernization and culture represent changing values and are the most influential aspects concerning religious mentality (Verweij, Ester, and Nauta 1997:321).

Verweij, Ester, and Nauta's (1997) findings show that masculine cultures are more hierarchic and orthodox while feminine cultures are more pluralistic and egalitarian, the later being the more fertile soil for secularization and arguably modernization (or at least a catalyst thereof) (p. 322). Thus, “if masculinity is one of the most important determinants of secularization [i.e. its deterrence or postponement], then there must have been a change from masculine to feminine values to explain this process [modernization and secularization]” (Verweij, Ester, and Nauta 1997:322). If this is so, then it may be the case that Ireland's declining Catholicity¹⁰ may be direct evidence of a shift from masculine culture to a more feminine one coinciding with the nation's economic boom.

It is self-evident that the masculinity/femininity of a culture is pertinent to social gender roles (Verweij, Ester, and Nauta 1997:311). “Masculine” societies have highly

¹⁰ For statistics and figures see publications by John Weafer and Ann Breslin from the Council for Research and Development respectively. Decrease in Catholicity are seen through decreasing mass attendance,

defined and distinctive gender roles usually associated with traditionalistic cultural traits. Men are ascribed roles which are “assertive, tough, [and] focused on material success, while women are supposed to be modest, tender, concerned with the quality of life” (Verweij, Ester, and Nauta 1997:312). However, within feminine cultures, gender roles “overlap” (Verweij, Ester, and Nauta 1997:312).

Masculine countries also view God and religion in a paternalistic light as a “Father, King, Shepherd”, and are considered to be of more substantial influence in peoples’ mundane existence than would be in feminine nations (p. 312). Historically the Judeo-Christian framework (and particularly Catholicism) has operated best within masculine countries due to its firm separation of male and female realms and prescribed behaviors as well as its hierarchical structure (Verweij, Ester and Nauta 1997:312). Protestantism, with its highly individualistic tenets however, seems to have done best within feminine cultures where God is conceptualized as “nondescript” and “individualized”, with a more egalitarian *modus operandi* and focus on “equality of all believers” (Verweij, Ester, and Nauta 1997:312).

Protestantism shows feminine culture characteristics concerned with valuation of each particular person as opposed to the more collectivist and individual-negating Catholic doctrine (Verweij, Ester, and Nauta 1997:312). Such characteristics are evident in Protestantism’s focus on equality of all faithful people, empowerment of females, the availability of positions of “clerical office” to women, and its fundamental aspect of individuality. Feminine countries are defined as having emphasis on relations between members rather than the clear-cut ascriptive roles found in Catholicism (Verweij, Ester, and Nauta 1997:312).

This ubiquitous validation approach can be seen directly in the single overarching characteristic displayed across every respondent in my study: the deeply held conviction that there is legitimacy in all faith systems and that ultimately it is positive to learn about and appreciate the world’s diversity.

Below are just a few examples of the sentiments expressed by my respondents:

[Discussing other faiths]

increasingly sparse Confession attendance, and increasing individually-conceptualized forms of religiosity and spiritualism)

S I wouldn't know nearly as much about other religions as I would my own and I would like to find out more because it's better, knowledge serves you far more than ignorance you know . . . Nevertheless, I'm sure there are some religions out there that are not beneficial, that are unhelpful, I mean I've heard about some terrible things that people, I mean not just in the past, people talk about the things done in the name of religion in the past, things are being done today and they're the same, you know they talk about children being sacrificed and killed in different parts of the world today, various different beliefs which do not believe in being open-minded and you know, "tolerant" is such a terrible word, because "tolerant" implies something that you're willing to tolerate but you don't view in way particularly positive I wish I had some other word than "tolerant," a more positive word than "tolerant," you know open-minded and willing to engage with the positive qualities of other people's religions and this is all very important but I think that you should at the same time be open to the fact that people can be very, very wrong People can do terrible things, people can turn themselves into terrible creatures and sometimes whatever religion they've chosen or been born into can be a part of that so you have to be aware that not everything out there is good I guess

M ehm, I'm not sure, I suppose it's sort of opened my mind in many ways cause I think Catholicism is very based on "us" and "them" I mean, the amount of wars that have been waged in the name of god, and not just by Catholicism but in general, but ehm, I'd say as far as my way of thinking goes, I'd be open to meeting anyone, whereas, let's say a very religious Catholic, if they met a gay person, they'd be very eh, I'm not sure, they'd be very closed off from that experience whereas I'm, I just take people as people you know, no one's right or wrong until they do right or wrong you know, so rather than just buying into the Bible I've kinda looked at other possibilities and kinda come to the conclusion that I'll have to read up on other things, cause like I said earlier, I know that I don't know what happens so I have to kinda read up on Hinduism and Buddhism and all these other things and see what makes complete sense to me and I doubt anything will ever make complete sense to me cause I think that takin' something from everything is the right way to do it, like when you look at the human race as a whole, there's hundreds of thousands of different cultures who all believe they're right so...so if you take a little bit from everyone then it'll all be a bit closer to a better picture

P oh yes! Very much! Very much so I think it's always good to learn, I mean every faith has something to offer I mean, obviously if you're going to be one faith then you have to believe that all the others are wrong but I mean, (long pause) there's something that every religion can teach you, everything can teach you and even in this way I mean, Islam is a huge example, I disagree with an awful lot of what Islam is saying, but I mean being Catholic and also just being from the West I suppose, I mean I have my disagreements with Islam but I mean you cannot deny their sheer devotion to it, they're very faithful people, frighteningly so in some cases .but I mean, I have experienced working with a security guard over the summer who was very much into his religion, he was Egyptian And, very much, very much into his faith and he was fervent about it, now he wasn't the best to debate with because generally he wouldn't accept any criticism of Islam but on perhaps the pros and cons of Islam, but there was just this eerie commitment radiating from him just that "I'm sure of my place in the universe" and it's but I mean, you can learn an awful lot there's so much you can actually learn from other religions

C I kinda have strayed away from there being *A Church* or *A Religion* I think obviously those people being heads of the Church would hold the view, i.e. a Catholic they're saying is "we believe in one Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church" not even acknowledging other Churches and you know, Protestants would be fairly derisory about that and you know it's not what God's about and until people lead change in attitudes then I think they will struggle to be identified with faith. Maybe they'll be identified with religion but religion's very different than faith

For brevity's sake these are but 4 of the 7 respondents, but I cannot stress enough

the continuity between the views of each respondent concerning the importance of respecting other faith systems and advocating taking an interest in learning about other faiths with an open mind, accepting the possibility that one's own faith may not necessarily be ultimately "right." This newfound sense of spiritual egalitarianism is of marked contrast to the formerly legalistic exclusivity with which the Irish once viewed faith (Inglis 1998: Chapter 10).

However, Inglehart and Baker (2000) address modernization as a fundamental aspect of this change. In an attempt to show that "economic development has systematic and, to some extent, predictable cultural and political consequences" (p. 20) they outline the general claims of modernization theory concerning events that take place in industrializing and developing societies:

The central claim of modernization theory is that economic development is linked with coherent and, to some extent, predictable changes in culture and social and political life. Evidence from around the world indicates that economic development tends to propel societies in a roughly predictable direction: Industrialization leads to occupational specialization, rising educational levels, rising income levels, and eventually brings unforeseen changes—changes in gender roles, attitudes toward authority and sexual norms; declining fertility rates; broader political participation; and less easily led publics. Determined elites in control of the state and the military can resist these changes, but in the long run, it becomes increasingly costly to do so and the probability of change rises. (Inglehart and Baker 2000:21)

Though economic development has been linked to social distancing "from absolute norms and values towards values that are increasingly rational, tolerant, trusting, and participatory", cultural change does not necessarily follow the same process (Inglehart and Baker 2000:19). Interestingly enough, there is considerable evidence concerning the manner in which traditional values systems have staying power in the modern world. Inglehart and Baker (2000) tell us that though industrialization and modernization might take a somewhat linear or mildly predictable path, it is not so with cultural change:

In marked contrast to the growing materialism linked with the industrial revolution, the unprecedented existential security of advanced industrial society gave rise to an intergenerational shift toward postmaterialist and postmodern values (Inglehart 1977, 1990, 1997). While industrialization was linked with an emphasis on economic growth at almost any price, the publics of affluent societies placed increasing emphasis on quality-of-life, environmental protection, and self-expression...the historically unprecedented wealth of advanced industrial societies, coupled with the rise of the welfare state, mean that an increasing share of the population grows up taking survival for granted. Their value priorities shift from an overwhelming emphasis on economic and physical security toward an increasing emphasis on subjective well-being and quality-of-life (Inglehart 1977, 1997). Thus cultural change is not linear; it moves in a new direction. (pp. 21-22)

As we have seen, cultural change is the most influential factor concerning a nation's aggregate religiosity and religious behavior. Inglehart and Baker (2000) go on to tell us various societies adapt differently to modernizing forces according to their "cultural heritage" and "traditional religious values have an enduring influence on the institutions of a society" (p. 22). Therefore, cultural modernization is a singular and highly heritage-specific process as "distinctive cultural traits endure over long periods of time and continue to shape a society's political and economic performance" (Inglehart and Baker 2000:20).

As such, Inglehart and Baker (2000) address modernization of culture in a slightly different way than the other researchers we have discussed. They approach its analysis with consideration to two basic schools of thought, *convergence theory* and *persistence theory* respectively (Inglehart and Baker 2000:20).

