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Published in:
Digital Media, Young Adults and Religion

Published: 01/01/2020

Document Version
Accepted author manuscript

Document License
Publisher rights policy

[Link to publication](#)

Please cite the original version:

Dahl, K., Sjö, S., & Moberg, M. (2020). Finnish university students' social media use in the light of the Faith Q-Sort prototypes. In M. Moberg, & S. Sjö (Eds.), *Digital Media, Young Adults and Religion: An international perspective* (pp. 128-141). (Routledge Studies in Religion and Digital Culture). Routledge.
<https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi-fe202201148014>

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10. Finnish University Students' Social Media Use in the Light of the Faith-Q-Sort Prototypes

Karoliina Dahl, Sofia Sjö, and Marcus Moberg

Introduction

In the project *Young Adults and Religion in a Global Perspective* (YARG), a new method called the Faith-Q-Sort (FQS) has been used to broaden our understanding of the composition of contemporary, both religious/spiritual and non-religious, worldviews and outlooks on life. As is outlined in more detail in chapter 3, when participating in the FQS, respondents are asked to sort 101 worldview- and religion/spirituality-related statements according to how well they think that the statements reflect their own personal views. Through factor analyses of the individual sorts, shared patterns in the sortings –so-called “prototypes” – are revealed.

This chapter explores some of the most notable ways in which Finnish university students as representatives of the three Finnish FQS prototypes (“Confident Rationalist,” “Convinced, Active and Relational Believer,” and “Emotionally Motivated Pluralist”) respectively negotiate and strive to reconcile their social media use with their worldviews and religious/non-religious identities and offline social lives. As is discussed in more detail in chapter 2, social media have developed into an increasingly central environment for people’s construction and performance of social, cultural, and religious identities. While previous research has underlined how “neither religion, ethnicity, nor gender cease to exist in the digital realm” (Leurs et al. 2012, 171), online environments can nevertheless open up for new re-positionings between such categories. This

chapter also builds on previous research on the relation between online and offline religiosity, which has highlighted how digital media use for religious or spiritual purposes tends to closely correlate with people's offline religious/spiritual engagements (e.g. Campbell and Lövheim 2011). Online and offline life and identities are argued to be connected and social media use understood as one aspect of how people understand and express themselves (cf. Xinaris 2016). To a much larger extent than many earlier types of online interactive platforms, social media have been described as environments of "context collapse" (Marwick and Boyd, 2011) as they typically bring together multiple and diverse categories of users, audiences, and "relational contexts" (e.g. friends, relatives, colleagues) into one single digital space (Quinn and Papacharissi 2017, 355). As a consequence, social media users increasingly find it necessary to engage in continuous "boundary work," to construct multiple versions of "networked selves", and to negotiate, enact, and perform multiple identities on social media (Quinn and Papacharissi 2017, 361; cf. Tagg and Sargeant 2017, 213).

The chapter explores the connection between three different sets of shared outlooks and attitudes towards religion and worldviews (i.e. prototypes) and particular types of social media use for worldview- and religion-related issues. To this end, we draw on three categories of data gathered in YARG. We begin by exploring the results of the YARG survey in Finland, focusing in particular on the relationship between respondents' self-reported religious belonging and practice and media use. We then provide a more detailed presentation of the three Finnish FQS prototypes. Lastly, in light of the interview data, we move to analyze how respondents belonging to each of the three prototypes respectively describe the relationship between their worldviews and religious outlooks and social media use. Combining the unique FQS-data with in-depth interviews provides a completely new way of approaching young adults' experiences of the relationship between their Internet use, worldviews, and personal worldview identities. This is also where the emphasis of the chapter lies. In the concluding section, we bring our

findings together, highlighting what our explorative study brings to current research on worldviews and social media use.

