TURKISH-DUTCH MUSLIM AND ORTHODOX REFORMED PARENTS IN THE NETHERLANDS: RELIGIOUS IDENTITY NEGOTIATIONS IN CONTEXTS OF CHILDREN'S EDUCATION

by

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Abstract

Religious parents can be thoroughly involved in tensions in educational contexts in western, secular countries. This study explores the understudied religious parents' processes of religious identity negotiation in educational contexts in a western, secular country, the Netherlands. Compared to other western countries, the Netherlands is more strongly observed in shifting away from collective religious freedoms, towards a focus on individual rights. It therefore forms a particularly relevant arena to explore these tensions.

Ten in-depth semi-structured interviews (N=16) were conducted. Participants are selected from two religious minority groups: Dutch-Turkish Muslim parents (N=6), attending Diyanet mosques, and Dutch Christian orthodox reformed parents (N=10), attending the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands. The psychological and sociological perspective of identity theory and related theoretical aspects are used as an analytical framework in the abductive analysis of the interview data.

The findings highlight an individualised nature of parents' religious identities, relevant across situations and strongly interwoven with their parenting identities. This interwovenness seems expressed through an identity concern towards their children's identities. The parents' experiences of frictions in educational contexts appear to be surprisingly diverse, in this study analysed in theoretical terms of macro and micro contexts. The findings indicate that parents' identity negotiations move beyond social recognition, instead prioritising a relationship with God and religious transmission to children. Importantly, this seems to result in an avoidance of religious identity expressions and interactions in educational contexts, and in an involvement with children's religious identities at home instead.

Thus, drawing on a limited number of interviews, this study deepens an understanding of religious parents' religious thinking processes when confronted with tensions in educational contexts. The findings are relevant in debates in the field of religion and educational policy in western countries, and in debates concerning the Dutch approach to freedom of education in particular.

Keywords: religious parents, religious identity, Netherlands, education, orthodox reformed, Christian, Turkish-Muslim, identity negotiation, recognition

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Table of content

Prologue

‘How did you come to study strongly religious parents?’ I was asked this question repeatedly over the years of my PhD study. As Flick (2009) notes, the ‘subjectivity of the researcher’ becomes part of the research in qualitative research. Furthermore, it seems rather unavoidable that my personal position is reflected throughout this study. It was my person who initiated this study, who conducted the interviews, who analysed the data and who wrote down the findings and conclusions. Therefore, I am ‘just as much a part of the research as the participants and their narratives’ (Sealy, 2018, p. 72).

As a result, reflection is an integral part of this research, in order to provide the reader with insight into the researcher’s motives and rationales. In interacting with both the Muslim and Christian parents, and in the whole process of research, I sought to reflect on my own religious background, religious identity, and democratic citizenship. It is for this reason that I also seek to reflect on an ethical approach to the interviews in chapter 4. In addition, in the epilogue of this study, I further reflect on specific notions, such as the selection of theories and the impact of this study on my personal thinking and convictions. Undoubtedly, this reflection will continue after the submission of this thesis, although it had already started when I was orienting for this study. Being transparent about the way in which this study was initiated thus foremost belongs to this provision of insight. Below I will elucidate my considerations on initiating and conducting this research study.

I have always had an interest in religion and how it is experienced personally by individuals. As I have a background in Psychology, over the years I have become especially interested in the interplay between religious identities, emotions and feelings, the role of interaction, and the influences of broader society on these religious identities. This curiosity about the ways in which religion is experienced by individuals was especially reinforced when I traveled in Muslim countries. It was there that I came into contact with strongly religious families. I particularly found the mothers very intriguing, in their expression of their religion and their care towards their children. Coming back to the Netherlands, and living in the United Kingdom later, I cherished these experiences with these mothers. Moreover, it became something I recognised in families in the Christian churches I attended, both in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom.

Not surprisingly, doing research on a topic surrounding religion was high on my wishlist when I was considering topics for my PhD study. However, despite this initial intrinsic interest in these mothers in Muslim countries, studying religious parents was not my primary aim when I was considering a topic. Instead, although I was interested in a broader field, I tended to seek for the ‘frictions’ in the field of education. In the first months of my PhD I initially focused on ‘tense situations’ in the classroom, surrounding religious issues. I was inclined to study

teachers' identities and practices. However, slowly I came to the idea of studying religious parents and their identity processes in education. This interest arose out of informal conversations with religious parents I have had both in the Netherlands and in the United Kingdom. In both countries, I have listened to deep concerns expressed in prayers in churches concerning worries about 'liberal' or 'secular' society. This made me curious. What exactly are these worries? How do they manifest themselves in parents' personal lives? What place do parents give these considerations in their personal lives, in society at large, and in the education of their children in particular?

My general interest in religion in society and education has also been reinforced by my occupation in the Netherlands. Before and during this PhD study I worked at an educational consultancy centre, serving schools with a religious (Christian) institutional identity. This way, I was introduced to policy and research on issues around citizenship and religion. I remember some conversations which particularly activated my thinking on these issues. For example, in light of my work and via a political youth organisation, I attended a political debate on freedom of education in the Netherlands. Here I spoke to a human right activist with a personal history in the religious state of Iran, who was campaigning against freedom of education[1] in the Netherlands. In our conversation, he argued that, in his view, religion was suppressive and should not have a part in the realm of education.

Although I will never be able to really understand what Iranian citizens experience, I think I understand his views and worries. Furthermore, I have grown up within the 'Bible Belt' in the Netherlands; a relatively strict, conservative religious community. As a child I attended mono-religious primary and secondary schools from within this religious community. Although I experienced these schools as warm environments, from my childhood years, I know something about how religion can be ingrained in the educational realm and the deep impact this has on an individual's life. Nevertheless, I also view this particular reality as a deeply complex and diverse one, as I have seen and heard parents' worries about the ideas of people like the human rights activist I met. Fear for losing their freedom to raise their children in the way they would deeply love to.

This tension provoked a curiosity in me to study the religious identity processes of parents. It motivated me to search for the deeper religious identity processes of these individuals. Individuals who are not only democratic citizens in a plural, western society, but who also have an active religious identity which they, at times, express publicly. These are religious individuals who seek ways to raise their children in a mostly non-religious society. All

[1] In the Netherlands, freedom of education implies the possibility for state funded mono-religious schools, see chapter 2.

of this is strongly related to the realm of education, which is often described as the intermediate sphere between the home and broader society.

In conducting this study into this particular field, my background in Psychology drove the choices for theories in the analytical framework. My religious and occupational background drove my choices for studying religious parents in educational contexts. And being a Christian made me an insider to the Christian parents and an outsider to the Muslim parents (Mullings, 1999), which I will reflect upon in chapter 4 and the epilogue of this study. From this position, I have set up this research project, conducted the theoretical research, and sought to grasp the parents' considerations, the scope of their experiences, and their deeper religious identity processes.

Chapter 1. Introduction

> *In our faith, um, your child is a test for you. Because your child is one of you, you see. (…) Why have we come here, not for our children, but for our Lord. And you have to educate your children like that for your Lord.*
> Emine, a Muslim mother

> *… they must be safe, by that I mean that they must know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. That's what it's all about in the end. And that, of course, is ultimately the goal of our lives, including their lives.*
> Maria, a Christian mother

The two extracts above summarise the essence of this study. Both mothers describe their deepest and most central concerns towards their children. Drawing on a limited number of in-depth interviews with Christian and Muslim parents in the Netherlands, this study deepens an understanding of religious parents' thinking processes when they are confronted with tensions in the context of their children's education.

Apart from offering a contribution to the academic field by its relative uniqueness, this study's findings highlight a personal nature of parents' religious identities itself, being relevant across situations and strongly interwoven with their parenting identities. The parents' experiences in educational contexts show to be surprisingly diverse, while throughout the interview data, the parents prioritise a relationship with God, above social recognition in interactions. Furthermore, the findings indicate that this individualised religiosity results in an avoidance of interactions and religious identity expressions in educational contexts, and in an involvement with children's religious identities at home instead.

Introduction

Religious groups experience tensions in educational contexts in many western countries around the world: Australia, Belgium, Canada, England, Hong-Kong, Israel, and the United States (Katzir and Perry-Hazan, 2019). Several recent occurrences in Europe and a few recent studies in western European countries (Elshof, 2019; Haga, 2019; Rissanen, 2020; Kolb, 2021) show that religious parents can be thoroughly involved in these tensions. Below, recent situations from around Europe, covered by mainstream media, illustrate how religious parents are confronted with tensions due to their religious convictions in educational contexts.