Convergence theory looks at changing value systems in the modernization process as just that, a *convergence* of values, "the decline of traditional values and their replacements with 'modern' values" (Inglehart and Baker 2000:20). Persistence theory suggests instead the staying power, or:

...*persistence* of traditional values despite economic and political changes. This school assumes that values are relatively independent of economic conditions (DiMaggio 1994). Consequently, it predicts that convergence around some set of "modern" values is unlikely and that traditional values will continue to exert an independent influence on the cultural changes caused by economic development. (Inglehart and Baker 2000:20)

Using data from the World Values Surveys from 1981-1982, 1990-1991, and 1995-1998, Inglehart and Baker (2000) explored the idea that economic development was linked with a wide happening of particular and "distinctive value orientations" (p. 23). Their findings turned up some considerable differences in the paradigms of people in affluent societies as compared to those in more poor societies going along two general and ultimately juxtaposed positions (Inglehart and Baker 2000:23). The two definitive fields were "*traditional versus secular-rational* orientations toward authority; and *survival versus self-expression* values" (Inglehart and Baker 2000:23).

Though Inglehart and Baker (2000) note that no comprehensive list of "traditions" can be compiled or be defined but a "mainstream version of preindustrial society" is still able to point out some general basic principles (p. 23). All preindustrial societies which have been studied "show relatively low levels of tolerance for abortion, divorce, and

homosexuality; tend to emphasize male dominance in economic and political life, deference to parental authority, and the importance of family life, and are relatively authoritarian” (pp. 22-23). Inglehart and Baker (2000) go on to add that such societies also tend to express characteristics such as possessing a “strong emphasis on religion” and general hierarchic structure as opposed to advanced industrialist societies which tend to express completely opposite attributes (p. 24). This is easily seen when comparing the pre-Celtic Tiger and present-day Ireland.

Furthermore, whereas preindustrialist societies extol “social conformity rather than individualistic striving [and] believe in absolute standards of good and evil [while] support[ing] deference to authority” secular-rational societies are completely the opposite on all accounts again, including the propensity for nationalistic outlooks (Inglehart and Baker 2000:25). What is more, the cultural changes leading towards the secular-rational position are those consistently found within cohort groups who have “grown up under conditions in which survival is taken for granted” and so have experienced greater attention paid to values such as gender equality, environmental protection, individualism/self-expression, and participation in economic and political fields (Inglehart and Baker 2000:26-27). Younger generations in societies wherein there is industrial development and economic advancement are increasingly rejecting those values venerated by the traditionalistic societies ¹¹ This is evident in A, P, D, C, G, and M. S however continues to exhibit high levels of investment in

Inglehart and Baker’s (2000) work ultimately states a very telling argument, and one I feel is particularly applicable to the changing scapes of the Irish value systems. Namely they argue that “economic development seems to have a powerful impact on cultural values: the value systems of rich countries differ systematically from those of poor countries” (Inglehart and Baker 2000:29).

Ultimately, Inglehart and Baker’s (2000) findings tell us that once constructed and or “established”, the definitive “cross-cultural differences” having to do with religion effectively become a part of given national cultures and as such are “transmitted” to respective populaces via the educational system and mass media, not to mention

facilitated via various conceptualizations of symbolic and cultural capital within the economic and political realms (p. 37).

However, according to Inglehart and Baker (2000), economic progress and development does indeed facilitate “secular and self-expression values” as well as presenting us with two emerging, and very different, tendencies within advanced industrial societies. These two trends are that “established religions are losing the allegiance of their followers, but there is a growing interest in spiritual concerns at the individual level” (Inglehart and Baker 2000:41) showing that despite institutional religious adherence declining, there is still a very clear and present need within such societies for religio-philosophical participation:

Postmaterialists [found in postindustrial and highly advanced industrial societies] are less attached to traditional forms of religion than are materialists [found in preindustrial, agrarian, and or poorer nations], but they are *more* likely to spend time thinking about the meaning and purpose of life. And in the three successive waves of the World Values Surveys, concern for the meaning and purpose of life became *stronger* in most advanced industrial societies. (Inglehart and Baker 2000:47-48)

The modern age is defined by Kliever (1979) with a fundamental premise “that personal self-consciousness is the indubitable foundation, the unrecognized pre-supposition of all else” (p. 171). This central position means that it is not from outside of the individual from whence recognition and conceptualization of the world comes, but rather it is from the primary notion that the self is concrete and conscious within the world and all else must thus be viewed via this individualist stance.

Perhaps the best illustration my study can provide of this point is in the participant G’s conceptualization that outside of him, all is “dream life”:

G: (laughing) that day I’d decided or I understood that to float with the Tao to give up everything and to do what you know is right kind of like this instinctual and dreamlike spiritual knowledge, this incredible psychic activity, to go with that will lead you anywhere you want and so at that time I would have had, I would have taken lots of drugs and I still would have been smoking actively, like regularly smoking marijuana and my recognition of reality is based on construction of reality for myself, like, my own inner construction, everything else was part of me, part of the dream... oh yes, yes, actually, living in consciousness about living in illusion...

[Discussing his conceptions of others in relation to his faith]

G: I’ve always looked at as my friends as being, in a lot of the paranoid times, I’ve lessened it more so, but my friends would be very close direct manifestations of similar personalities to myself, so ultimately, previously I would have said that everyone was a manifestation of

¹¹ There are arguably many exceptions to this statement found within conservative religious groups and areas of various countries, however, on the global whole, the overwhelming majority of younger cohort groups, particularly within advanced industrialist societies, are increasingly holding true to these findings.

my personality as the illusory, hallucination kind of, these non-physical beings that would influence my structure of reality whereas now, it's taken me a while to consider the theory of mind that other people are people, and that they have everything that I have

Vento (2000) argues that far from utter secularization, modern people are increasingly engaging in spiritual and religious pursuits by means of new methods of conceptualizing the sacred and religious:

Some might argue that modern thought has no place for the mythological or the supernatural. I would argue that as "modern thought" progresses to new modes of perception via new metaphysical paradigms, he/she will understand the other side of the coin, that is, the "subjectivity" that has been a blank spot for scientists and intellectuals alike. If belief in the supernatural is something immanent in nature but also transcends nature, and whose activity is not bound by the inexorable working of natural law but may progress beyond it through innovation, creation, and self-creation, then man in his new perceptual sensitivity will follow suit to a higher understanding of reality. (p. 195)

Many thinkers in the social scientific study of religion have said that in the West there is a "symbiosis" between religion and secularity (Vento 2000:183). There is also the issue of the commercialization of religion wrought by the so-called "New Age culture" which includes:

New Age science, healing, and personal growth, channeling, neo-paganism, and the millennial idea of a New Age...an expression of popular Western culture criticism directed against the dualism and reductionism that, perceived as characteristic of rationalist philosophy and science and dogmatic Christianity, is held responsible for the world crisis. (Vento 2000:184)

The above mentioned "counterculture" has been stressed by many thinkers to have considerable religio-philosophical aspects and by and large to be invested with a certain pathology of spirituality which can be seen in the "cultural world of drug trips, rock music, prolonged adolescence, sexual experimentation, and communal living" (Kliever 1979:178) and arguably embodied in my respondent, G. There is also the aspect of a renaissance of pagan spirituality and religion extending far deeper than what Kliever (1979) calls a "faddish interest in astrology, witchcraft, alchemy, and divination" into a concerted, organized, and sincere membership and community (p. 179) as can be seen clearly in A and somewhat in G as well, though more convoluted and in a more obtuse fashion. These undeniable characteristics of modern day religiosity serve as excellent examples of what Kliever (1979) explains as "the 'public dreams' of our civilizations beginnings and the 'private myths' of our personal imaginings reflect[ing] a pluralism and disassociation at the heart of reality as well as in the midst of experience" (p. 179).

Kliever (1979) speaks of the end of an era and the revolutionary processes of paradigm shift. Using a Kuhnian metaphor, Kliever (1979) tells us that paradigm shifts signal the end of eras of particular forms of thought due to growing uncertainty concerning formerly “concrete” truths and societal expectations (p. 1972). Kliever (1979) says that such shifts “begin in a culture when insoluble anomalies and violated expectations command the increasing attention of that culture” (p. 172). These certain norms and “truths” are shaken by various forces of change, sometimes due to the depletion of “answerable” questions or with the rise of new unanswerable questions (p. 172). These circumstances force the attention of the given culture onto such questions, causing debate, research, and ultimately change to new world views and or interpretations of existing world views (Kliever 1979:172).

Within our “contemporary industrial and postindustrial societies” there exist quasi-, para-, and even secular religions, all of which seek to “deal with ultimate dynamics in a way similar to how religious organizations do but that do not have explicitly supernatural or super-empirical beliefs or references” (Vento 2000:184). There is a marked and undeniable “tension between the two opposite poles” of the increasingly secular stance of many world governments and the continuing level importance religion has in many peoples’ lives (Vento 2000:189).