Media and Religion in Finland

Despite a gradual general transition towards a more fragmented and market-governed media-sphere, Finland still largely preserves a democratic corporatist media system characterized by “a high degree of state intervention and of political parallelism, a highly professional journalistic ethos, and an early development of the mass press” (Lundby et al. 2018, 195). Finnish mainstream media remain fairly well trusted among the population at large, newspapers are still quite commonly read, Internet infrastructures are extensive, and Internet use counts among the most widespread in the world (Lundby et al. 2018). With slight variations between some regions, 91–98% of all Finnish households had broadband access in 2018 (Eurostat 2018), and 89% of the total population reported having used the Internet during the last three months. Indeed, in the age group of 16–24 year olds, 100% reported having used the Internet during the last three months and 98% reported using the Internet several times a day. Finland thus displays very high levels of Internet access and everyday use. Social media use has also become increasingly widespread. According to a survey conducted by Statistics Finland (2018), 93% of people in the age group 16–24 reported having engaged with social media or online social networks during the last month, as compared to 61% for the population in general. Smartphone use is likewise common, as 99% of 16–24 year olds and 97% of 25–34 year olds currently own smartphones (Statistics Finland 2018). Facebook remains the most popular social media platforms, followed by WhatsApp, YouTube, and Instagram (Statista 2018).

While the Finnish religious landscape has been gradually diversifying since the early 1970s, it remains dominated by the majority Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland (ELCF).

In the beginning of 2019, almost 70% of the total Finnish population were members of the ELCF (Kirkon tilastot 2019). However, mirroring similar developments in the other Nordic countries, the church has been experiencing progressive long-term decline on virtually all fronts. Membership figures have been slowly but surely dwindling ever since the early 1970s, belief in God and Church doctrine has weakened, the portion of regular churchgoers had been reduced to a small minority of all church members, and so on. While these developments have involved all age groups, they have been particularly notable among younger generations (Niemelä 2015). Finns' relation to the ELCF has been described in terms of a disposition of "believing in belonging" (Davie 2000, 2015), although that label appears to have become less and less descriptive of the attitudes of younger generations (Niemelä 2015). While membership in other types of religious communities has generally remained relatively low, the total numbers of religiously unaffiliated people has risen sharply in the past couple of decades, in 2018 making up approximately 27% of the Finnish population (Statistics Finland 2019). With regard to non-Christian religions, the numbers of Muslims have been steadily growing over a period of several decades (mainly due to increased immigration), although they still make up only around an estimated 1.5% of the population. Moreover, while various types of alternative spiritualities and new religions were established already in the early 1970s, they have only managed to attract limited numbers of followers and practitioners (e.g. Broo et al. 2015).

The relationship between religion and media in Finland quite closely mirrors that of the other Nordic countries. News and current affairs media coverage primarily remains focused on matters that relate to the majority ELCF and the smaller national Finnish Orthodox Church, although past decades have also witnessed a steady growth in coverage of Islam-related issues (e.g. Lundby et al. 2018, 205–207). The Finnish media landscape also includes a wide array of "religious media", including a larger amount of Christian newspapers and periodicals, a few Christian radio channels and television networks, and several alternative spirituality magazines.

Most Finnish religious and spiritual communities and associations have also established a presence online, either through their own websites or social media profiles.

Religiosity and media use in the Finnish YARG sample

The survey results for the Finnish YARG sample (N= 484 university students between the age 18–30) reveal comparatively high figures of self-reported religious belonging, but also quite low levels of self-assessed personal religiosity, and even lower frequencies of both public and private religious practice. In the Finnish survey data, 42.7% of respondents considered themselves “belonging to one or more religious groups, communities, or traditions,” as compared to 34.5% of the total YARG sample (N= 4964 university students in age 18-30). As reported on a 10-point degree scale (see chapter 3 and Appendix A for more details), the Finnish sample yielded a mean of 3.5 for self-assessed degrees of personal religiosity, which is below the total sample mean of 3.9. In addition, 33% of respondents reported “never” taking part in public religious ceremonies or services, excluding special occasions such as weddings or funerals, followed by 23.6% who reported doing so “less often,” and 26.5% who reported doing so “only on special days and celebrations.” As many as 40.1% reported “never” engaging in private religious or spiritual practices, such as worship, prayer, or meditation, while an additional 17.1% reported doing so “less often.”

Finnish respondents reported high levels of media use overall. For example, 22.3% reported using newspapers and magazines “every day,” as compared to only 12.5% of the total sample. Only in India (38%) and Sweden (23%) was daily newspaper/magazine use more prevalent. However, the media most often used is the Internet, which 95.6% of respondents reported using “every day,” as compared to 85.1% for the total sample. 100 % of Finnish respondents therefore reported using the Internet on at least a weekly basis. Being active on

social networks is also common, as 87.8% reported using social media to “get information about news or current affairs.” The three most commonly reported purposes of daily Internet use were communication (69%), finding information (66%), and entertainment (63%). One of the least commonly reported uses was for “religious or spiritual services and issues.” More than half (56%) of respondents reported “never” using the Internet for such purposes. Combining the results for the options “every day” (0.4%), “almost daily (1.9%), and “every week” (8.1%) reveals that only 10.4% of respondents reported using the Internet for such purposes on at least a weekly basis. However, “occasional” use was still reported by 34% of respondents.