In North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany, Muslim parents filed a lawsuit against a Catholic school in 2017, where their son was forced to attend Catholic classes and services (Knight, 2017). The Muslim parents lost their case, and broad societal debates followed in Germany. In the United Kingdom, Muslim citizens at primary schools in Birmingham heavily protested in

March 2019 after LGBT-lessons, entitled ‘No Outsiders’, were introduced. One of the parents stated in an interview with the BBC: ‘What we have a problem with is promoting of homosexuality (…). Telling children as young as four, that it’s ok to be gay. It just doesn’t go with our beliefs, our rights’ (BBC, 2019). In the Netherlands, Christian orthodox reformed schools’ identity declarations, to be signed by parents, became the centre of heavy debates in November 2020 (Poortvliet, 2020). Some religious schools included their religious views on sexuality in these declarations, pointing to their belief that marriage is meant exclusively for a man and a woman. Criticism focused on possible unsafe climates in these schools for LGBT-pupils. In France, a Muslim parent complained to his child’s school about lessons on free speech where a teacher showed cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad (France 24, 2020). On social media a parent called for ‘mobilisation’ against the teacher and, a few days later, the teacher was murdered. Showing cartoons of the Prophet Muhammad led to protests by Muslim parents in the United Kingdom, in West Yorkshire in 2021 (BBC, 2021). In this case, the teacher was suspended and the school apologised to the parents.

These different occurrences all show the potential severity of cases where parents’ religious convictions clash with public or school policies. Outbursts of deeper underlying processes of religious identity negotiation seem to manifest in a range of different legal, societal, and political compositions. In some situations religious convictions clash with non-religious and liberal policies, while in other situations religious convictions clash with religious policies at religious schools. This illustrates the complexity and dynamics of the underlying processes that take place in the background. Moreover, it points to a demand to know ‘how religious (minority) groups (can) relate to liberal society’ in educational contexts (Exalto and Bertram-Troost, 2019, p. 2), and a need for understanding religious minorities in order to prevent misunderstandings (Buttler-Sloss, 2015). This is especially the case as a report by The Netherlands Institute for Social Research recently noted a growing misunderstanding of religious minorities in the Dutch public realm (Huijnk, Hart and Houwelingen, 2022).

This current study focuses on exploring the underlying psychological and sociological processes as experienced by parents belonging to two religious groups, Muslim and Christian parents, in a western country, the Netherlands. In doing so, it attempts to offer explanations for events in which these religious parents experience frictions in relation to their religious identities in educational contexts.

Background of this study

Compared to other countries in western Europe, the Netherlands is relatively secularised (Gorski and Altinordu, 2008; Pew, 2015; CBS, 2018). In this, the Dutch government is particularly observed to shift from collective rights for religious and cultural minorities to individual rights favouring liberal values (Vasta, 2007; Himanen, 2012; Maussen and

Vermeulen, 2015). Processes of secularisation in combination with a growing religious diversity due to immigration processes, increasingly give rise to debates on the handling of religious institutions in the field of education (Kennedy and Valenta, 2006; Ter Avest and Rietveld-van Wingerden, 2017). For instance, practical examples of social unrest in the Dutch context encompass a headscarf ban at a Catholic school in 2011 (Verus, 2011), the discrimination of a homosexual teacher at an orthodox Protestant school in 2011 (Oomen and Rijke, 2012), debates on teaching material on sexuality in Islamic schools in 2019, debates on religious identity declarations to be signed by parents in 2020, and an orthodox reformed school coming under scrutiny due to an unsafe climate for LGBT-pupils in 2021 (Rosenberg, 2021).

The broader impact and relevance of these tensions is described in a report by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education (2020). In the aftermath of debates on the teaching material on sexuality used in Islamic schools in 2019, an investigation was conducted by the Dutch Inspectorate of Education into a range of schools with a (religious) ideology as institutional identity and an aligned curriculum. Rather than focusing on 'incidents', this investigation was '(…) about the scope that the freedom of education gives to express one's own moral views, even if they deviate (strongly) from mainstream views (…)' (Inspectorate of Education, 2020, p. 14). In the Netherlands, this freedom of education involves the opportunity to found a school based on religion or ideology, with an aligned curriculum, corresponding selection criteria for educational personnel, and a specific admission policy, provided that schools are under supervision from the government.

Thus, this freedom still allows parents to choose government-funded religious schools in the Netherlands. However, it is precisely this freedom which often causes conflicts. Some voices in the Dutch media have even called for an ending to (Musch, 2020) or at least an adaptation of (Van Eijsden, 2021) freedom of education. In essence, as the authors of the investigation report (2020) noted, this 'freedom of education implies a conflict of ideas, which is particularly visible in interpretations that deviate from the beliefs of the majority. Educational freedom is therefore about protecting schools against majority coercion' (Inspectorate of Education, 2020, p. 11).

This protection against a 'majority coercion' has gained an important place in the political-philosophical and legal-scientific literature (Bader, 2012; Oomen and Rijke, 2012; Maussen and Vermeulen, 2015; Rijke, 2019, among others). For instance, in the domain of the freedom of Dutch schools to select teachers, Oomen and Rijke (2012) elaborated on the tension of possible discrimination of individual teachers in religious schools. They argue that a conflict of responses arises from, on the one side, global legal pluralism involving the rights of communities, and on the other side, international, European and national law, which defends the equal treatment of individuals. Both legal and socio-scientific research has been conducted

to investigate this tense relation between these conflicting responses (Oomen et al., 2009; Oomen and Rijke, 2012). In short, the conflict between individual and collective rights has often been central in the context of religion in the public sphere (Donk et al., 2006), particularly in the field of education (Burtonwood, 2003; Maussen and Vermeulen, 2015).

In this context, Rissanen (2020, citing Himanen, 2012) even noted a 'failure of national models to promote inclusion', as 'minority rights are exceedingly tied to demands for loyalty to nation states and their core values' (p. 135). Similarly, as previously mentioned, Maussen and Vermeulen (2015) observed a shift by the Dutch government from collective rights for religious minorities to individual rights that favour liberal values. This touches on the tension between collective and individual rights (see for a summarised insight into the philosophical debate on this topic between Kymlicka, Halstead, Taylor and Habermas in Himanen, 2012, pp. 79-94). As Renault (2007) noted, the recognition of an identity is related to this debate on individual rights and collective rights. Recognition can be understood in a variety of ways (see Fraser, Honneth, Bourdieu and Taylor in Renault, 2007, for a summary), but Taylor especially took the role of 'significant others' (1994, p. 32), or 'interlocutors' (1989, p. 36) in recognising one's identity into account.

Taylor's classical 'Politics of recognition' (1994) described the development of the political idea of the recognition of an identity to a 'vital human need' over the years (p. 26). Taylor explained how this idea, and the subsequent need to defend the expression of a particular identity, evolved. According to Taylor (1994), the idea that each human being is unique compared to others has become morally significant over the years, as it is related to the idea of an identity as a moral voice within, which is 'anchored in our feelings' (p. 28). Accordingly, an identity is related to the ultimate sense of being yourself, the 'own particular way of being', which is also named 'authenticity' (1994, p. 28). Taylor argued that the recognition of such an identity is about the 'ideal of authenticity', the idea of 'being true to oneself' (1994, p. 31), which defines one's dignity[2]. According to Taylor, this 'being true to oneself' can be articulated for an individual identity, but should also apply to a 'culture-bearing people among other peoples' (1994, p. 31), such as a group with a particular nationality.

Taylor summarises possible answers to the question, 'who am I?' as identifications and commitments constituting one's 'frame or horizon' (1989, p. 27). Such a frame, or horizon, determines the moral stances of the individual, the 'fundamental orientation' (p. 29), which we all develop in dialogue with others. These are the 'significant others', and it is argued that it is especially this 'dialogical character' of an identity in which recognition takes place (Taylor,

[2] Taylor wrote more comprehensively on the development of the idea of dignity, related to morality, and what that constitutes in the modern world, in his 'Sources of the self: The making of the modern identity', 1989, p. 15.

1994, p. 32). This ‘dialogical character’ is defined as language, in a broader sense than just words, pointing to, for example, expression of feelings. Here, Taylor (1994) cites the work of George Herbert Mead (1934). Mead (1934) stated that one’s self-definition arises in interaction with others and stressed the importance of the ‘significant others’, and the ‘modes of expression’ in which the recognition of an identity takes place (Mead 1934, in Taylor, 1994, p. 32). These thoughts point to the importance of dialogue with others and the expression of one’s identity in these interactions (Mead, 1934; Taylor, 1994).

In light of these ideas, Taylor argued that the recognition of individual identities ultimately leads to ‘homogenizing’, as he noted: ‘Implicitly invoking our standards to judge all civilizations and cultures, the politics of difference can end up making everyone the same’ (1994, p. 71). Thus, rather than focusing only on this modern idea of recognising individual identities, Taylor strives for the continued recognition of group identities and the value of cultural identities. This view was, however, criticised by Habermas (1994), amongst others, who responded that individuals should be protected within communities, and thus individual rights should be favoured over collective rights.

Interestingly, in recent years, this idea of recognition seems to be used more and more to protect cultural and group identities, whereas this is again criticised by feminists who argue that ‘institutional recognition’ can reinforce ‘traditional (often male) authorities in minority communities’ (Hopkins and Blackwood, 2011, p. 216). Hopkins and Blackwood (2011) therefore argued for a ‘nuanced understanding of identity and recognition’ (p. 217) and note that both belonging to a group and one’s individual self-categorisation should be understood in a nuanced manner.