Because of this juxtaposition I would argue that this view is particularly applicable to Ireland at present. Instead of the straight replacement of traditionalistic values with “modern” ones as convergence theory suggests, societies are influenced by their culturally specific heritages and so “move on parallel trajectories” within the modernization process according to their particular cultural backgrounds (Inglehart and Baker 2000:49). The non-Catholic respondents of my study are excellent examples of young Irish people who are not simply unattached but forthrightly reject traditional forms of religion. They exhibit postmaterialist values and indeed show that significant and m-depth thought goes into their personal construction of their faith. Though they disregard and in some cases attempt even to delegitimize the Catholic Church’s place in Irish society, there remains within them an intense need to be spiritual, a quest for the “meaning and purpose of life” becoming stronger instead of weaker

Kliever (1979) says.

The revolutionary possibility at work on the fringes of our time's "return to religion" is not the content of the new religions but the form of a new religiosity. The new religions are contributing to the formation of a new way of being religious—a spiritual life that is not tied to any monolithic culture, tradition, or self-identity. Indeed, the widened pluralism of religious options in our culture reflects a deepening pluralizing of religious consciousness as such. In William Shepherd's elegant phrase, we are witnessing the emergence of a "polysymbolic religiosity" (p. 169).

This new polysymbolic religiosity is not a ubiquitous replacement of formerly paramount religious institutions; rather, it is just "one of the forms of religiosity that is permitted by the modern world's discovery of the plasticity of the religious imagination" (Kliever 1979:170). This shows that just because there may be an increase in the plurality of the Irish religious field, this does not mean that there is an all out replacement of Catholicism, it simply means there are more forms of religiousness than there were before sharing Catholicism's realm.

Following this, Kliever (1979) tells us that there is a fundamental aspect of the translation of ideology into action within the modern era such that the concurrence of "being and values, of truth and duty" are undeniable (p. 171). And the final definitive characteristic of modernity, according to Kliever (1979) is that the modern world is forged within a notion of "immanentism" (p. 171). Whereas during the medieval period all focus was centered on the importance of the afterlife, the otherworldly, the sacred and ephemeral, presupposing that this worldly life was utterly unimportant, the modern era centers itself on the here and now, the material, the consumable and the mundane. This individual-centered and overtly immanentist worldview is best summed up by Kliever's (1979) one-liner "history making and self-actualization became the birthright and duty of every citizen of the modern world" (p. 172).

Spiritual Capital, Religious Values, and Increasing Individual Choice-making

Verter (2003) asserts that today's religious market is less concerned with supply than it is with demand, showing the increased consciousness of the modern populace about what choices are available for their value systems (Verter 2003:170). He goes on to say:

Markets of ideas are structured: there are stronger positions and weaker ones. One's position is linked both to the amount of capital one possesses and to one's relation to the processes through which capital is distributed. As Bourdieu explains, one's position shapes one's actions, and one's actions shape the overall field... It portrays religion as a field of conflict, not just between rival denominations, but also among individuals, including those who share the same faith. It identifies individual investment, not as steady accumulation of one's position within a framework of human relations—a framework modeled not simply by one's family or one's church, but by one's broader social field. It offers a model characterized not by stasis, but by change (2003:158-159)

I would argue that Verter (2003) is absolutely right in this assertion and would put forward the evidence found in my study as support for such a pluralist environment. I would also suggest that my data serves as evidence of the rising prevalence of individually constructed systems of meaning in contemporary cultural systems. Though I specifically sought out both participants who had remained within a Catholic framework as well as those who had actively chosen to move outside of Catholicism, the variation of those who had disaffiliated was more considerable than I had imagined.

Verter's (2003) model of spiritual capital "treats religious knowledge, competencies, and preferences as positional goods within a competitive symbolic economy" thus paying much needed attention to individual agency in terms of the internalization and appropriation of religio-philosophical values. The highly dynamic take on the transpositional characteristics of religious and spiritual capital discusses draws our attention to the nature of individually referenced processes of legitimation. Verter (2003) effectively forces the close inspection of personal and individual agency within the conceptualization of religio-social structures and ultimately seeks to address a coherent and compelling social psychology concerning the self and identity formation via religio-philosophical situatedness. Verter (2003) thus effectively provides for the power of the individual in actively participating in religious discourse (p.151).

With this premise, Verter (2003) puts forward the assertion that one's spiritual disposition may be "regarded as a form of cultural capital" (p. 152). He adds that

personal religio-philosophical piety may actually be viewed as a “matter of taste—in other words, as a product of social relations—and thus as a marker of status within struggles for domination in a variety of contexts” (Verter 2003:152). This is entirely applicable when analyzing my respondents’ attempts at cohesive and empowered identity formation within the increasingly fluid and instable symbolic economy of present day Ireland.

Taking Bourdieu’s lead, Verter (2003) calls direct attention to the social conflict concerning “the power of legitimation, the power to define the value of one or another product” (p. 158). This conflict is clearly seen today within the increasing instances of spiritual exploration in tandem with the heightening individualism present within modern day global capitalist societies. Verter (2003) demands that attention be paid to the unique situation of contemporary spirituality in that (at least in America and I would argue Ireland today) unprecedented levels of individualism are manifested in various forms of “theological eclecticism and spiritual exploration outside of an institutional context” (p. 156).

Verter (2003) further details that “spiritual knowledge, competencies, and preferences” may be conceptualized and valued in individuals and groups as particular assets within an “economy of symbolic goods” (p. 152). Thus, as Ireland’s economy for such goods is becoming more and more pluralistic, Verter’s (2003) analysis seems well tailored to such an environment. What is more, Verter (2003) makes the statement that though there may not be any fixed scale of power in any particular field, these are nonetheless “not free markets; competitors do not enjoy equal advantages” (p. 158).

Even from just A’s adoption of “a Hedgewitch with Celtic Interests” as a title for herself to G’s assertion that he is a “priest” of some form of new religion being transmitted to him progressively through “synchronicity” and various life experiences, highly differentiated systems of meaning are fully evident. These different systems are each complete with significantly divergent natures concerning the respective spiritual attributes of these participants. The respondents’ assertions show an amazingly wide spectrum of spiritual forms just between these three people.

A, G, and M all detailed quite clearly a distinct and individually geared form of religio-philosophical conception and actively followed and or conceptualized his of her

place within the social world via their personal conception of morality and self. It is clear that for at least with these three disaffiliates, there is a wealth of spiritual choice and behavioral possibilities within the contemporary Irish context. Each of their conceptualized roles, identities, and behaviors holds a particular source of capital, different structures of meaning, and is somehow translated into the mainstream social setting via the follower's participation in the wider societal context.

As can be seen with all members of my respondent group, each identifies particular characteristics, skills, or abilities which they feel they should practice in order to advance themselves within their respective spiritual fields. This is quite possibly a direct example of Verter's (2003) individualized spiritual capital, valuing particular goods and knowledge according to one's own conceptions of one's faith.

For example, while M discusses his new faith form, which centrally focuses on the afterlife and has little basis in his practical everyday behavior, he is still able to identify activities which he feels attribute to his religio-philosophical development. Study, M feels, has helped him discover very meaningful aspects of his spirituality:

M: ...really in college really, college would have a big sort of it would be affected a lot of my philosophy, cause for a long time I really had not interest in college like first and second year I just, pissed by, I couldn't stand it so I took a year out and now that I'm back I just love the idea of learning, improving myself, so I'm just really just the philosophy of not harming others, influencing my interest in politics and that's what comes to mind first cause I'd be fairly left leaning in my political outlook. The idea, it does make a lot of sense to me, "do unto others" and it's strange too because that's a really key Christian concept but ehm, I'm not sure, I'd say that Catholicism is really steeped in politics as well, it's not just a faith, it's very political and power oriented.

Focused within the self, G shows that overt practice is an important way for him to be involved and develop in his spirituality:

G: ehm, I try not to kill things... And I try to listen to my instincts and I carry, most of the time, I carry a bag of stones which I've picked up along the way, each one has a significant meaning [W: ok] and so if I'm in a place where I feel is spiritually significant or I feel is significant, is a significant point of synchronicity where I need to choose to do something, I might, I will sometimes feel myself subconsciously feeling the stones, and then I will make that conscious and I will see what stone it is I'm feeling and that will help me make my decision, so that stone would say represents masculine or feminine, or that stone is relaxed or something, they all have their different things, it's based loosely around the tarot system [W: ok, so kind of like a runic system?] yeah. And so I've had that, I'll flip coins, I have lots of eh superstition, so of which I don't even recognize that I do pretty much, someone has to tell me, ehm, cause I do remember certain trips, and certain things in experiencing the meaning behind the superstition.

Further, G's spirituality is a very conscious projection of his own independent

conceptualization. Whereas S internalizes and embodies ascribed Catholic doctrine and indeed even certain ascriptive roles (as in her status as a lay person and a “creation of God”), G understands himself as uniquely empowered within his faith system:

[G is answering a question which asks whether or not he feels that he made a conscious decision to follow his faith form of if he feels that he was “brought up to follow it?”]
G: yes. [meaning that it was a conscious choice for him to follow this faith form]... the dharma is something that I’d look at but I’d try not to get dogmatic and my mother always points out dogmatism and conservatism, and I know that comes with it. It is a choice. And sometimes, sometimes I’m lazy, and for that reason I make mistakes, which I look back on which I know for mistakes...like how to deal with things, how to attend to things, like knowing that instinctual feeling that I shouldn’t do this and yet I do it anyway, following temptation and addiction, addiction has been a strong focus that I’ve looked at a lot and I’m active in that I use the Tarot as a system. And I choose to do that, but at the same time I’m relaxed about it, I’m a real, I never sat down and said “I’m going to learn how to read the Tarot” it flows in and kind of came to me on that night actually on a couple of nights over a period of time the Tarot started to integrate itself into my life and in that sense I’m choosing to be a priest or to be a student, a devotee of whatever you word it and but at the same time it is happening to me because it’s what I am, [W: ok] it’s like in society, from looking at primitive or indigenous societies there’s ,from what I know, there’s often someone who’ll be the healer, you know there’s someone who’ll have the role of the healer and someone that’s the role of the does poetry or whatever, [W: right] and I recognize my being a role, in a role of a priest you know.