Looking at correlations (using Kendall’s tau-b, $n=484$, $p<0.01$) between reported media use and degrees of religiosity and incidences of religious practice, a small but significant negative correlation can be found between identifying as religious and using the Internet to find information ($\tau = -.152$) or for entertainment ($\tau = -.177$). There is a strong correlation, however, between identifying as religious and using the Internet for “religious or spiritual services and issues” ($\tau = .439$). Apart from this, though, the survey data does not help us identify any notable differences in media use from the perspective of worldviews. For this, we turn to the FQS and interview data.

The Finnish FQS prototypes

The FQS-method employed in the YARG project yielded a certain amount of so-called prototypes for each national sub-sample. Each prototype represents generally shared viewpoints on worldview and religion among certain portions (i.e. certain prototypes) of participants in a particular sample. A prototype is therefore to be understood as an ideal representation of a group of people (see Chapter 3 for further details). Out of a total of 50 Finnish young adults who participated in the FQS, 37 belonged to either one of three prototypes that emerged from the

sample. These have respectively been labelled 1) Confident Rationalist, 2) Convinced, Active and Relational Believer, and 3) Emotionally Motivated Pluralist. In the following, we briefly account for the main characteristics of each of them in turn.

Confident Rationalist

“I’m, like, in quotation marks, a believer in science” (YFIKD152), says Helmi, a 21 year old female respondent. Her views are shared by many Confident Rationalists. Based on their sorts of the FQS statements, Confident Rationalists espouse a firm belief in science, human progress, and freedom of choice, and hold values such as tolerance and equality in high regard. In addition, in the words of the FQS statements they most commonly agreed with, they “reject religious ideas that conflict with scientific and rational principles,” they “can see no higher purpose or ultimate destiny for the human species,” and they “view religion as the illusory creation of human fears and desires.” According to the YARG survey results, those respondents who belong to the Confident Rationalist prototype display only a mean of 0.9 on self-assessed degree of personal religiosity. Religion is mainly connected to and comprehended through culture, society, and tradition, and has only little or no personal significance for Confident Rationalists.

The Confident Rationalist prototype includes fourteen individuals with four males and ten females. Ten of them were between the ages 20–24 and four between the ages 25–30 when they participated in the FQS in 2016. Eight of them belonged to the ELCF, four had left the ELCF, one had a mixed Orthodox and Lutheran background, and one came from a non-religious background. The fact that the majority of all Confident Rationalists remained members of the ELCF provides an illustration of the ways in which religious affiliation often has little or no impact on individual’s beliefs and attitudes towards religion.

Convinced, Active and Relational Believer

Being religious is a very important part of my own identity as well as how I personally conceive my own role and relationship to this world and to other people around me.
(YFIKD141)

This is how Kaisa, a 28 year old Neopagan, described what being religious means to her. The quote also illustrates how respondents belonging to this prototype tend to understand religion as including a strong relational element. In the words of the FQS statements that the respondents belonging to this prototype most strongly agreed with, they are “contributing members of a religious or a spiritual community,” they “believe in a divine being with whom one can have a personal relationship,” and they “consider being religious or spiritual as central to whom they are.”

This prototype includes thirteen respondents, with five males and eight females. Eight were between the ages 20–24 and five were between the ages 25–30 when they participated in the FQS. On the basis of the results of the YARG survey, respondents belonging to this prototype score highly on all religiosity indicators, displaying a mean of 9.0 on self-assessed degrees of personal religiosity. Twelve of these respondents were members of various types of Christian congregations, one was both a member of the ELCF and the Krishna Movement, and one self-identified as a follower of Native Finnish Faith (a form Finnish neo-paganism). Even though the majority of these respondents are Christian, the fact that two of these respondents cite other religious affiliations illustrates this prototypes’ emphasis on the impact of beliefs on everyday life rather than the beliefs in and of themselves.