Focus of this study

Families in religious minorities are confronted with these particular majority versus minority tensions (Marks, Dollahite and Young, 2019), particularly in educational settings, when children encounter the 'ruling culture' that differs from the home (Metso, 2018, p. 18, see also Nesbitt, 1998). In these situations, children and adolescents 'must make choices between different coexisting norms' (Kuusisto, 2011, in Metso, 2018, p. 18). Negotiations of religious children and adolescents facing such tensions are widely researched in the field of religious identity development and negotiation (Phelan et al., 1991; Østberg, 2000; Faircloth, 2012; Awokoya, 2012; Moulin, 2013; Visser-Vogel, 2015). In separating both worlds, Phelan et al. (1991) described how religious adolescents even expressed to ‘always hide a part’ of who they are (p. 237). In addition, studies have shown how religious adolescents in schools are ‘teased’ about their religious identities (Kuusisto, 2010, p. 137; Moulin, 2013, p. 212). However, less studied in this field of tensions in educational settings are the parents in religious minority groups.

A few recent studies have taken religious parents in educational settings into account. Findings in a study by Haga (2019) indicate how Somali-Muslim parents in Sweden are faced with the task of 'navigating' between different 'normative systems' (p. 115). Haga notes that this is related to teachers' assumptions that their pupils would lack ideas on children's right of freedom. According to Haga (2019), regarding the Swedish institutional context, the existence of differences in views between religious parents and schools are not problematic in themselves, 'but rather how differences are commonly misnamed, misunderstood, and unnecessarily emphasized' (p. 126). Also focused on Scandinavia, Rissanen (2020) studied the negotiations of Muslim parents in the 'everyday life of the schools' (p. 147), in Finland and Sweden. In her study in state schools, and emphasising the cultural tradition of Protestant Christianity, Rissanen found that Muslim parents experienced a pressure to privatise their religion, resulting in a lack of recognition of their religious identities. According to Rissanen (2020), this can result in a lowering of the 'religious literacy' in the schools, and 'upholds the risk of religious rights being ignored in the everyday life of the school' (p. 146).

In a study in the Netherlands amongst Catholic schools, Elshof (2019) found that parents can also hold extensive views within their children's religious schools. In her study, Elshof found that parents stated that Catholic schools 'should express and develop their Catholicity more outspokenly' and that the schools themselves were 'insufficiently aware' of these parents' views (Elshof, 2019, p. 122). Related to these studies, Kolb (2021) studied the 'views and perspectives' of Muslim parents towards the 'didactic design' of religious education in Austria and found a broad range of differing perspectives (p. 4). Kolb (2021) notes that the role of Muslim parents' 'religiousness', in this, is 'generally understudied' (p. 4).

Overall, these studies indicate that religious parents have to negotiate differences between their religious convictions and views within the schools their children attend. In these cases, this seems to result from being a minority group in a majority context, reflecting the previously described tensions. This study aims to explore these processes amongst religious parents in contexts of education, in a secular western country in Europe, the Netherlands. In particular, it seeks to elucidate the deeper religious identity processes parents experience, as underlying processes of possible societal outbursts described in the beginning of this chapter. In this respect, it focuses on educational contexts in which parents negotiate their religious identities, in an attempt to offer explanations for events in which these religious parents experience frictions in relation to their religious identities.

To achieve this aim, in-depth interviews have been conducted with individual parents or couples of parents from two religious groups. The first religious group consists of Dutch-Turkish Muslims, who attend Diyanet (*Türkiye Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs) mosques. The second religious group consists of Dutch orthodox reformed Christians, who attend the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde*

Gemeenten in Nederland), and are part of the so-called Bible Belt (Pons-de Wit et al., 2019; Snel, 2007). These groups were selected as they are expected to experience the described processes related to 'minority rights', 'exceedingly tied to demands for loyalty to nation states and their core values' (Rissanen, 2020, p. 135), and the Dutch government shifting from collective to individual rights (Maussen and Vermeulen, 2015) (see for in-depth information on these groups chapter 2, 'Religious groups approached in this study'). Although several studies have been conducted amongst these religious minority groups, no study in this field has focused on the religious identity negotiation of parents within educational contexts. That is surprising, especially as parents' religion is such a prominent topic in current societal debates in the field of (religious) education (Pols, 2020).

Participants were recruited via gatekeepers and snowball-sampling in their religious places of worship throughout the Netherlands, where they are active attendants of their places of worship. Additionally, participants were selected if they have children in the final years of primary school. Ten in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a total of 16 participants (four interviews with Muslim parents, N=6; six interviews with Christian parents, N=10) were conducted. Participants were between 30 and 42 years old, and their educational backgrounds ranged from vocational to university education.

Theoretical aspects of identity theory (Burke and Stets, 2009; Stets and Serpe, 2013), rooted in the work of Mead (1934), are used as analytical framework in the analysis of the interview data. The sociological and psychological perspective of this theory aligns with the aim of this study. In particular, in this theory, the concept of identity is about '*understanding individuals* as situated in *social interaction* and *embedded within society'* (Stets and Serpe, 2013, p. 31, emphasis added). According to identity theory, an identity is activated in a situation which is relevant to that identity. In such a situation, the options of identity verification or identity non-verification are possible (see chapter 3 for an outline of this theoretical framework). Theoretical aspects of this theory are used as an analytical framework in the interpretation of the data, where a combination of inductive and deductive data analysis is used, so-called abductive analysis (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012) (see chapter 4). This combination of inductive and deductive data analysis aligns with the taken ontological and epistemological position in the philosophy of critical realism (see chapter 4), where theory is seen as approximating rather than determining reality.

Previous research

In the context of education in western European countries, only a few (previously mentioned) studies have researched processes surrounding religious identity negotiation amongst religious parents in the context of education (Elshof, 2019; Haga, 2019; Rissanen, 2020; Kolb, 2021). However, socio-scientific research has shown the broader importance of identity and

social interaction for religious minority groups in western societies. In a broader context than educational settings, Hopkins and Blackwood (2011) conducted a study with British Muslims into 'how, in everyday interaction' (p. 215) their religious identity was negotiated, and the subsequent impact on their participation in society. They concluded that the recognition of identities is of crucial importance to 'participate in the public sphere' (p. 225). Hopkins and Blackwood (2011) used a theory familiar to identity theory, namely self-categorisation theory (Turner et al., 1987), which takes group identity into account (see also Fleischmann and Phalet, 2016).

Similarly, the broader importance of identity and social interaction for religious groups is shown in several studies amongst religious groups in the Netherlands. For instance, Maliepaard and Phalet (2012) found that group contact has an important impact on the vitalisation of religious identities of Muslims in the Netherlands. In particular, they identified a suppressive influence of majority group contact and a supportive influence of minority group contact on the religious expression of members of Muslim minorities. Additionally, Fleischmann and Phalet (2012) showed how religious socialisation played an important role in the religious vitality of Turkish-Dutch Muslim identities.

The influence and role of parents is widely researched, both globally and in the Netherlands, in the field of religious socialisation and religious transmission (Clark, Worthington and Danser, 1988; Myers, 1996; Özdikmenli-Demir and Şahin-Kütük, 2012; Bader and Desmond, 2006; Pels, Distelbrink and Postma, 2009; Pels, 2010; Vermeer et al., 2011; Maliepaard and Lubbers, 2013; Vermeer, 2014; Metso, 2018; Holmes, 2021; Chafai, 2021). In the field of religious identity development, some studies have included the particular role of parents as 'agents' in the religious identity development of their children (Schachter and Ventura, 2008; Fisherman, 2011). Schachter and Ventura (2008) applied the term 'identity agents', while Fisherman (2011) used the concept of 'socialization agents'. In both studies, parents are seen as important sources of contextual influence on the children's processes of religious identity development. Fisherman (2011) particularly encountered this influence in comparison to the influence of teachers and peers. Similarly in this field of religious identity development, and focusing on religious parents in the Dutch context of education, one study explicitly examined the influence of both parents and schools on the religious identity development of adolescents (Bertram-Troost, De Roos and Miedema, 2007). Bertram-Troost et al. (2007) concluded that the parents' worldviews in particular play a pivotal role in adolescents' religious identity development, and teachers are encouraged to notice this pivotal role in the religious identity development of their pupils.

Nevertheless, all these studies reside in the field of adolescent religious identity development or religious socialisation. In these studies, the more or less pivotal role parents play in this particular field of religious identity development of children and adolescents is

highlighted. Less central, however, are the perspectives of religious parents themselves, currently understudied in the context of education (Scholvinck et al., 2020; Kolb, 2021; Van Schoonhoven, 2021). Furthermore, in May 2020 the Rathenau Institute (Scholvinck et al., 2020) concluded that parents and pupils are almost unrepresented in the field of educational research in the Netherlands. Several studies have focused on religious parents' school choices in the Dutch educational context (Ter Avest, Bertram-Troost and Miedema, 2015; Bertram-Troost and Miedema, 2017; see for an in-depth overview Markus et al., 2018), as studies in other countries have done as well (McCreery, Jones and Holmes, 2007; Iner, 2021; Leukert, 2021). However, in the Netherlands, studies focusing on parental involvement in education have mainly taken the cultural and immigrant backgrounds of parents into account (Booijink, 2007), while the religious identities of parents in the context of their children's education have been less centralised.