Another interesting set of capital-building behaviors, if you will, in a particular faith field can be found within A’s interview. A, like S defines her ability to succeed at being “a good Pagan” within society is directly connected to her outward behavior as per a specific moral schema:

W: ok, so can we talk about, in terms of your daily life, you’ve talked to me a little bit about that, you have your own food and your own washing up liquid and your own detergent for your clothes and things like that, so and that you’re a vegetarian, so are there certain actions that you do specifically perform, I mean, you talk about picking up your dog’s poo and working hard and being polite to people, that you specifically do because of your faith or specifically do not do because of your faith?

A: ehm, well, all those things you just mentioned I do perform, it’s not like I found paganism and then adapted myself to it, they just kind of, paganism is a label that I found that suited me, so just, all these things that I perform are in harmony with my religion, and my religion is me and I am my religion, and it’s just like I sort of kinda, well, the things that are not in my religion or are contradicting my religion or whatever, I do *not* take any medicines that have been tested on animals. I don’t use anything that’s been tested on animals, all my shampoos and everything, all my products come from natural things, I try and wherever I can, I eat organic, use organic products, because I really think that it’s important.

The examples are copious throughout each respondent’s interview, aptly illustrating the fact that for each of these participants, even those of self-professed Catholic identity, there are particular and personally reflexive systems of meaning within their spiritual fields. Each participant details specific actions and or thoughts/mental exercises which are methods of accruing capital within their religio-philosophical context and which in

turn can be utilized according to personal investment within their spiritual system as a source of symbolic or personal capital within their interactions with others. This can be clearly seen in terms of the manner in which the respondents discuss how they would like to be perceived by those around them.

When asked if they felt their spirituality or faith was something they wanted others to identify them with, respondents answers were as diverse as their respective faith systems. This variety shows a wide and varied concept of religious/spiritual capital and makes evident the differentiation each participant made concerning the transference of such capital between fields.

S is an interesting case in that while she finds immense joy in her relationship with her faith and her God, she struggles with the manner in which she is perceived when her friends introduce her to others as “S the Catholic”. Excerpts from her interviews below show a stark dichotomy between her own personal identification via her faith and her feelings concerning the manner in which others identify her via her faith, especially in terms of her ability to meet a suitable partner:

[On her views of herself via her faith]

W. . in terms of how you define yourself, if you had to write something, if you had to write a piece about yourself, [S. about me] how would you define yourself and would your faith be a building block, a fundamental aspect?

S. yes Absolutely, no question about it. God is the source of who I am. I wish I could make the claim that God is the center of my life. In many ways He is but not in all the ways that He could and should be [W. ok]. like I said before, God is hugely important to me and would that He was more so. again, I know that it does happen but it's just starting to seem very unlikely and simply because there's the phenomenon of my friends telling new people I meet all about me before I get to kind of make an impression, it's (pause) you know, people hear “oh this is S the Catholic,” “here's S the Catholic,” you know pretty much immediately and it's hard because it might not be the first thing you want people to know about you, you know? and even though like I say, even if it would be someone ideally who would be interested in that path, nevertheless, it can be a real big turn off for young guys and (pause) you know? Especially when people go throwing around the fact that I am not interested in sex before marriage and things like that and that's something that you know, should really, is between you and the person, and it's not helpful if the whole world knows it

While following exceptionally different religio-philosophical courses, G's conception of himself in terms of his faith is much like S's in that he feels his faith is an all encompassing part of him, however, unlike S, he wishes others would actually perceive him more so:

[How G defines himself]

W. ok, um, so in terms of the way that you think about yourself is your spirituality a really big part of how you think about yourself?

G [almost interrupting] yes entirely I think I see much more, I hear much more, [inaudible] ehm, it's hard to be true, in relations to family, who are most tightly connected Maybe I've had an easier run with friends but at the same time, I hate leaving things unfinished [W ok] I know that there's a time when you have to, when you have to, complete things, tie all the loose ends I think objectively, I try to think objectively, they say it's impossible to escape subjectivity, and I disagree, because I think on touching god you escape subjectivity, you are objectivity [W ok] you are mirrors of everything, so like I say, when I touch god, what I see is this incredible sadness, this water [W ok] and that's probably far from like an approachable account .

[How G feels others perceive him]

W. so how much of the person you consider yourself to be is made up of and defined by your faith?

G. (immediately) all of it

W all of it Ok And is that how you want others to view you as well?

G well, it would be me nice. (laughs) but to do that, to do that, they'd have to have perhaps they'd have to have the experience of touching god, of consciously touching god [W. ok]

W but it's definitely something that you want others to perceive in you?

G yeah

These forms of spiritual dabbling and religious pick-and-mix show the important linkage—and I would argue direct embodiment—of a growing mass movement towards a majority of individually-based ethical systems co-existing within a increasingly pastiche and disjointed societal context. This presents a question of anchorage in identity formation and posits the issue of what defines constituent and cohesive social and personal characteristics and or roles (i.e. identity). Without collectively held systems of value, where will individuals find the moral and ethical touchstones adequate for designation as an acceptable member of a particular social polis? Furthermore, how will any standard normative behavior be constructed, let alone identified and applied, within societies with increasingly atomized systems of meaning? How can cohesive identity formation and coherent social apparatus exist in any stable terms when they are being wrought with a distinctively post-modern uncertainty? Questions such as these are not only pertinent, they are integral if there is to be understanding of current societal climates and changing systems of meaning. Such topics as the fields of core value systems, concepts of collective good vs. individual good, and the social construction of group membership systems would be very valuable areas for future research.

Conclusions

Today's Irish young Irish do not assume the ascribed roles put forward for them by the institutional Church, as did their forbearers. There are distinct and identifiable choices beginning to be made about what sets of values young people feel they will commit themselves to. It appears that increasingly these values are no longer those put forward by the Catholic Church. I would like to argue that these fundamental changes in Irish society are at least in some way contributed to by a shift in the Catholic inculcation process Irish children undergo within the home via their family life and the roles their parents—particularly mothers—play in their religio-philosophical socialization.

This being the case, viewing the heightening levels of polysymbolism in a positive light, there is potential for it to result in direct and active socially inclusive affects rather than privatized individual codification (Shepherd 1975:197). Essentially, Shepherd (1975) tells us that if polysymbolism develops healthily, then there is more opportunity for inter-faith connections to be made and increased ecumenical efforts. This is a key insight, I believe, to keep in mind when considering the manner and methods Irish young people use to appropriate symbols and meaning systems on an individual basis while simultaneously seeking to integrate themselves within wider society

Shepherd (1975) summarizes Bellah's position on the holistic process of personal and social construction and maintenance:

the relationship between the self and its socio-cultural setting is more arresting than consideration of one apart from the other, as if society could be reified and set off from the selves embodying it. For Bellah the self is also a sort of cybernetic system, and though that term is distasteful, it is meant to suggest a decidedly non-reductionistic understanding of human nature and of religion as well. Religion "as that symbolic form through which man comes to terms with the antinomies of his being" (1970 227) is rooted in a theory of human nature. "Religion is a part of the species life of man, as central to his self-definition as speech" (1970 223) (p. 398)

What is essential to our study here is that Bellah's orientation takes into account the inherent identity-building structure relative to the religious field. Human beings seek to situate themselves within a wider schema of meaning via their religious conceptualization. With this view, religion is not simply a social activity that humans engage in together, it is an activity which we engage in personally as a means of not only understanding the world around us but in understanding ourselves within said world. Not

in so many words perhaps but nonetheless, I believe that Bellah has formulated this analysis of human religious behavior around a pretext of the individual's continuous reflexive identity formation and quest for meaning within a larger social and cosmological structure. This makes his points an excellent summation of this particular study

As the previously forbidden stance of individually-based ethics increasingly comes to the forefront of Irish young people's methodology of social conceptualization one must ask how young people are attempting, failing, and or succeeding to build systems of meaning for themselves while trying to integrate and exist within a social environment still heavily laden with Catholic meanings and messages. The shift from community-based Catholicism to the near radical-individualism of high Capitalist status has shaken the previously uniform Catholicity of the Irish nation. In order to maintain some form of social and moral touchstone a full review of the changing nature of the Irish social value system should be undertaken, not just by social scientists but also by the Irish themselves.

We can see ready application of this assertion in the fact that modern day Ireland affords many different role choices for women as well as men today seen in changing demographics and a fundamental transformation in the nature of the Irish economy. This change is significant not just in the economic sphere but indeed, increasingly in many other social fields.¹² These changes offer considerable support for Inglis' (1998) earlier research concerning the mother being the locus of Church power within the Irish context. If mother—and indeed Irish woman in general—are no longer limited in their access to capital exclusively via affiliation with the Church, then it may follow that the primacy of the Church within the home and subsequently in the rearing of children, will diminish. With different avenues for women to gain social standing and personal identification other than Catholicism, there is a crucial link not being made between the Church and the Irish woman. Without stringent adherence and or exclusive emphasis on Catholicism, Irish children are met with power never before had in history, the power to choose their faith system.