Emotionally Motivated Pluralist

I cannot engage with any religious group, but I feel a connection to many religious traditions, and I believe that these can be useful to me. I enjoy getting to know different religious traditions, staying in spiritual or sacred places, looking at religious artefacts, and admiring religious art. (YFIKD122)

This is how Ella, a 22 year old respondent, describes her worldview. Ella's views exemplify well this prototype's interest in religions, philosophies, and existential questions, but also its tendency to choose and freely combine elements from different sources. In the words of the FQS statements most strongly agreed upon by respondents belonging to this prototype, the Emotionally Motivated Pluralists are "profoundly touched by the suffering of others," view the divine or a higher reality as a deep mystery that can be pointed to but never fully understood," "think about the ultimate as a life force or creative energy," and think that the "world's religious traditions point to a common truth." In addition, they support "individual freedom of choice in matters of faith and morality," believe "that one can be deeply moral without being religious," and actively work "towards making the world a better place to live."

This prototype includes eleven individuals with only one male. It also differs from the other two prototypes when it comes to the ages of the respondents that belong to it. Seven of them were between the ages 25–29 and four were between the ages 21–22 when they participated in the FQS. The third prototype thus had a majority of older respondents. Eight of them belonged to the ELCF and one to the Finnish Orthodox Church. Two had left the ELCF. According to the results of the YARG survey, respondents belonging to this prototype display a mean of 3.9 on self-assessed degrees of personal religiosity. Emotionally Motivated Pluralists emphasize balance in life and their surroundings by remaining open to different religious or

spiritual alternatives as long as it is possible to move between them and choose the ones that feel right without harming anyone else. At the same time, they strongly reject any religiously-motivated restrictions on their personal freedom of choice.

The Finnish prototypes and use of social media

The views expressed by respondents in the in-depth interviews confirm what the YARG survey results also clearly indicate: that the Internet constitutes an integral part of everyday life for the respondents belonging to all prototypes. Many attached particular importance to the social aspects of the Internet and social media (e.g. for keeping contact with friends, following different types of sites, and participating in online communities that related to their studies, work, hobbies, and preferred forms of entertainment). Respondents reported using social media platforms in a variety of different ways. The most frequently discussed social media sites in the interviews were Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and YouTube. Nearly every representative of the prototypes, regardless the prototype, had a Facebook account, and many had Instagram accounts. Most of them used WhatsApp for communication, and even though they did not have YouTube accounts, many used the site for entertainment and for searching information.

In addition, respondents were highly conscious about the pictures they presented of themselves through social media, for instance from the perspective of potential future employers. Some also expressed discontent with increasing pressures to be constantly available on social media. However, clear differences could be observed regarding which social media platforms respondents followed and were active on, what kinds of content they produced on these sites, and how they related this to their own personal worldviews and religious outlooks. Having provided a general overview of the most common uses of social media among out

respondents, we now move to analyze some both shared and peculiar characteristics of social media use among respondents belonging to each prototype.

The personally modest social media profiles of Confident Rationalists

The Confident Rationalists often have social media profiles that disclose only limited amounts of personal information. While they actively follow newsfeeds, keep in contact with friends, and follow various types of groups on social media sites, they seldom, if ever, post or disseminate personal content online. Their social media engagement can be described as “non-religious” in the sense that they do not follow any religious or spiritual groups or sites. However, nor do they report following any non-religious sites, such as those of associations linked to atheism, secular humanism, or non-religion. Yet, in some cases they nevertheless express views that relate to their worldviews on social media. This is the case for Helmi, a 21 year old female respondent, who is politically active. As she explained, her Facebook profile reflects her political views:

Well, I do bring out opinions and such. I can bring them out strongly, and people do know that I'm a member [of a political party], but, um, maybe I don't, somehow, want to create this, like, because my ring of friends, they don't all think the same way. So I don't want to underline the differences in my ideology compared to theirs. (YFIKD152)

Though Helmi holds clear political and ideological views that also reflect her worldview she prefers to remain sensitive and respectful of other views and tries to not come across as forcing her ideas on others. Helmi therefore carefully manages the content of her Facebook profile in order to reveal only select parts of her identity and worldview. This mirrors the views expressed

by other respondents belonging to the Confident Rationalist prototype, none of whom viewed social media as particularly significant for the expression of their personal identities. This seems to be especially the case when it comes to their worldviews and convictions. As Nita, a 23 year old female respondent explained:

I don't, as religion doesn't matter to me, so, it does, like, if a video or a documentary [e.g. on YouTube or Netflix] seems interesting then of course, but I don't actively look for anything, only if I run into something on the front page, I'll gladly watch it, but I don't [search for it], because religion doesn't make a difference in my life at the moment.
(YFIKD140)

Nita mentions watching videos with religious content online occasionally, although only out of curiosity or general interest. Nor does she mention deliberately seeking out any type of atheist, non-religious, or secular humanist content online.

Overall, due to their general disinterest in religion-related matters, at least on a personal level, Confident Rationalists seldom talked about seeking out or engaging with religious content online.

The modestly religious social media profiles of Convinced, Active and Relational Believers

The religious identities of Convinced, Active and Relational Believers are in most cases visible in their social media profiles. With a couple of exceptions, respondents belonging to this prototype were active social media users, including in religious matters. They tend to follow religious or spiritual sites, and also occasionally post content that relates to their religious convictions and engagements. However, while these respondents do not hide their convictions

or beliefs online, they are simultaneously careful so as not to come across as forcing their values and convictions on others. In this sense, their profiles can be described as “modest” or restrained when it comes to the religious content they produce and share on social media sites. Kalle, a 21 year old male Lutheran respondent said:

I do occasionally share some faith-related things, I mean I’m not the type that I would try to force something on people [...] but when I do share I share things that are important to me, from many aspects of life, so I do share every now and then, like in that way I’m not hiding anything, so in some ways it shows but not in a particularly strong way.
(YFIKD133)

While Kalle says that he does not “hide” his religious views on social media, he nevertheless adds that he does not express or articulate them in “a particularly strong way.” His account therefore reflects at least some degree of conscious awareness of what he discloses about his personal religious identity online. Even though cautious and “modest” displays of religiosity on social media are characteristic for this prototype, some of the Convinced, Active and Relational Believers would prefer to only share their religiosity or spirituality with likeminded individuals. This is how Linda, a 20 year old female respondent and member of the Krishna Movement, describes her use of Facebook:

Facebook, I’ve tried to keep it more as this connection to my spiritual family, [...] that’s the network I want to belong to on Facebook. But the world forces into your Facebook even if you didn’t really want it to. [...]. Or then it’s this tool for your identity. Then my work identity or school identity is clearly more restricted or this smaller part of me. [...] No one really looks at my things that much anyway but still it’s a bit of that I wouldn’t

give it to my employer because after all there might be some prejudices or just this that we won't call you ever again because you're weird. (YFIKD126)

Linda's views clearly illustrate how personal identities often become negotiated on social media sites. For her, being active on social media requires her to negotiate the enactment and performance of two separate identities: a personal religious one and a professional one. Maintaining a separation between the two requires constant boundary work. Indeed, she experiences the relationship between these two identities as somewhat problematic, as she fears that her religious engagements might, for example, end up having a negative impact on her career opportunities. In contrast, Ville, a 27 year old male respondent and member of the Evangelical Free Church (a Protestant revivalist community), openly expresses his religiosity on social media:

I remember sometime writing on Facebook that, um, "Learning to love like Jesus Christ has loved me." So in a way I think that, that one quite well describes how I myself, being a Christian, lead this life [...] I'm in the midst of this process and I'm learning, every day. (YFIKD146)

At the time of the interview, Ville was negotiating and trying to reconcile his bisexuality with traditional religious views on sexuality. Both identities were openly shared on social media, but the relation between the two was questioned by others several times, both online and "offline." Although having received some negative responses for being so outspoken about his religious views online, he continued to express them on e.g. Facebook. Ville therefore quite explicitly states that his "offline" personal religious identity is identical to the one he projects online. His religiosity is thereby also confirmed in the process.