In light of this gap in the academic literature, several studies call for research into religious parents' perspectives in the context of education. Especially in the Dutch context, Van Schoonhoven (2021) calls for including the voices of religious parents when it comes to freedom of education. Similarly, as Kolb (2021) observes in the 'German speaking world', analyses in the field of religious education often take place 'in a deductive manner', 'with a top-down approach that does not take into account the experiences of those involved' (p. 2). As a result, several studies have called for research in 'schools as arenas', while taking 'bottom-up' approaches by including religious parents (Rissanen, 2020, p. 136, see also Kolb, 2021).

More generally, studying religious identities in public spaces is perceived as academically relevant (Seymour, 2012). Seymour called for studying the religious identity negotiations and formation of young people, but also pointed to the importance of studying the religious identity negotiation of persons surrounding education. Though not specifically mentioning parents' processes of religious identity negotiation, Seymour (2012) noted: 'nothing is also more important than assisting persons to know how *we* can seek to negotiate the terrains of *our* multiple identities and multiple commitments in the public space' (p. 3).

Aim of this study

This study seeks to add to this particular field, by taking a bottom-up approach (Rissanen, 2020; Kolb, 2021). As mentioned, it focuses on the sociological and psychological processes of religious identity negotiation of religious parents in the educational contexts of their children. It aims to explore the deeper underlying religious identity negotiation processes of both Christian and Muslim parents, selected from two specific groups in Dutch society. This study thus takes a focused, limited approach by selecting two specific religious groups, interviewing a small number by snowball sampling selected parents, confining to in-depth qualitative analysis and taking a specific theoretical field as conceptual paradigm. In doing so, it attempts

to offer explanations for events in which these specific religious parents experience frictions in relation to their religious identities in educational contexts. The findings in this study are thus not generalizable, but give insight into how religious parents in Dutch society *may* describe, experience and negotiate their religious identities in the context of education.

In line with research by Moulin (2013), this study thus widens the academic enquiry with 'comparable monotheistic religious traditions in a plural context' (p.16). As Christianity and Islam are both Abrahamic faiths, earlier studies have also combined these groups in studies on religion and parenting (e.g. Agius and Chircop, 1998; Marks, 2004; Moulin, 2013; Dollahite et al., 2018; Kelley, Marks and Dollahite, 2020). Similarly, this study thus aims to study Muslim and Christian parents as the 'religious parent' as, for instance, Moulin studied Jewish, Muslim, and Christian adolescents as the 'religious adolescent' (Moulin, 2013, p. 15, 16). Moulin based this approach on the common experiences of 'religious adherents in a secular and plural society– albeit as belonging to distinct religious traditions' (p. 16). Schachter and Ventura (2008) took this same perspective, by stating that their participants, Jewish Orthodox parents, would 'represent' a broad array of religious parents, 'whose parenting takes place in the context of the encounter of different, sometimes conflicting, cultures, worldviews and values, social and educational institutions' (p. 456).

Research questions and study overview

The purpose of this study, then, is to explore the processes of religious parents negotiating a religious identity in the context of education, with frictions for the religious identities, in a western European country, the Netherlands. The research questions to be answered focus on this aim and are delineated below. Underlying these research questions are theoretical concepts of identity theory, which are discussed in chapter 3. Therefore, chapter 3 describes these research questions again and clarifies them further.

As both the identities and the particular experiences of parents are fundamental for the processes of the actual identity negotiation, research question 1 and 2 are focused on respectively the parents' religious identities, and their experiences in educational contexts. Research question 3 considers the actual processes of parents' religious identity negotiation and the influences on social interaction in educational environments. Finally, research question 4 focuses on possible differences between the two religious groups. As a result, the research questions in this study are:

Question 1. How are the religious identity standards described and experienced by the religious parents?

Question 2: What are the personal experiences of religious parents (Christian, Muslim) in educational situations in which parents perceive a lack of self-verification of their religious identities?
Question 3: How do parents negotiate their religious identities in situations as explored under research question 2, and what is the influence on the social interaction in the educational environment?
Question 4: 'Is there any difference (regarding the results on question 1, 2 and 3) between the two religious groups of parents (Christian, Muslim)?

These questions are the focus of this study and will be addressed in the following chapters. An overview of these chapters is given below.

Chapter 2 describes the historical and societal context of this study. Specific relevant historical and typical aspects in the Dutch approach to religion and education are outlined. The origins of the typical Dutch freedom of education, the particular processes of 'pillarisation' and de-pillarisation, and the impact of secularisation and immigration processes are set out. Recent societal occurrences are discussed as well, showing current societal unrest surrounding freedom of education. Importantly, the religious minority groups selected in this study are presented in the final part of this chapter.

Chapter 3 explores the theoretical and analytical framework for studying the complex processes of the religious identity negotiations of the religious parents. A conceptualisation of religious identity and theoretical aspects of identity theory are described. Additional related theoretical aspects, taken from the field of identity formation and development, are presented to further facilitate the analytical framework of studying the parents' religious identity negotiation processes in educational contexts.

Chapter 4 discusses the methodological underpinnings of this research. The ontological and epistemological positions are described, taking the perspective of critical realism. The research methodology of qualitative research and the details of the research method of semi-structured in-depth interviews are presented. It also provides details on the accessing of the religious communities and the sampling process. Particular attention is given to the search for ensuring the reliability and validity of the findings and the research ethics in the research process as a whole. The participants are introduced by providing in-depth information on pivotal aspects. Finally, the epistemological background and detailed process of the abductive analysis of the interview data is outlined in five steps.

Chapter 5 addresses the first research question. The religious identities as described by religious parents are explored. In particular, the findings indicate a relevance of the identities across domains and an importance of a relationship with a personal God. Furthermore, the

parents' multiple identities are explored, demonstrating an interwovenness of the parents' religious and parenting identities, expressed in three ways: through their actions, through their transcendental relational aspects, and through their religious responsibility. As part of the parents' own identities, this interwovenness is shown to reside in an identity concern towards their children's religious identities and identity development. The final part of this chapter considers the differences between the identity standards of the Muslim and Christian parents.

Chapter 6 examines the second research question. The parents' experiences in educational contexts, in which they encounter frictions, are explored. As these experiences reside in a variety of situations, a categorisation is set up by applying and adjusting existing theoretical concepts from the field of identity development to the Dutch educational context. As a result, the parents' experiences are sorted in two categories: 'discrepancies between macro and micro context' and 'discrepancies within the micro context'. Overall, these categories show to be useful to locate the frictions in parents' experiences in educational contexts.

Chapter 7 considers the third research question. The parents' processes of religious identity negotiation are presented, divided in three parts. First, aspects surrounding identity verification and nonverification are outlined, where it is shown that religious parents move beyond a reaching for the recognition of their religious identities. Second, antecedents of parents' religious identity disclosure in the educational contexts are analysed, demonstrating that parents often do not disclose their identities in educational contexts. Third, 'unseen dynamics' are presented, giving insight into how parents instead negotiate their religious identities, invisible for educational personnel.

Chapter 8 further continues to address the third research question. The 'unseen dynamics', as presented in chapter 7, are analysed further. The theoretical perspective of reciprocal identity processes is taken, as especially the identity systems of the parents can be shown to influence children's identity systems. These processes also emerge when parents discuss child-teacher relationships. In some minor occasions, the parents outline how children reciprocally influenced parents' identity systems. In particular, it is noted how parents seek to establish a 'basis' at home, from which they aim to make their children 'resistant' to undesired external influences in the educational contexts. Finally, the importance of the 'nexus' between the family, school, and the religious place of worship is presented, where parents especially emphasise the predominant role of the home.

Chapter 9 contains the conclusion and discussion of this study. The findings of chapters 5-8 are summarised, and practical and societal implications are described. Finally, limitations and strengths of this study are outlined and suggestions for future research are given. This final chapter is followed by an epilogue, which includes the reflections of the researcher.

Chapter 2. Context. The Netherlands: religion and education. Room for faith-based schools

Introduction

This study aims to explore processes of religious identity negotiation among religious parents in a western European country, the Netherlands. In western countries, religious and cultural minorities face challenges due to extensive emphases on nation states and on the core values and diminishing emphases on social and minority rights (Vasta, 2007; Himanen, 2012). Rissanen (2020), citing Himanen (2012), described it in strong terms as 'a sense of the failure of national models' in Europe, including the Netherlands, as 'minority rights are exceedingly tied to demands for loyalty to nation states and their core values' (p. 135). The Netherlands is a unique country in this.

Compared to other countries such as Germany, the UK, and France, the Netherlands has been known for extensive collective rights as a result of a history of pillarisation (Koopmans, 2006; Vasta, 2007). However, against this background, several authors have explicitly observed a shift from multiculturalism and collective rights to assimilation and individual rights in the Netherlands (Vasta, 2007; Koopmans, 2006; Maussen and Vermeulen, 2015). This conflict between individual and collective religious rights (Bader, 2012) is seen as a key development in the Netherlands. In essence, over the years, the Dutch government has noticeably shifted away from the collective religious freedoms for religious communities, towards a focus on individual rights (Maussen and Vermeulen, 2015). This has led to 'less room for far-going associational and collective freedoms for minority groups', especially those emerging in educational contexts (Maussen and Vermeulen, 2015, p. 100).