Irish people are afforded with self-governable opportunities everyday in modern

¹² For more see Coulter and Coleman (eds) (2003).

Ireland. They are increasingly able to dictate the direction, character, and indeed content of their lives, as opposed to 50-100 years ago when most of one's life was dictated via Church doctrine, the legalistic Catholic social system, and the general socio-economic status around one.

This being said, it is important to remember that cultural symbols ingrain the concepts of right and wrong, good and bad as per particular social atmospheres. Tradition has staying power because it is inherited, passed down via the intimate ties of the family and is legitimated via social collective history. It is not until the social climate becomes adverse to tradition that any real change will be affected. I would like to argue along with many others mentioned throughout this work, that Ireland's social climate is one experiencing a change of wind.

Looking through Bellah's lens we understand religion as inherently motivational and action prompting (Shepherd 1975:400). Religious practice is the manifestation of a link between ideology and action, a dynamic and complex relationship as can be seen through my respondents' discussions concerning their conceptions of self, influences on their actions, and their active choice making within both their faith structures as well as wider society.

However, I find a possible juxtaposition here with my respondents' insights and Bellah's assertion of the motivational capability of religion and the opening up of the ability for wider action within a more liberal, pluralistic social setting. Perhaps it would be better to say that my data shows religion having powerful motivational capabilities in that the faithful will follow doctrine and norms *according to their religious schema*. With today's increased focus on the individual as the center of social discourse, there is greater opportunity and indeed motivation for action and thought directed by *individuals'* understandings of particular structures of meaning and value.

This can be seen via the different manifestations of faith-based action each respondent in my study described. There is no doubt that many of these actions were actively analyzed in terms of their concordance with each participant's faith systems and were conducted or not conducted for and on specific terms. S cites her specific refusal to have a sexual relationship before marriage as a direct manifestation of her faith, despite the difficulties she faces within her peer group due to her **non-participation in such**

behavior. Paganism influences motivate A's behavior in her feelings of "personal responsibility" towards others, the environment, and animals. C takes specific care in how he treats others in his attempts to actualize a Christian lifestyle while both P and D attest that they regularly try to view their behavior via their Catholic morality. M views his behavior in terms of his faith/philosophical commitment to "treat people well" while G asserts that his actions are based around the fact that he views himself as a situated being within his faith system attempting to "do no harm."

Thus we can see that while certain aspects of their behavior might not always be in line with those of their family or their peer group and so may cause difficulties in various social settings, these participants are excellent examples of people who engage in actions, behavior, and conceptions of self that are faith-based despite meeting resistance and or social strain. The father from ascriptive Catholicism that Ireland's young people go, the more they themselves are able to explore and define their own reality within the individualistic constructs of high capitalism. While it is not necessarily the case that these respondents felt that they were solely defined via their faith systems, nonetheless these systems remained in the forefront of their behavior choices as well as in mind when interacting with others.

These dynamics are precisely what make the study of university-aged Irish identity development in terms of faith systems so important. In order to properly document the social and cultural changes Ireland has undergone over the past twenty years of flux, one must take into account the multi-layered and sometimes mentally gymnastic approaches to meaning, purpose, and identity constructed by Irish young people. By understanding the patterns and influences experienced by these people we are able to garner a clearer, richer picture of the changes in the fundamental value systems and normative structures internalized in contemporary Ireland. Further, with this insight, we will also be able to understand how these changes have come about across generations through comparative study, discerning what they mean in terms of the transforming condition of identity within Irish society.

Such dramatic modifications in the very nature of the social and personal fabric of the Irish social structure begs the question of how these young people will conceptualize themselves within new and shifting systems of meaning, freshly empowered via a

growing sense of individualist-based ethics and an increasingly individualized Capitalist condition. The findings of my study not only support many of those outlined by Inglis (IWP 2004) but showed the need for further development in his line of research. While Inglis (IWP 2004) is paving the way towards better understanding of changes in the field Irish Catholic identity, more attention should be paid to those who have disaffiliated if we are to gain a better picture of the Irish religio-philosophical field.

Furthermore, my findings supported the work done by Sandomirsky and Wilson (1990) in that disaffiliation processes between males and females are indeed distinct and so perhaps further study should be engaged with the changing roles of women and religion in Ireland, particularly concerning non-Catholic faith forms. Ultimately the critical influence of parents on the religious attitudes and behaviors of their children as in Hitlin (2003) and most notably Kelley and De Graaf (1997) appears loud and clear in my respondents. Without strong influences during childhood, the "passing down" of faith systems simply did not occur in those respondents who had disaffiliated in favor of another faith form. This proved possibly to be the result of the diffuse affects of rapid modernization as Meyer and Jepperson (2000), Lash and Friedman (eds.) (1992), Vento (2000), and Giddens (1991) all noted. With the individualizing and privatizing influences of high capitalism discussed by Verweij, Ester and Nauta (1997), Irish young people who lack significant figures of religious education in their home lives effectively cast out on their own, forging new spiritual territory and giving unprecedented primacy to the self.

That being said, A's case serves some note here. Despite growing up in a household where she was actively educated in Catholicism and where weekly mass attendance was a family activity as well, these factors did not serve to deter A from disaffiliating from Catholicism in favor of Paganism. This may point in the general direction of a deeper and more strongly infused sense of individualism and the self-focused aspect of modern high Capitalism. A's process of disaffiliation was different primarily in this respect when compared to those of G and M. Thus A may serve as an apt example of the extent to which Irish young people are increasingly internalizing the indoctrination of individualism over the inculcation of the Catholic faith.

Regardless of this however, these respondents show that though rejecting traditional religio-philosophical tenets is high on their respective agendas, there remains a

prevalent desire for faith, though it is the kind of faith that is suited to personal temperaments and inclinations. There also remains a deeply held conviction within each that their faith is a considerable influence in how they identify themselves personally as well as socially. Overall this study provides supportive examples for research previously conducted concerning major influences and nuances of young people's identity formation with respect to faith systems. The respondents present strong correlations with theories presented by several prominent thinkers as well as indicate the need for further research in the area.

APPENDIX

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Transcription of Interview 1

M— male disaffiliated from Catholicism

W: Right, ok, so first, basically I just need to know a few basic things, so how old are you?

M: eh, 21

W: 21 ok and I just need to get you to please tell me a little bit about where you're from, where you grew up if you can talk a little bit about that.

M: ehm, well I suppose I'm from Dublin, I'm from Dublin—(names a suburb of Dublin)

W: Dublin, (names the suburb mentioned), that's great

M: and yeah, I've always lived there.

W: In the same place or have you ever changed house or?

M: well, yeah, until I was two I lived in Ballymun, and then we moved to (names the town again) and we've lived there ever since

W: yeah, so you wouldn't really remember anything before that then?

M: no, not really.

W: Ok, so if you can just tell me a little more about your childhood, so you grew up in Ballymun...?

M: ehm, well, I grew up in (name of suburb) mainly [W: oh yeah, right]. So yeah, I dunno, we moved there when I was two so I was still a baby, I suppose [W: mmmhmm] after a while I got to know people and made friends and yeah, until I was about say about 10 or so [W: mmhmm] and then ehm, no, no it was about 12 actually, yeah 12 we went to secondary school, and then I went to secondary school and then made different friends [W: right] and grew apart from the old friends [W: right] and then when I turned 16 the two groups of friends were melded [W: oh] and then that was the same until I went to college and lost touch with all those friends! [W: (laughing)] And then I met a completely new group of friends so...

W: great, so where'd you go to secondary school?

M: eh, (names school) [W: ok]

W: so if you could just tell me a little bit about your family life? Well, your family and your family life?

M: ok, ehm, well, I suppose that the biggest ehm thing to be saying about my family is ehm, when I was 16, no 15, my father died so that would have really affected me and other such things [W: (sound of agreement) absolutely] so ehm, yeah, until then, we weren't really, we were never a religious family and it never really played a big part in our lives. We never used to go to church actually, you know you go to church up to your Holy Communion [W: yeah] and your Confirmation and then weddings and stuff that was it [W: yeah] maybe once in a while, we'd go for Christmas Eve [W: yeah, Christmas or Easter or yeah one of those] yeah, Easter. But ehm, we never really went and still don't but anyways yeah [W: mmmhmm]

W: Ok, so that would definitely be a milestone then

M: yeah, that would be like the biggest turning point I suppose in the family

W: ok, so in those terms, in terms of that milestone and obviously your faith has changed a lot in terms of what it means to you so how would you talk about that, how would you say what your faith, or if you want to call it a religion, I'm not sure how you want to

define yourself, we can talk about that in a little minute but what does that mean to you, your faith?