Even though respondents belonging to the Convinced, Active and Relational Believer prototype tend to be more open about their religiosities and worldviews online, this is not always the case. For example, Kaisa, a 28 year old female follower of Native Finnish Faith, said:

Well, maybe to the extent that I do follow some certain groups on Facebook, such as the registered associations of Suomen Luonnonuskonnot [Finnish Nature Religions] and Lehto [The Association of Nature Religions], for instance. [...] but I mean, not that clearly, I would guess. On the whole, I would say that there is much more stuff relating to various kinds of hobbies on display on my Facebook profile page. (YFIKD141)

While Kaisa reports following several neo-pagan groups online, her Facebook profile nevertheless mostly contains various types of “stuff relating to various kinds of hobbies.” Kaisa’s offline religious engagements are therefore only indirectly displayed online.

For Iida, a 24 year old female respondent and member of the conservative Laestadian Movement (a Pietistic Lutheran revival movement), her religious identity is something she wishes not to disclose or discuss on social media or elsewhere:

I don’t talk about these things, as there have been sort of, um -- the media talks about these cases of abuse and other things, so it feels like they’re the first thing people think of. (YFIKD142)

Iida’s reluctance to reveal her religious views on social media is partly due to several instances of negative Finnish mass media coverage of Laestadianism in recent years. Afraid of becoming the subject of personal attacks, she consciously refrains from expressing or discussing her

religious convictions online. For her, social media constitute environments where she deems it safer *not* to disclose her religious identity. Previously quoted Linda from the Krishna Movement also expressed some similar concerns:

I feel like my religious or spiritual, maybe the experience of how other religions or even my own religion might've been trampled over in the media or how that media is used as this tool of power [...]. Probably just for this reason I'm a much more critical reader of newspapers for example than those people that don't have that personal engagement with it or have never themselves felt any sort of experience of injustice or sort of fear.
(YFIKD126)

The religious identities and convictions of both Iida and Linda clearly have a notable impact on their respective expressions of their religious identities on social media. The restraint that they both reported exercising when it comes to expressing their religious convictions online was in both cases primarily due to the constructions and representations of the mass media. As such, their accounts provide good examples of how the discourse produced and perpetuated through mass media extends into the digital realm and sometimes serves to create “identity traps” (du Preez 1980), whereby certain groups of people (in this case adherents of the Laestadian Movement and the Krishna Movement) find themselves constantly confronted by unfavorable and perhaps even chastising discourses about themselves (cf. Benhabib 1992, 198). Apart from these notable exceptions, however, most respondents belonging to the Convinced, Active and Relational Believer prototype tend to openly express and perform their religious identities on social media.

The modestly spiritual social media profiles of Emotionally Motivated Pluralists

Emotionally Motivated Pluralists use social media sites amongst other things to find what suites them best regarding their worldviews. Their social media use can also relate to personal wellbeing: finding a balance in one's life and tools for understanding oneself. For some of the respondents the sites also offer tools for finding the calmness they are looking for. This is the case for Ella, a 22-year-old female respondent:

I have followed some religious videos on YouTube -- there are, for instance, these videos called ASMR-videos [Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response] [...]. Those kinds of videos are really soothing and meditative in my opinion. But the producers of these videos have not themselves committed to anything, anything at all. Or you could say that they are committed on some level, since in some of the videos, people painting pictures of mandalas are shown on the screen. (YFIKD122)

It seems to be important for Ella that the producers of ASMR-videos are not religiously or spiritually committed, at least according to her interpretation. Although the videos feature "people painting pictures of mandalas," for Ella, this by and of itself does not indicate that they would have "committed to anything at all." Ella's unwillingness to engage with any particular religious or spiritual group is characteristic this prototype more generally. In Ella's case, YouTube becomes a spiritual tool for meditation but also a platform for negotiations between engagement and freedom of choice. The importance of being able to freely choose one's personal religious/spiritual beliefs and engagements was also highlighted by several other respondents. For example, Inka, a 27-year old respondent, talked about her Facebook use as follows:

Well, Facebook, not too actively, I mean I browse it on my phone or tablet, [...] and then on Facebook there's this yoga community where I'm pretty active. [...] So, there people share [+stories] related to diet and exercise and the sport itself, but there are also quite a bit of these more spiritual conversations there. It's actually a pretty nice community, you get a lot of support there [...] and it's, like, really the type of community where no one gets judged. (YFIKD134)

For Inka, the solidarity of the online yoga community is important, especially because she only practices yoga at home by herself. As she continued:

And the community is, like, it's very important that, even though you do it independently, you never feel like you're doing it alone, so you can always write there [+on the Facebook wall], and people ask for advice there, and the instructor also answers all the questions. (YFIKD134)

The online yoga community allows Inka to engage as much as she wishes, wherever and whenever she wishes, but without any types of obligatory participation in any classes. Yet, Inka went on to say that she is not willing to post any types of spiritual content on her personal profile, preferring instead to keep her personal spiritual engagements to herself.