Although these developments are observed in other western countries as well, they are more strongly present in the Netherlands (Koopmans, 2006; Vasta, 2007; Maussen and Vermeulen, 2015). Therefore, the Dutch context forms a particularly relevant arena to explore dynamics among religious minorities in the western world, in the context of education. This chapter examines the particular characteristics of religion in education in the Netherlands. First, insight will be given into the specific historical aspects of religious freedom and freedom of education in the Netherlands. Second, the current situation and challenges for religious minorities in relation to education in the Netherlands will be presented. Finally, the selected religious minority groups in the Netherlands studied in this study will be discussed.

Historical aspects in the Netherlands: shifting from collective to individual

Several historical aspects of the state and religion are important in the shifting Dutch approach. These are outlined below.

Pillarisation and freedom of education

Before the separation of church and state in the constitution of 1848, the Dutch Reformed Church played a prominent role within society. Religious views, apart from Calvinist views, were only tolerated. After the separation of church and state in 1848, the Dutch Reformed Church was no longer privileged over other religious groups — all religious groups now enjoyed possibilities to develop a space for themselves within society (Knippenberg, 2006). The 'Protestant nation' had become a 'Dutch nation' (Knippenberg, 2006, p. 321).

However, throughout these developments, religious diversity continued to be seen as a threat to the unity of the Dutch nation (Knippenberg, 2006). Attempts to unite the Dutch nation led to state schools, 'characterized by a climate of Christianity that goes beyond all institutionalized religion, a Christianity above religious differences' (Ter Avest, Bertram-Troost and Miedema, 2007, p. 203). As a result, there was no 'continuity between specific religious beliefs and practices in the families and at school' (Ter Avest et al., 2007, p. 204), and as a consequence, non-government funded denominational schools were founded by groups of parents or teachers (Ter Avest et al., 2007).

During this time, attempts to marginalise religious diversity led to a strong increase in self-consciousness among religious groups, according to Knippenberg (2006). In addition, the experienced 'ideological threat of the liberal state' (Knippenberg, 2006, p. 322), provoked the formation of strong group identities among religious groups, leading to the so-called pillarisation (Lijphart, 1977; Knippenberg, 2006). In particular, the lack of equal financing among the state schools and the denominational schools, combined with educational requirements for both type of schools laid down in the 1878 School Act, led to a so-called school dispute (Knippenberg, 2006). Orthodox Protestants and Roman Catholics in particular sought equal financing of both denominational and state schools. This school dispute ended in 1917, when the equal state financing of confessional and state schools was secured in a new constitution (Idenburg, 1960; Dronkers, 1995). In 1920 this was specified in an adapted version of the already existing 23rd article (Ter Avest et al., 2007), and freedom of education was established (Government of the Netherlands, n.d.).

Based on this 23rd article, religious non-governmental schools currently exist alongside state schools in the Netherlands, government-funded in equal measure (Shadid and van Koningsveld, 2006; Shakeel, 2018; Exalto and Bertram-Troost, 2019). Apart from the pillarisation of the educational field, other fields were also institutionalised based on categories such as religion. As a result, these years are regarded as the beginning of pillarisation in the Netherlands (Knippenberg, 2006; Lijphart, 1977). Different groups in the Dutch society now had their own particular range of 'marked organizations', such as 'political parties, labor unions, education, television broadcasting, retirement homes, social service agencies, and recreation clubs' (Monsma and Soper, 2009, p. 60).

The ideas of Dutch statesman and politician, Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), have been important in this respect (Glenn, 2012). Kuyper invented the idea of 'sphere sovereignty'. This concept holds that spheres, or communities, should not be seen as 'subordinate' to the state (Glenn, 2012, p. 3), but instead should have their own sovereignty. In this view, schools do not belong to the state, but to parents (Maussen and Bader, 2015). Kuyper's ideas have shaped the Dutch approach to religious freedom, providing collective religious freedoms for religious communities. As a consequence, the Dutch government has played a modest role in the spheres of religious groups in society, and more specifically in the context of religious schools.

De-pillarisation and immigration processes

The period of pillarisation roughly lasted until the 1960's. Since then, it was especially challenged by ongoing secularization and immigration processes (Monsma and Soper, 2009). As a result of a decreasing commitment to the 'pillarized ideologies', a process called 'de-pillarisation' emerged (Dekker and Ester, 1996, p. 339). The immigration of Muslim guestworkers and their reunion with their families in the 1980's led to a new 'religious plurality within the Dutch society' (Ter Avest et al., 2007, p. 208).

Nevertheless, in line with the 23rd article, Islamic schools were founded. However, children from Muslim families have attended a range of schools, from Islamic, to state schools, as well as Roman-Catholic and Protestant-Christian schools (Rietveld-van Wingerden, Westerman and Ter Avest, 2009; Ter Avest and Rietveld-van Wingerden, 2017). Thus, despite the history of pillarisation in the Netherlands, Muslim groups were not perceived as a somewhat isolated pillar (Maussen, 2012). According to Maussen (2012), this is due to the synchronous development of the process of de-pillarisation and the immigration processes, which both emerged in the 1960's (Maussen, 2012).

Notwithstanding, Muslim groups have been under scrutiny. In particular, a focus on the integration of these groups shifted to a focus on their assimilation (Driessen and Merry, 2006; Vasta, 2007; Sözeri, Kosar-Altinyelken and Volman, 2019). Altinyelken and Sözeri (2019) have linked this change to concerns that Muslim immigrants would not share the 'core values of liberal democratic societies' (2019, p. 48). For instance, the founding of Islamic schools has been 'controversial' in Dutch society from the beginning (Driessen and Merry, 2006, p. 211), which was especially fuelled after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 (Driessen and Merry, 2006). Driessen and Merry (2006) suggest that the most important reasons for 'liberals' to argue against these schools, were fears 'that the Muslim children will be indoctrinated with anti-Western, anti-democratic, and anti-integrative ideas' (p. 215). Interestingly, as Driessen and Merry (2006) note, the majority of teachers in these schools have been non-Muslims.

Whereas Muslim groups were not perceived as a somewhat isolated 'pillar' (Maussen, 2012), this is not the case for another religious minority group. Orthodox reformed Christians, often related to the term 'Bible Belt', are still largely organised in a leftover 'pillar'. Although

recent voices point to a slow de-pillarisation of the Bible Belt (Rijke, 2019; Broeksteeg, 2021), many pillarized aspects are still present (Oomen, 2011, p. 184). Similar to the scrutiny Muslim groups encounter, a recent article in a right-conservative opinion magazine pointed to, in strong terms, the previous 'sixty years of incessant bullying' Christians would experience in the Netherlands (Özdil, 2021). Özdil especially pointed to the 'progressive' groups in the Netherlands, who, again in strong terms, 'ridicule, humiliate, denigrate or take away rights from Christians'. Overall, over the years, voices surrounding both Christian and Muslim groups point to increasing pressures on these religious minorities in the Dutch society.

Current situation concerning freedom of religious education in the Netherlands

In both historical and current discussions on the freedom of (religious) education in the Netherlands, the previously mentioned 23rd article is perceived as more dominant than, for example, the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), articles[3] 9 and 2 (Exalto and Bertram-Troost, 2019; Van Schoonhoven, 2021, p. 148[4]). The 23rd article entails three main 'associational freedoms' (Maussen, 2014, p. 12): freedom of direction (*vrijheid van richting*): the possibility to have an ideology, philosophy or doctrine as the foundation of the school; freedom of foundation (*vrijheid van oprichting*), the possibility to found a new school; and freedom of design (*vrijheid van inrichting*), the opportunity to use teaching material different from the material used by state schools.

This freedom of education provides parents with the freedom 'to choose the school they want their children to attend' (Vermeulen, 2004, p. 31, see also Dronkers, 1995). An important condition for this freedom of education has been monitoring and supervision by the government (National Council for Education, 2012; Maussen, 2014; Maussen and Bader, 2015). These freedoms have led to a range of state-funded non-governmental schools in the Netherlands, see Table 1.

[3] Article 9: 'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief, in worship, teaching, practice and observance.'
Article 2: 'No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.'

[4] Recently, Van Schoonhoven (2021) elaborated on these ECHR articles in relation to the 23rd article. Van Schoonhoven calls for widening the debate on these articles of the ECHR, and promotes the voices of parents to become more centralized in the debate on the freedom of education. She illustrates how in several cases (in Turkey, Norway, Denmark and Germany) these ECHR articles played a crucial role for both non-religious and religious parents, in light of religious and philosophical convictions expressed in education.

Table 1

Primary schools per denomination

School type	Number of schools
State school (‘Openbaar’)	2.080
Non-governmental/denominational (‘Bijzonder’)	4.627
Protestant-Christian	1.943
Roman-Catholic	2.023
Other non-governmental/denominational	661
Islamic	55
Christian orthodox reformed [‘Reformatorisch’]	177
Other	429
Total	6.707

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, ‘Educational institutions: size, type, ideological basis’ (*‘Onderwijsinstellingen; grootte, soort, levensbeschouwelijke grondslag’*). Accessed at: https://opendata.cbs.nl/statline/#/CBS/nl/dataset/03753/table?fromstatweb (October 2020).