M: well, I never, for a really long time, I never even considered faith or religion [W: ok] like as a part of my life and it just, it was sort of like, you know when you grow up say a certain type of carpet on the floor, that sort of just becomes something like that you think is there [W: mmhmm] until, until something big happens and changes it [W: right] and that, that probably would have been what happened with my father's death cause that sort of, for a while I didn't mourn or anything [W: mmhmm] but then when I was 18 or so I had a huge sort of realization, "oh god where is he?" you know [W: yeah (sound of agreement)] and wonderin', like start askin' all the questions that I supposed you'd associated with faith, you know, what happens when we die [W: yeah] and all that so ehm, for a long time I was really distressed and got really depressed [W: mmhmm] and eh yeah so I started to go to a faith healer [W: oh really?] yeah and ehm we just, it was, we more had conversations there wasn't really any I suppose traditional healing involved it was like discuss all the stuff I was thinking about and ehm yeah I sort of came to the realization that I amn't an atheist you know, I don't believe that there's nothin' [W: mmhmm] you know beyond this world [W: right] ehm but, I don't believe in Catholic religion as such and Christianity in general I have a lot of problems with so I suppose in many ways I'd associate my beliefs more with Eastern beliefs as in I wouldn't consider there to be this world and another world you know like and you know earth, heaven, and hell that stuff [W: right] you know I'd more consider it all the same reality [W: yeah] so I'm not sure what you'd define that as. [Implying that I would be able to define his beliefs]

W: No, you're doing very well that you can talk about it this way, not everyone can do that. So, now where would you put your faith, or will we call it a philosophy or do you feel that it is a faith?

M: I'd say that it is a philosophy cause [W: ok] like I associate faith with ehm, something you believe in without proof, but ehm, I tend to look at the world and my experience to kind of reaffirm the philosophy that I have so (laughs)

W: ok, so where would you place your philosophy in your life, what kind of role does it play there?

M: well, I suppose a really background role cause I wouldn't really think about the afterlife or anything like that in any real way like, but like I was saying when I was going through my really dark period [W: yeah] and I was really kinda stirvin' for somethin' to help me get on with things cause I was really preoccupied with the whole dying thing and I'd be waking up at night and I'd be cold sweats [W: ok] and ehm so for I suppose I built this philosophy as a sort of coping mechanism you know so if at any time I do wonder what happens after death, then I have this, I have an explanation for myself [W: mmhmm] so I don't start panickin' and go "oh god, I'm going nowhere, I'm just gonna turn into gas and everyone with forget about me!" (Using dramatic voice and laughing) [W: (laughs with MK)]

W: ok, so can you tell me a little bit about your first prominent memory or your first very prominent experience with faith is, looking back into your childhood and you know, your very formative years?

M: I'm not sure that, the earliest memory I have and that wasn't mundane and I've forgotten is probably a funeral actually (laughs) [W: ok] Yeah it would have been my

uncle's father [W: ok] that would be on my father's side, his sister, her husband [W: ok] so completely unrelated, we would have attended this funeral so that probably, seeing the body laid out and stuff like that, that probably would have been my biggest memory of first being around... and I suppose being so young, I would have been about five or so [W: yeah] I wouldn't have really understood what any of this meant but obviously it would have been in the back of my mind thinking [W: yeah] what happens, what happens when that happens to you [W: exactly] so that would have been...

W: you're most prominent one, ok, so can you tell me a little more about, so who was kind of the primary figure facilitating your experience with religion when you were young?

M: well, the teachers I think, [W: ok] cause my mother's a Protestant, [W: oh] yeah, and she's from Scotland so if we'd ever be attending church she wouldn't go for Communion [W: mmhmm] and she wouldn't know too many of the prayers so she, and she wasn't a very religion person herself but when she was a child she would have had very strict rules and stuff with religion you know [W: ok] and she never really carried that... [W: carried that to you?] yeah

W: ok... so do you have any siblings?

M: eh yeah a small sister.

W: ok, and how old is she?

M: ehm she's 18

W: oh, not so small anymore then?

M: I still think of her as a little...

W: I know how that is, my little brother is 17 now and he's enormous but he's still my little brother

M: yeah

W: so's my baby brother, he's 13 and enormous, and he'll always be my baby brother, I'm ten years older than him [MK: yeah] but... so, again, you were talking about how you were kind of, with this first experience, you were thinking "oh jeez, you know what is this and what's happening and where do you go and?" [MK: yeah, yeah] and questioning, so do you feel like was or has been an overarching part of the process for you?

M: it could be yeah, I never really thought about how, well the reason for me being so preoccupied with the whole death and life after death thing, but it could [W: yeah] yeah.

W: so it's a large part

M: yeah, since it's the first memory I have regarding religion and faith and my father and stuff like that probably...

W: now don't say this just cause I brought it up! (laughing) Don't go with it just cause I made a connection in my understanding of what you're telling me!

M: no no! That really, yeah, it makes sense to me yeah...

W: so given that, can we talk about the people in your life that might have really influenced how you think or your experiences with your faith or later your philosophy?

M: yeah, yeah, I think that people *not* effecting how I think about religion would have been the biggest influence [W: ok] for in daily life really for most of my childhood most of my teenage years, religion, faith wouldn't have come up at all [W: oh, ok] we were pretty much completely non-religious. I mean so I suppose that would have been the reason why when I started to think about this stuff I was completely unprepared I didn't

have an explanation that I believed in so I had to sort of formulate one for myself [W: right] cause I'd always suppose, there was always the assumption that what was in the Bible was gospel truth [W: yeah] and I never thought about did I believe in it, I never really questioned it [W: mmhmm] so when I started questioning it and realized that I didn't actually believe in it, it was very distressin' [W: yeah]. So there wouldn't have been anyone that would have formed or influenced my beliefs, but the fact that there wasn't anyone that formed my beliefs would have made the biggest impact.

W: yeah, so the absence of influence did the most to influence you?

M: yeah exactly.

W: ok, so when would you say that you really started to kinda question that and wonder like "hey, you know, what is this book that is telling me this?" How old would you say you were then, was there kind of catalyst that pushed you towards that or?

M: ehm, I'm not sure, see, you could say that when I was 18 and I started thinkin' about it, that, that was the turning point but there was always these moments when I'd think, "do I believe in this?" when it came up, especially in religion class in school [W: ok] we were doing... I forget what we'd do, but there'd be like work books that you'd go through and you know answer questions on the Bible and learn off prayers and I suppose I would have wondered, why are we doing this, you know, what's the meaning of this but that really wouldn't have played a really big role but... eh, what was the question again? (laughs)

W: (laughing) ok so I'm just trying to look at if there was really a time when you really felt that there was that big hanging question mark?

M: yeah, I can actually remember one specific time, one night.

W: ok, can you tell me about that?

M: yeah, I was lying in bed and I couldn't sleep and my mind was racing and I started thinkin' about a lot of stuff and ehm, one, one thing that occurred to me was, I don't know how I started thinkin' about death but, I started wonderin' what would happen if I died and would everyone be ok, especially my girlfriend, I was thinkin' about her, and then I was thinkin' what if she died would I be ok [W: yeah] and I was like, well one of us is going to die eventually [W: yeah] and it became this inescapable thing that's gonna happen and it's gonna completely destroy my world and I just started crying it was horrible [W: (sound of agreement)] and I ehm, yeah, so that was when I really started thinkin' about it.

W: it is a very difficult thing, the unknown, it is, it's very difficult to wrestle with that one, it really is.

M: yeah, it really is, it's like a big black hole [W: yeah]

W: so, after that kind of experience, and this kind of build up with the way you that were kinda trying to explore and really trying to mediate a little, do you feel that you were trying to figure it out for yourself really? [M: yeah definitely] so how about the people outside of your life in general, did you ever have conceptions of about how like oh ok, well this person's classified this way or this person's classified that way and you know I mean like figures in the media, or figures in particularly politics especially in a country like Ireland being so steeped [M: yeah!] in the Catholic faith, did you ever have any ideas concerning like well, what makes that person good or what makes that person bad and you know, was there every any wrangling with that?

M: well, not really you know, I usually took people for what they did rather than what they believed in [W: ok] but to be honest, I always thought that people who were really, really religious were kinda ridiculous cause I just didn't see the point in being preoccupied with another life you know and god watchin' over ya and stuff like this, you know, I just never bought into it, so I just, I never really judged people in their beliefs I more just questioned why they believed and then what they did you know?

W: yeah, so that does hinge, a lot of things hinge on that, that dichotomy of idea and then action, that where is that fulcrum, where does that line get drawn [M: yeah, exactly] and when does idea influence action.

M: yeah, that's it, but I think in Ireland, especially these days, there's, it's more, being religious is kinda like a seal of approval. Like if a politician said "I'm an atheist, I don't believe in god, I don't go to church" they'd just, they'd be written off because so many people in Ireland are religious, so many people think that in order to be a good person you have to be religious and you have to believe in god and a lot of people don't understand that you can be good and be an atheist you know.

W: and where do you think that comes from?

M: I suppose from Catholic doctrine, you know... the whole nature nurture thing, we're nurtured into believing that in order to be good you have to believe in god.

W: so it's a socialization question then?

M: yeah,

W: so can you tell me a little more about when you were having those big hanging question marks, those big crises of conscience if you want to call them that, can you tell me about whether or not the way that you were understanding your philosophy or the way that you came to understand your philosophy, was that a very conscious choice for you or?

M: ehm, no I wouldn't say that is was conscious, I'd say it was more, I suppose there were certain things that I would have believed in and certain things that I just would have discarded so I would have been looking at different ways of seeing the world and [W: right] figured out which ones sat right with me, [W: right] so I suppose in a way it would have been conscious that I'd be lookin' for an explanation cause especially when I was going to the healer, she, she basically showed me examples of different ways that you could look at the world [W: ok] like, I remember one example was a book by a guy called Daniel Brinkly, and he was a hit man when he was alive and I think he was killed, he was blown up actually I think on a job, and ehm, yeah he was clinically dead for a few hours and then he came back to life and now he's a completely changed person and now he runs a faith, faith clinic or something like that.