Respondents belonging to this prototype primarily use social media to follow, seek information about, and practice according to personal preferences. However, these respondents are more likely to follow other religious/spiritual sites or groups than to post any type of religious/spiritual content of their own.

Concluding remarks

In this chapter, we have analyzed how social media is used in worldview- and religion/spirituality-related matters among respondents belonging to the three FQS prototypes generated in Finland. We have identified similarities as well as differences between and within the three prototypes. One of the most notable similarities shared by all three prototypes is the importance attached to freedom of choice in worldview and religion/spirituality-related matters. According to the respondents, everyone should be free to choose their beliefs, and partly for this very reason, many of them refrain from disclosing too much information about their own personal religious/spiritual outlooks online. As the YARG survey results indicated, differences in social media use became apparent in relation to questions of worldviews, religion, and spirituality. According to our findings, whether respondents display higher levels of either personal religiosity/spirituality or non-religiosity, this does not necessarily become reflected in their engagements on social media.

In line with previous studies (e.g. Bobkowski and Pearce 2011), the religiosity of Convinced, Active and Relational Believers usually shows in their social media profiles, even if only modestly. While these respondents lead active “offline” religious lives, this does not always become reflected in their online engagements. Yet, while Convinced, Active, and Relational Believers tend not to emphasize their religiosity in their self-presentation on social media, they do not hide it either. The personal religiosity/spirituality of Emotionally Motivated Pluralists tends to be somewhat visible on their social media profiles. Overall, these respondents are more explorative in their social media use in religion/spirituality-related matters. Although it does not necessarily come across clearly on their social media profiles, in some cases, these respondents are also more spiritually active online than “offline.” Mainly due to their general

disinterest in, or indifference towards, religion, Confident Rationalists disclose the least about their personal worldviews and convictions on social media.

While some of our respondents consciously strive to limit what they disclose about their worldviews on social media, others use social media as a platform for extending their religious or spiritual identities. In line with previous research (e.g. Quinn and Papacharissi 2017; Tagg and Sargeant 2017), although our respondents reported engaging with social media in a variety of different ways, their accounts highlighted the need for continuous boundary work and negotiation between multiple, both offline and online, identities. The “context collapse” (Marwick and Boyd 2011) of social media was sometimes experienced negatively, as it might force people into undesirable identity negotiations. This was the case for Linda, one of the Convinced, Active and Relational Believers and member of the Krishna Movement, who felt the need to maintain a clear separation between her personal religious identity and her professional identity on social media. However, the interviews also contain plenty of examples of the ways in which social media provided respondents with communal and relational settings that supported their personal religious/spiritual explorations and engagements. For example, this was the case for Inka, one of the Emotionally Motivated Pluralists, who talked about how her active participation in a Facebook yoga group supported her personal spiritual explorations and private practices.

Our discussion above also provides an illustration of how social media can provide important environments for self-exploration among people belonging to different kinds of minority groups. In the Finnish context, identifying as actively religious can be experienced as identifying with a minority. Many of the practicing Christian respondents belonging to the Convinced, Active and Relational Believers prototype followed and actively participated in Christian groups on social media. Such groups play an important role in fostering solidarity among young people who ascribe to traditional religious beliefs that are no longer espoused by

the majority of the Finnish population. Social media can also fill a similar function for Emotionally Motivated Pluralists who often reported using social media to find people with whom they share religious/spiritual interests. For the Christian believers who were close to mainstream Lutheranism, being modestly religious online was not problematic. This was, however, not the case for respondents who belonged to religious minorities (i.e. the Laestadian Movement and the Krishna Movement) that had been the subject of critical media scrutiny.

Future research should continue exploring the relationships between worldviews and media use. Young people today are often avid media users, but their worldviews clearly shape how and why they use, for example, social media. While social media can clearly play a part in the shaping of religious identities, context, religious/spiritual belonging and beliefs, aspects of social media, and personal perspectives, among other factors, shape how one relates to social media, leading to sometimes very different uses and perspectives.