However, these freedoms have been contested in Dutch society for years (see Vermeulen, 2006). Criticism has especially focused on the incompatibility of religious convictions in relation to a ‘strongly secularized, democratic society’ (Kennedy and Valenta, 2006, p. 338). Most prominently, critics focus on the centrality of children’s freedom of religion and conscience (National Council for Education, 2021). In this respect, as mentioned, Maussen and Vermeulen (2015) have observed a shifting away from collective religious freedoms for religious communities, towards a focus on individual rights, with ‘less room for far-going associational and collective freedoms for minority groups’ (Maussen and Vermeulen, 2015, p. 100). Voices for adaptations (Van Eijsden, 2021) of freedom of education indicate that freedom of education will continue to be contested. Recently, several societal occurrences illustrate how freedom of education is still heavily debated.

Already mentioned in the introductory chapter, in 2019 a debate about citizenship education sparked discussion, in particular concerning identity declarations to be signed by parents. In November 2020, Arie Slob, the Minister of Education, argued for the possibility by law for strict religious schools to have so-called ‘identity declarations’ (Poortvliet, 2020). In these identity declarations schools have set out their identity, in order to inform persons outside their inner circle and to provide pupils with a corresponding climate in parenting and education. Parents are asked to sign these declarations in order to have their children admitted in these schools.

However, some Christian orthodox reformed schools included their biblical vision on sexuality, pointing to the exclusivity of marriage between a man and a woman. A range of reactions focused on the expectation that these kinds of declarations would foster an unsafe climate for pupils with LGBT-identities in the school. An organisation representing the interests of LGBT-individuals filed an official complaint against the Minister of Education (DutchNews, 2020). A majority of parliament then voted against these identity declarations (NLTimes, 2020). In the weeks following the upheaval, the rationale of freedom of education became the centre of debates in Dutch media (Asscher, 2020; De Jong, 2020; NPO, 2020; Ten Hooven, 2020; Schreuders and Lassche, 2020). Recently, a majority of the Parliament voted for a ban on any form of admission declarations in schools.

In light of these and other occurrences, the National Council for Education published reports (2019, 2021) on the application of the 23rd article. In the National Council for Education's most recent report (2021), the authors especially recommend to change the primary focus on room for the schools' 'own vision and identities', to a primary focus on the 'common ground in education', defined by the 'values' of the 'democratic constitutional state' (p. 5). Interesting to note in this regard, according to Huijnk (2018), is that values of the democratic state and (conservative values in) Islam are often presented as 'incompatible' (p. 67) in the public debate. Huijnk et al. (2015) mention this can lead to feelings of alienation among Muslim minority groups. As Huijnk (2018) notes, this can be related to the 'mainstream society' in the Netherlands leaving little room for different opinions on themes such as male and female positions or homosexuality (p. 67). As a consequence, this can result in 'experiences of rejection and stigmatization from the Dutch society' (Huijnk et al., 2015, p. 18).

This study thus inhabits this particular Dutch context. In particular, two religious groups have been selected, which are expected to be involved in these tensions. Below these selected religious groups will be discussed further.

Religious groups approached in this study

For this study, interviews have been conducted with parents from two religious minority groups, in relation to the education of their children. The first religious group consists of Dutch-Turkish Muslims, attending Diyanet (*Türkiye Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs) mosques. The second religious group consists of Dutch orthodox reformed Christians attending the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland*), part of the so-called Bible Belt (Snel, 2007; Pons-de Wit et al., 2019). Parents from these two particular religious groups have been interviewed to provide insight into how the process of their identity negotiation unfolds in the context of education in the Netherlands.

Both of these groups are expected to represent a religious minority involved in processes related to 'minority rights', 'exceedingly tied to demands for loyalty to nation states and their core values' (Rissanen, 2020, p. 135) and the Dutch government's shift to individual rights (Maussen and Vermeulen, 2015). In particular, a specific community among the Christian groups in the Netherlands was chosen which is known for its conservative values. In the previously described societal occurrences this particular group is often involved. Among the Muslim groups in the Netherlands, a group has been selected which is especially known for both their conservative religious values and immigrant history. In the following section the background of these two religious groups is described in more detail.

Muslim parents: 'Diyanet mosques'

In this study, Muslim parents from Turkish-Dutch communities visiting Diyanet (*Türkiye Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs) mosques were contacted. In Diyanet mosques the tradition of the Sunni Islam is followed (see Sunier and Landman, 2011, pp. 88-109). In general, Muslims believe that there is only one God, Allah, Who revealed His will through the prophet Muhammed. Many Muslims view the Quran as 'the literal revelations of the word of Allah' (Huijnk, 2018, p. 25). Especially central in the Sunni Islam is the following of the 'hadith', living by rules presented by the prophet Muhammed.

Turkish-Dutch Muslims make up the largest immigrant community in the Netherlands (total of 397,000, as taken from Altinyelken and Sözeri, 2019) and are especially known for their isolationist tendencies (Sunier and Landman, 2015). The Turkish-Dutch Muslim community in the Netherlands is spread over three different Islamic organisations, of which the largest is the Diyanet (*Türkiye Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs), which encompasses 146 mosques, compared to 46 mosques of the Suleymaniye community and 45 mosques of the Milli Gorus community (Altinyelken and Sözeri, 2019). Taking the total number of mosques in the Netherlands into account, the Diyanet mosques make up one third of the total number of mosques in the Netherlands.

The Diyanet mosques are closely related to the Turkish government (Sunier and Landman, 2015). The Dutch government signed an agreement in 1983, which officially allowed Diyanet imams to be employed in the mosques in the Netherlands. Turkey was then seen as a more secular state, and Diyanet was thought to represent a more moderate version of Islam. Diyanet was therefore favoured by the Dutch government above the other Turkish Islamic organisations (Sunier and Landman, 2015; Altinyelken and Sözeri, 2019). Currently, the imams in the Diyanet mosques are still employed by the Turkish government, while the organisation of Diyanet also provides training for the imams working in the Netherlands (for more in-depth information on the Diyanet training of imams see Sözeri, Altinyelken and Volman, 2019; Altinyelken and Sözeri, 2019). Due to these relatively strong connections, concerns exist about the influence of the Turkish state through the Dutch Diyanet mosques, inhibiting the

immigration processes of Dutch-Turkish citizens (Sunier, van der Linden and van de Bovenkamp, 2016).

Several studies have been conducted in the Turkish-Dutch community in the Diyanet mosques, and of special relevance is a case study by Altinyelken and Sözeri (2019) on the mosque pedagogy of Diyanet mosques. Altinyelken and Sözeri emphasize the differing societal roles of mosques in Turkey and the Netherlands. While mosques in Turkey are focussed on religious activities in particular, in the Netherlands mosques serve as 'community centres'. In this regard, the Diyanet mosques in the Netherlands serve as teahouses, conference rooms, and more. Islamic lessons have an important place in the Diyanet mosques (Sözeri, 2021).

Christian parents: 'Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands'

In this study the Christian parents were selected from churches of the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland*), a Protestant denomination in the Calvinist tradition, which belong to the more conservative and orthodox churches of the previously mentioned Bible Belt (Snel, 2007; Oomen, 2011; Pons-de Wit et al., 2019). The Bible Belt is an orthodox Protestant community in the Netherlands, consisting of a total of around 300.000 individuals (Van der Knijff, 2019). In April 2021, the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands consisted of 23.784 members (RD, 2021), spread over 48 churches in the Netherlands, and one church in South-Africa (Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland, n.d.). Within the larger Bible Belt, this church denomination has been categorised as the 'extremely on the right' (Zwemer, 2007, p. 132). It can thus be seen as relatively more strict and conservative than the majority of churches in the religious community of the Bible Belt.

The Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland*), was founded in 1953, after a theological dispute had arisen within the relatively larger and still existing Netherlands Reformed Congregations (*Gereformeerde Gemeenten*). Originally, this church denomination was founded in 1907, in a merging of two reformed denominations. The aim was 'a church in the classical reformed sense', characterised by 'scriptural-experiential preaching' (Golverdingen, 2014, p. 13). This scriptural-experiential preaching, known for a strong connection between faith-experience and particular Bible-texts, is currently still a feature of these church denominations. In particular, Van der Knijff (2019) described this preaching as one in which 'the revelation of God and man's experience of faith are brought together' (p. 388).