W: wow

M: so that sort of, and he came back with an a sort of an account, and account of what he saw and he did see some things that you know Catholic religion would point out, like someone came like someone came up over to him, well, not like came over to him not walked over to him, but someone came and guided him through some sort of an experience where he looked through all the stuff he'd seen and done and been and that sort of that, that influenced my view on the world and that he came back with the explanation that he wasn't judged by someone, he judged himself, he was shown all the things he did and he had to sort of ask himself did he do go and he said "no," [W: right]

so that's where I view, I wouldn't see the afterlife as being somewhere where you're judged by someone else, it's more where you'd look back on your own life and. .

W: so can you tell me a few more of the volumes that you've read?

M: well there's that one, I think it's called Life After Life or something like that, then there's another one, I forget... no I think Life After Life is actually another book [W: ok] by someone else [W: that's fine] and then there's the other one by Daniel Brinkly, but ehm, they're the only two that I would be familiar with, but I also have an audio tape that the healer gave me as well [W: oh] it's really interesting, it's kind of crazy cause it was ehm, this guy, I forget the name but he was talkin' about lots of different things for example like, this couple had a baby and the baby died and then they had another baby and that, that little girl, when she was about four years old, and she was talking to her mother and she said something like "do you remember when I went away and then I came back" or something like that [W: wow] yeah, there's that and there's lots of stuff like that and he talks about like someone who has actually mapped out the afterlife and stuff like that, so that's a lot of the stuff that I've been looking at [W: ok] and it sort of made me, I haven't come up to a complete answer to what I think the afterlife is like but it's sort of shown me the fact that I don't believe in Catholic Christian doctrine isn't, doesn't mean that I don't believe in an afterlife, sort of like I can believe that there's something there I just don't know what it is.

W: right

M: you could actually look at it as kind of exciting you know in a way, you can see what it's like [W: exactly] yeah

W: ok, and so you also mentioned something along the lines of more Eastern thought?

M: yeah, the Eastern philosophy, you know like Buddhism and stuff that would see the universe as the universe and human beings, all life really as completely connected and it's all about energy, like that would, I don't know too much about it but that, that kind of makes sense to me a bit

W: and where did you have, where did you start that.

M: with the healer as well [W: ok] I keep calling her "the healer"

W: that's fine, you don't have to name her, that's completely fine, so we're going to, can we talk about maybe have there been experiences in your life that have really challenged your philosophy? I know that we talked about your father and how that really sent the first cracks through your Catholicism even if it wasn't very deeply couched, but now that you're kind of exploring other forms of thought and philosophy, have there have there been any experiences that have...?

M: not really because the sort of philosophy that I have now isn't based on sort of facts and you know "this is the way it is" it's based on the fact that I don't know, you know, so anything that, anything that happens that could challenge that philosophy sort of reaffirms mine because I'm sort of saying to myself, like Socrates said, you know, "I don't that I don't know" so, yeah, nothing can really challenge the way that I think because I don't think in any particular way.

W: good answer, in-depth, so moving from that form of, that wondering if things have really shaken that, can we talk about what morality means to you? [M: yeah, morality] you know, is it an action, is it an idea, is it both, is it concrete, is it malleable, is it relative?

M: yeah, I'd say it's relative. I'd say that morality it's very much a cultural term like, you couldn't say that there's a human morality. Cause when you look at like suicide bombers, they think they're doing is the most moral action they could possibly be doing, whereas, as far as my own morality is concerned, I believe that anything that sort of hurts another person is bad. So, that could be anything from you know, throwing litter on the ground to killing someone you know because it's all just, I'm not sure, there's a philosopher that speaks about this, I think it's Heidegger but I'm not sure, but ehm, the dan, someone's dan line, that's the way that he talks about it, he says that anything you do that affects someone's life in a bad way that's bad and so he therefore came to the conclusion that even if you're living you're affecting someone's life in a bad way cause you're taking up air and stuff like that but I'd sort of take a little bit of that [W: right, moderate that] but any action that would hinder someone else's well-being... but there are many problems with that as well cause you're always going to be hindering someone else's well-being but [W: so maybe it's more of a conscious hindering then?] yeah exactly.

W: that's very interesting, so can we talk about where morality comes from and who's teaching it, you were talking about how it's cultural?

M: yeah, it's cultural, I'm not sure, that's another one of those questions that I don't have an answer for, I suppose you could say that comes from parents and everyone in a particular society that a person, when they're growing up encounters, just the way that musical taste is sort of influenced by all the music you'd come across, it's sort of like a moral taste (laughing)

W: (laughing) good simile! So going from morality and as you said the way that it is couched in culture, so where are we getting that kind of tradition? How does tradition fit into that for you or how do you see tradition fitting in to that and is that necessarily a good thing or a bad thing?

M: tradition in what sense?

W: well for a concrete example, the way that Ireland is so steeped in Catholicism?

M: I'm not sure really, I think that historical events can have an influence on the way that society develops, I'm not sure, but the story about St. Patrick, I'm sure that's really inspiring, but then again that's myth so, but I'm not sure how tradition comes about...

W: ok well maybe in terms of the way that manifests in society, for example in India with the caste system, which is a very religio-philosophically based system it is inherently detrimental to its citizens, so maybe in those terms could you expound upon certain aspects of Irish society, Irish morality, Irish traditionality that maybe are or are not positive?

M: well I suppose the Church's influence of the state has had a really big effect, I mean, I see the Catholic Church as being the epitome of conservatism, it's very eh, well I suppose we shouldn't generalize because I'm sure there are many priests who are liberal but [W: so maybe the Catholic Church as an institution?] yeah, as an institution it's very set in it's ways, so that would be very detrimental to many different aspects of Irish society, especially I'd say the Gay and Lesbian community would be confronting the Church's affect on society everyday cause, actually, I'd say the whole idea of being gay as being wrong comes from the Bible, the Leviathan...

W: and how do you feel about that?

M: I say each to his own, you know, like I said earlier, it's not hurting me any, it's not affecting me so no problem.

W: ok, well, so how does your philosophy translate into your daily life?

M: I'm not sure, I suppose I just try to discover, really in college really, college would have a big sort of, it would be affected a lot by my philosophy, cause for a long time I really had no interest in college like first and second year I just, pissed by, I couldn't stand it so I took a year out and now that I'm back I just love the idea of learning, improving myself, so I'm just really just the philosophy of not harming others, influencing my interest in politics and that's what comes to mind first cause I'd be fairly left leaning in my political outlook. The idea, it does make a lot of sense to me, "do unto others" and it's strange too because that's a really key Christian concept but ehm, I'm not sure, I'd say that Catholicism is really steeped in politics as well, it's not just a faith, it's very political and power oriented.

W: yeah, ok, so can you talk a little bit more about how that translated your work at college and your daily life and those changes that you made and you know, the practical side of it?

M: yeah, I suppose... I suppose, it wouldn't really, I'm not sure of how it would affect my daily life, I'm not sure it does, I'm tempted to say that it doesn't but I think it does, I suppose I'd always look at what I'm doing and question if it was good, like I'd look at how I treat other people and is it good and if it isn't then I wonder why am I doing it? And I try to fix it.

W: so is that a very conscious part of your actions?

M: yeah in some ways, like I wouldn't really, like the question is hard to answer because I haven't really thought about it before but I am consciously using this philosophy that I have, but I am consciously aware that I'm consciously using it you know? It's a hard question (laughs)

W: yeah, it is (laughing) it's a sticky topic. But like you said, you do ask yourself about what you're doing is a good thing or is it a bad thing, so are there certain actions that you just will not engage in or that you do make a point to engage in?

M: not really, I'd say that's the malleable nature of my philosophy is that it's very much, it would sort of, I sort of think that ehm, each situation will dictate what will be good in the situation, for example, what would come to mind would be the whole question of violence. Like, I live in ehm, (name of suburb) and it's a very horrible place to be livin' so walkin' around with long hair and big sideburns ehm, I'd sort of come into contact with a lot of people who probably wouldn't like that so a lot of times I'd say, get things shouted at me walking along an alley or something so in situations like that I'd judge it in many different ways like I could turn around and start a fight or I could just not do anything or I could shout back a response but it's all, it will be all dictated by what I'll feel is right and that in turn will be dictated by who's saying it and what they're saying... it's like, if it's three five-year-old kids you know shouting stuff at me they're not doing anything wrong they're just doing what they saw they're big brothers doing growing up you know and but if it's people my age they're obviously doing something wrong but again they're doing what they saw their parents doing you know so it's very, right and wrong, relativism, it's different.

W: so in terms of the way that you engage with others you know concerning your faith and philosophy, has that been a public or private experience? Do you feel that your

philosophy is a public matter or a private matter for yourself, is it something that you would prefer not to discuss or do you feel...?

M: I'd say it's both, it's extremely private on one hand because it comes with my struggle to cope with the whole question of life after death but at the same time I don't have a problem discussing it with people cause it's something that I don't know, it's not embarrassing, it's just the way I deal with things.