In light of the freedom of education and pillarisation as previously described, faith-based schools are often established from within the churches within this community in the Bible Belt (Exalto and Bertram-Troost, 2019). Children from the participating Christian parents almost all attend such orthodox reformed schools (Ter Avest, Bertram-Troost and Miedema, 2015; Markus et al., 2018). In the array of Protestant schools in the Netherlands, these

orthodox Protestant, or orthodox reformed, schools have been categorised as 'segregated schools' (Wardekker and Miedema, 2001, p. 43, 44; Bertram-Troost et al., 2015, p. 204, 216). This is a small group of schools (2.5% of the total of schools in the Netherlands, as taken from Exalto and Bertram-Troost, 2019), especially known for a religious homogeneity among families, teachers, and churches, holding to an exclusive understanding of a religious truth. This truth 'can only be found in the God of the Bible and in His Son, Jesus Christ' (Wardekker and Miedema, 2001, p. 43). Compared to mainstream Protestant-Christian schools, the religious dimension is especially present in these schools (Dijkstra and Miedema, 2003; see also De Muynck, 2008).

Existent research among these orthodox reformed parents has focused on the parental school choice for religious schools in the Netherlands (Ter Avest, Bertram-Troost and Miedema, 2015). Apart from historical and theological research, other research in this field has focused on religious identity development of adolescents in the Netherlands (De Bruin-Wassinkmaat et al., 2019), on teachers in these schools (Markus et al., 2018, 2019), and on appointment policies of teachers in the orthodox reformed schools (Rijke, 2019).

Christian and Muslim parents: differences

An interesting difference between the Muslim parents and the Christian parents is the context in which they raise their children. For Christian parents this is their native context. Muslim parents, on the other hand, often have an interethnic background and therefore raise their children in an interethnic context (Huijnk et al., 2015; Maliepaard and Alba, 2015). The influence of the ethnic and also the national Turkish identity on processes related to religious identity might play a role in the process of religious identity negotiation of the Turkish-Dutch Muslim parents (Wiley, Fleischmann, Deaux and Verkuyten, 2019), and will therefore be taken into account.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study on religious identity processes of parents in educational contexts is conducted in the Netherlands where, historically, religion has played an important role in society and education. After an intensive 'school dispute', the freedom to establish a state-funded school with an institutional religious identity has existed since 1917. As a result, parents are currently free to choose the type of education they want their children to receive. The Dutch history of pillarisation has been an important development in the context of this freedom.

Nevertheless, over the years, processes of secularisation and immigration led to a de-pillarisation of the Dutch society. Currently, this specific Dutch freedom of education is being challenged and regularly debated in Dutch society. The Dutch government is observed to shift their focus from collective to individual rights and, thus, the rights of religious minorities are diminishing. Although this is observed in other western countries as well, this development

even more strongly manifests itself in the Netherlands. Therefore, in this particular educational and societal arena, this study aims to explore the religious identity processes of parents from two religious minority groups in educational contexts.

The two religious groups approached in this study consist of Dutch-Turkish Muslims, attending Diyanet (*Türkiye Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*, the Turkish Presidency of Religious Affairs) mosques, and Dutch orthodox reformed Christians, attending the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland*), part of the so-called 'Bible Belt' (Snel, 2007; Pons-de Wit et al., 2019). Both of these groups are especially expected to encounter the described dynamics surrounding religious minorities in the Netherlands. The next chapter will outline the theoretical and analytical framework for studying these dynamics among the religious parents in the context of education.

Chapter 3. Analytical framework. Religious identity and identity negotiation in identity theory

Introduction

In this chapter the analytical framework for studying the religious parents in the described contexts of education (chapter 2) is outlined. To this end the sociological and psychological perspective of identity theory is used. In this theory, the concept of identity is about '*understanding individuals* as situated in *social interaction* and *embedded within society'* (Stets and Serpe, 2013, p. 31, *emphasis* added). This study aims to study processes among religious parents within the social and societal context of education. It thus seeks to centralise the person's 'sense of self', applied to the religious dimension of that person's life, and expressed in the interaction between people in the context of education.

Identity theory thus aligns with the aim of this study, namely to *understand* religious parents (*individuals*) *as situated in* educational contexts (*social interaction* and *embedded within society)*. Therefore, compared to other theoretical models, identity theory is viewed as particularly relevant and useful as an analytical framework for this study. Other conceptualisations, for instance on religiosity (Stark and Glock, 1968), lack the particular sociological understanding of interaction between persons and its embeddedness in broader society, combined and associated with the very sense of self, and the religiosity of the person involved (Wimberley, 1989). In addition, as noted in the introductory chapter, this study is conducted in light of Taylor's (1994) descriptions of Mead's (1934) ideas on the recognition of an identity in dialogue with significant others. Identity theory is rooted in the ideas of Mead (Finch and Stryker, 2020; Stets et al., 2020) and thus conceptualises these notions of identity negotiation in interaction.

As a result, identity theory provides this study with a clear, well-researched framework and, compared to other possible theoretical frameworks, is thus viewed as analytically useful in this study on religious parents in the Dutch context of education. This chapter provides an overview of identity theory. First, a conceptualisation of a religious identity is given. Second, identity theory as an analytical framework in this study is introduced, and its theoretical aspects of are presented. Third, additional related theoretical perspectives on the role of parents' identity negotiation are presented, through a description of the microscopic identity processes that take place in the social interaction between parent and child. Finally, this study's approach to studying the context, in which parents' personal experiences in educational contexts reside, is outlined.

Conceptualising religious identity

The broad aim of this study is to understand the perceptions, the personal experiences, and the inner identity negotiations of religious parents, while confronted with frictions in educational contexts. Studying such a complex process embedded in society requires an approach where in-depth research can be conducted. In this study the concept of 'religious identity' is used to approach the deepest religious being, the 'religious self-*understanding* and self-*representation'* (Moulin, 2013, p. 32) of religious parents in relation to the education of their children. As this study especially seeks to research the parents' religious identities within a societal context such as education, identity theory is used as a theoretical framework. In the next section, this theory will be outlined in more detail. First, however, a conceptualisation of 'religious identity' will be given.

Peek (2005) argued that many studies have neglected the option of defining religion as identity and argued why religion is an important factor in the organisation of a person's identity. Peek offered four reasons why religion can be seen as a basis for identity in the American context: 1) religion has become important for immigrants to find a solid basis in a new environment; 2) religion plays an important function in society, as religious membership provides many (e.g. social, economic) benefits; 3) religion helps to ease tension, as it is often primary to other identities that cause tensions; 4) religion helps to maintain distinctiveness for individuals, both socially and personally. Using the approach of a religious identity is thus regarded as useful to examine the role of religion for the participating parents in this study.

Studying religious identities should, according to Ammerman (2003), be seen as 'analyzing a dynamic process' (p. 224, see also Hemming and Madge, 2011). According to Ammerman, this process must be seen as multiple, complex, and related to many contexts. Ammerman writes: 'Understanding religious identities will require that we listen for stories in all their dynamic complexity, situating them in the multiple relational and institutional contexts in which contemporary people live their lives' (2003, p. 224). In this regard, Moulin points to the importance of social interaction related to the 'multifaceted nature of postmodern societies' (2013, p. 43). He argues that religious identity construction is a constant process 'across conflicting systems of representation and recognition' (p. 43). Especially in light of research on Muslim identities, Moulin and Panjwani (2017) also argued for seeking to understand religious identities in their 'multiple and intersectional nature' (p. 520). As the concept of religious identity is widely used in the field of education and religion, these authors warn against the risk of 'obscurity of meaning' (p. 519).

An important characteristic of religious identity is the faith in a 'higher power' (Pargament, 2002, p. 240). This faith is grounded in a belief in the truth of your own religion (Kinnvall, 2004; Ysseldyk et al., 2010). For example, Christians believe that the person of Jesus must be a God; that is part of their ultimate truth. This belief in a truth is related to

‘transcendence’ (Werbner, 2010, p. 233), as the example of Jesus as being God shows. Seul (1999) describes transcendence as a relationship ‘to the nonhuman world; to the universe; and to God, or that which one considers ultimately real or true’ (p. 558). Werbner (2010) adds the emphasis on the ‘experience of transcendence and divinity’ (p. 233). It is this transcendence which makes a religious identity unique.

Often related to this concept of ‘transcendence’ is the term ‘difference’, an important aspect related to religious identities. Werbner (2010) writes about ‘difference’ in distinguishing between ‘the living and the dead’ (p. 251), ‘human and sacred worlds, person and God, sacred and profane’ (Werbner, 2010, p. 233). Werbner’s writing reflects the way other authors write about religion, often using terms of ‘difference’. For instance, Ecklund (2005) describes religious ‘identity accounts’ as ‘the discourse, motives, or moral boundaries that an individual develops to explain her place in the world and the distinction between others who are and who are not part of her religion’ (p. 137). Difference is sometimes defined as boundaries between different religious groups (Ysseldyk et al., 2010) and difference between religious groups and the secular world, which is sometimes even interpreted as ‘hostility toward the secular modern world’ (Herriot, 2007, p. 6, as cited in Ysseldyk et al., 2010, p. 64). This view of being ‘different’ is closely related to the perspective of parents with a religious minority identity towards a majoritarian identity. This is especially true as it is argued that liberal theories led to a ‘homogenizing’ of differences, due to which ‘many religious, cultural, and political worldviews often feel excluded from the public sphere’ (Alexander, 2019, p. 421).