W: so what about in other terms? Like you were talking about people who are overly religious and are kind of consumed with that in public discourse and the way you were talking about the politicians? [M: yeah] you know about this kind of "seal of approval," so how would you situate yourself with that, how do you feel about that?

M: ehm, I'm not sure you see, I'd be tempted to say that it's ridiculous and it's wrong and that you shouldn't be overly religious you should just you know concentrate on the here and now and not worry about life after death but at the same time a lot of people have got to that philosophy in the same way that I've come to mine, as a way of coping with loss so I'd say that I'd be very happy if people were given the information that I was given rather and they came to their own philosophy rather than say like being taught Catholicism and stuff like that in schools and then once they experience loss or something that makes them need an answer to all these questions they just automatically turn to this really political, overarching, misogynistic, Catholic faith and I'd say it's not so much that it's wrong that people turn to Catholicism in a big way, it's more wrong that Catholicism jumps on the opportunity to have people turn to it.

W: so can you tell me a little bit about the way that how you think about yourself in terms of your philosophy? Is that a big part of how you identify yourself or how you want other people to identify you?

M: no, not really, not in any way whatsoever, I wouldn't consider myself religious and I wouldn't consider this way that I think about the afterlife and stuff like that as a big part of my identity, it's more like for this particular question of life after death or is there a god, this is the answer I have to it, it isn't something that I'd consider is a part of me, but then again I suppose it depends on the discourse you're dealing with cause say if I went to church then it would be a huge part of my identity, it'd be how I look at myself in relation to the world and it would be in opposition to the way that the Church is looking at me.

W: so what about in terms of the way that you behave, you know if your philosophy, the way that you construct how you're you, where is your philosophy in that, where is that philosophy's place in that, what role does it play if it plays any?

M: I don't think it actually does, I think this philosophy is, it isn't a fundamental of my life, it's more rather than my life being built on it, it's built from experiences in my life, so rather than affecting elements of my life, it's elements of my life that are affecting it.

W: ok. So do you feel, I mean, you're a student of the social sciences, just finished third year anthropology, congratulations, that's a big step [M: thank you] so you're familiar with the term "reflexive" then, [M: yeah] so would you feel that it plays a reflexive role for you in any way shape of form?

M: I'm not sure [W: about how you think about yourself] yeah, it could do [W: well, I'm just going from there because you were telling me about how you think about what you do, is it a good thing that I'm doing or is it a bad thing, am I treating this person well or am I not treating this person well, so I'm picking that up there but I'm just looking to

clarify that with you to make sure that I'm not going in the wrong direction with what I've taken from what you've told me so far].

M: well, you could say that it does yeah, it's very much like, yeah, it's very difficult to explain because like I said earlier, every situation is different and there's no real right and wrong so, I'm not sure

W: it's a difficult question, I understand. So in terms of your philosophy, how does that influence your relationships with people?

M: ehm, I'm not sure, I suppose it's sort of opened my mind in many ways cause I think Catholicism is very based on "us" and "them" I mean, the amount of wars that have been waged in the name of god, and not just by Catholicism but in general, but ehm, I'd say as far as my way of thinking goes, I'd be open to meeting anyone, whereas, let's say a very religious Catholic, if they met a gay person, they'd be very eh, I'm not sure, they'd be very closed off from that experience whereas I'm, I just take people as people you know, no one's right or wrong until they do right or wrong you know, so

W: so that's a very important distinction for you isn't it?

M: yeah

W: so how would your philosophy influence your relationships within your nuclear circle your friends, your family, your girlfriend, you said you have a girlfriend,

M: yeah, it's, with my family like my mother and sister, I'm not sure, I think it's kinda strained our relationship in a lot of ways cause I'd kinda start to question, I'd really start questioning the stuff that my mother's taught me, cause you know the whole thing with like "I'm big and you're small, I'm right and you're wrong" you know, I was watching Matilda yesterday, so [W: (laughing) yeah that's a good film! The book is even better though!] yeah, but like I'd be questioning a lot of stuff that she'd believe in you know and I sort of think you know, "you're wrong," like, it's like "no, you're wrong" cause, well that would sort of strain our relationship and the fact that I'm grown up as well, becoming my own person, that's going to affect it as well you know that kind of it's strained it but at the same time it's made it better cause you know I've stopped thinkin' in terms of you know "I can do this, I'm, it's not wrong," you know for example like asking for money, like there probably would have been a time when I was young that I would have thought, "oh, well sure I can ask for money and not have to pay it back because I'm a child," whereas now I'd be more, you know I suppose it's kind of karmic as well, cause if I borrow money then I pay it back so, and I've borrowed a lot of money so I have a lot of paying back to do! (laughs)

W: (laughs) I know how that is! So can you talk a little bit about how your faith, your philosophy make you different or similar to others? Do you feel like it's a demarcating facet or do you feel like it makes any difference? Do you yourself feel that reflexively or is it from outside of you or?

M: in some ways I think it makes me better, cause I'm not sure it's very tricky to say that my way of thinking is better than anybody else's, but when I look at the affect that this way of thinking has on my life, if it has any like, I was saying do unto others, it's affected my life in a good way whereas I look at people who really take the Bible as fact and see what they do, you know discriminating against countless different groups, it just seems like my philosophy is a whole lot healthier and better than that, and so does many other people's, I'd say it has a very positive affect on what I do.

W: ok, so is your philosophy something that you would want other people to see in you? Is that something that you translate into your actions and is that something you would want people to identify you with?

M: I wouldn't say that I'd want them to identify me with, there's plenty of other things that I'd rather be identified with like, but there's worse things I could be identified with, like I'm sure there's numerous elements of my personality that people could feel are very key and might feel that they are bad, but this way of looking at religion and stuff, well, it wouldn't be too bad if people identified me with that I suppose but it wouldn't really be something I'd consider to be a real integral part of my identity

W: ok, can you talk about the things you might feel are more integral parts?

M: well, music plays a huge, huge role in it, I'd rather be considered a good musician than a key philosophical thinker! (laughing)

W: (laughing) I can understand that, so music?

M: music? I don't know, politics I suppose, I'm very interested in political thought and where that kind of comes from so philosophy yeah, they'd be my big passions.

W: alright, so can you talk to me a little bit about the structure of your faith, as you said this has been something that you have very much worked on but can you tell me a little bit about the pillar with it, whether they're people or literature, can you tell me about how it's ordered, how it's structured?

M: well, I suppose that the main thing would be, well you couldn't tie it down to any book or anything thinker but when I'm looking at philosophy and I suppose ideology, I'm very open-minded to anything, I'd be very into not judging something until you read it, particularly regarding socialism and feminism as well, I've had many a discussion regarding socialism and feminism and they've just been like "ah, feminism, it's a load of shaggin' man-hatin' women," and socialism, you know, they just spout off stuff about the former USSR and China and stuff like that but because of I suppose the fact that I'd be very much in favour of reading all this stuff before judging it, rather than hearing propaganda, that'd be my philosophy towards my life, just I suppose you could put it in a nice little phrase like "judge everything by your own experience rather than by what someone tells ya," you know.

W: ok

M: well that's kind of what my whole, kind of my whole philosophy of the afterlife comes from, cause rather than just buying into the Bible I've kinda looked at other possibilities and kinda come to the conclusion that I'll have to read up on other things, cause like I said earlier, I know that I don't know what happens so I have to kinda read up on Hinduism and Buddhism and all these other things and see what makes complete sense to me and I doubt anything will ever make complete sense to me cause I think that takin' something from everything is the right way to do it, like when you look at the human race as a whole, there's hundreds of thousands of different cultures who all believe they're right so [W: yeah, so who's right? (laughing)] right, so if you take a little bit from everyone then it'll all be a bit closer to a better picture.

W: ok, so do you feel like this philosophy, it being akin to religion if you want to push that relationship, so is faith very much situated around the afterlife or is it about practical application toward living or is it both or?

M: ehm, I'd say it's more situated around the afterlife cause they way it came about what coping with the crumbling of every single belief that I had or didn't have, every single

belief that I just assumed I should believe in, so it did come about regarding the afterlife so it's very much based on how I cope with the afterlife is where it came from but at the same time it has influenced my daily life and the way I think about you know philosophy and academia and music as well.

W: All right, so do you feel like it has translated into that or that it is able to be translated into that?

M: ehm, it's able to be translated in every way possible I suppose if I was really interested in all this stuff I could really crystallize it but I suppose it's only in a very small way translated for me cause sort of the whole way of judging from your own experience that's something that I've been taking and that determines how I look at things.

W: ok now, in terms of your future plans, with your future life, dreams aspirations, how has this philosophy number one influenced it and number two do you take that kind of into account in terms of how you think about your plans, you know your concrete plans and hopeful plans, aspirations?

M: ehm I'm not sure, I suppose I should answer that by looking at what I do plan on doing and I kinda I don't like the idea of sorta buyin' a house, getting mortgage, working a 9 to 5 job, being a slave to the system but I, that, that sort of is affected by the fact that I don't like the idea of buying into the same old standard religious belief and you know becoming another person kneeling in the church praying, I'd rather have something that's suited towards me and what I'd like to do and I suppose I kinda, I like the idea of not being tied down to any one place, just being able to see everything, I'm not sure which way it goes whether it's this philosophy affects that or this view, this hope, all these hopes and aspirations are what's influenced this philosophy but they're definitely linked, it'll take many year's thinking about childhood experiences thinking about what's come first.

W: thank you very much for your interview