Important to take into account is the notion that religion can be closely related to ethnicity (Yang and Ebaugh, 2001), especially among immigrant groups (Duderija, 2008). In this regard, Duderija (2008) notes that it is especially the move from a ‘religious majority to that of a religious minority context’ (p. 372) that can have significant impact. In this respect, it is argued that immigration processes strengthen religious identities, offering immigrant groups ‘important identity markers that help preserve individual self-awareness and cohesion in the group’ (Smith, 1978, in Duderija, 2008, p. 372). As a result, immigrant groups can increase their focus on their religious identity, rather than on their ethnic identity (Ebaugh and Chafetz, 2000), while others use religious institutions to retain ethnic boundaries (Yang and Ebaugh, 2001). Thus, in studying the complex processes of parents’ religious identity negotiation in this study, it is important not to lose sight of aspects of the ethnic and national identities of participants, even though this study focuses on the particular religious identities of participants.

Breakwell (1986/2015) argued that religious identities share the same psychological processes as other identities, for instance the processes in changes in identity content or the integration of new information into an existing identity. In that light, identity theory, used as analytical framework in this study, reflects the dynamic mechanisms of an identity in relation to social interactions. For example, while elaborating on this identity theory, Brenner (2019)

defined a religious identity as the 'individuals' views of themselves as religious persons and its meaning to them' (p. 75) and noted how this religious identity 'may be performed in relevant situations' (p. 76). In this study, the theoretical aspects of the identity theory are thus viewed as providing a helpful approach in studying the dynamics of parents' religious identities in social interactions. The following section will give an overview of identity theory and relevant theoretical aspects.

The use of identity theory as framework

Identity theory is a well-known theory developed over the last fifty years and is founded in structural symbolic interactionism (Kuhn, 1964; Mead, 1934, as cited by Stets and Serpe, 2013). A basic idea in structural symbolic interactionism is the view that society is produced by interaction and social action. People's self-conceptions develop when they think about themselves, as 'who and what they are' (Stets and Serpe, 2013, p. 32), and in relation to social processes. Structural symbolic interactionism laid the foundations for research into the relationship between identity and society, and for identity theory more specifically.

It is important to note that research using identity theory differs from research using the concept of identity (Burke and Stets, 2009, see also Stets and Serpe, 2013). Compared to other theories about identities, identity theory is particularly relevant and useful in this study, as it sociologically addresses both how people experience how they are perceived by others as well as how they act upon these perceptions. In addition, Burke and Stets (2009) argue that literature on the concept of identity lacks a clear definition of the term 'identity'. Similarly, in the field of religion and education, with regard to the concept of religious identity, Panjwani and Moulin (2017) argue that the wide use of the concept identity 'risks obscurity of meaning' (p. 519). In contrast, the high number of quantitative studies conducted on identity theory, testing hypotheses, offer strong empirical and theoretical underpinnings to the concepts in identity theory (Stets and Serpe, 2013). In addition, as Hopkins and Blackwood (2011) argue, theories on identity in social psychology, such as identity theory or social identity theory, have 'much to offer' (p. 215) in debates on identity in domains of politics. This current study therefore uses the theory as a framework in studying the religious identity negotiation of parents in the societal context of education.

In doing so, as further methodologically outlined in the next chapter, the studied reality is not seen as theory-determined, but as theory-laden (Fletcher, 2017). It is therefore important to note that the detailed outline of identity theory in this chapter especially serves to provide a complete insight into identity theory. A selection of the theoretical aspects is used in the analysis of the data. In going back and forth between theory and data (Morse et al. 2002; Timmermans and Tavory, 2012), additional theoretical aspects were added, seeking to offer the best explanatory hypotheses (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). These added theoretical

aspects are described in the final paragraphs of this chapter, under ‘Analytical focus on parents: ‘identity agents’’. In the presentation of the findings, the applied theoretical aspects are again described. In the following paragraphs, identity theory will be discussed in more detail.

Outline of identity theory

In this section I set out the relevant aspects of identity theory. I will start by giving a definition of identity, as provided in identity theory. Then, I will continue by describing the process of self-verification of a person’s identity and relate this to the perceptual control model, as theorised within identity theory. This model clarifies a person’s process of identity negotiation, in relation to both the influence of social interaction and the individual’s identity itself. In the next paragraph, I will describe useful theoretical aspects of identity theory, which influence a person’s identity negotiation.

First, I will consider the definition of an identity according to identity theory. Identity theory holds that an identity is ‘a set of meanings attached to *roles* individuals occupy in the social structure (role identities), *groups* they identify with and belong to (group identities), and *unique ways* in which they see themselves (person identities)’ (Burke and Stets, 2009, as cited by Stets and Serpe, 2013, p. 34). An identity is thus described as a ‘set of meanings’. Those meanings are defined by responses to a stimulus. For example: ‘Thinking about myself as a father (the stimulus) calls up in me a set of responses (set of meanings) (...), e.g., being strong, being caring, or being the breadwinner’ (Burke, 2007, p. 1–2). Those particular responses constitute a distinct identity.

A person has multiple identities, which are hierarchically stored (Stryker, 1980/2002). A specific identity is activated in a situation which is relevant to that identity. In the case of this study, if there is a situation within the educational context that can be linked to the religious identity of the parent, the religious identity of this parent will be activated. When an identity is activated, two possibilities emerge: self-verification or self-nonverification of an identity (Swann, 1987; Stets and Serpe, 2013). Self-verification is the process where ‘targets’ (the persons themselves) are seen by ‘perceivers’ (others around them) in the way they see themselves. According to Swann (1987), persons will always tend to verify their self-concept to achieve self-verification. As a result, individuals would have a natural tendency to gather persons around them who do verify their own self-concept. This means that the process of self-verification occurs often unconsciously and as part of a routine.

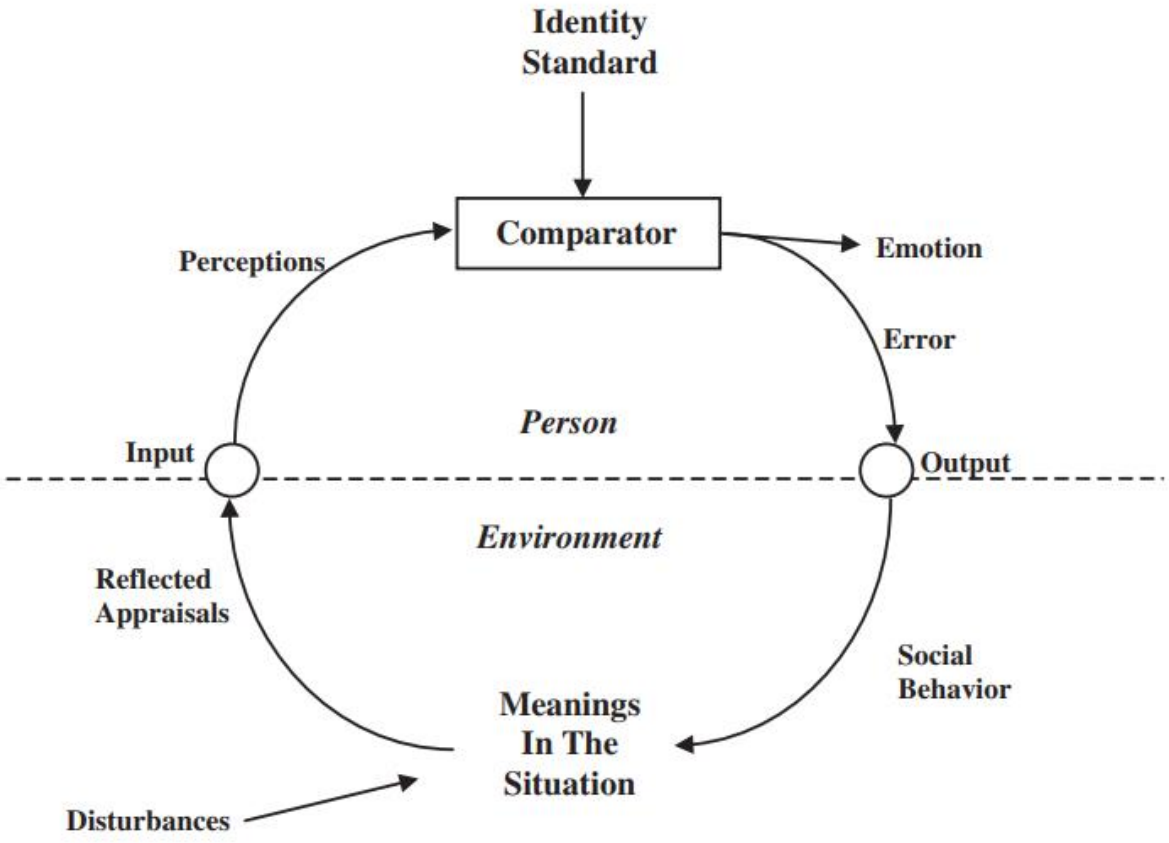
Stets and Serpe (2013) note how identity verification can be illustrated by a process as described in the perceptual control model (also known as identity control theory, Stets and Burke, 2005). The perceptual control model defines the ‘feedback loop’ of the activated identity (Stets and Serpe, 2013, p. 35). In this model, an identity is seen as a system that controls

perceptions (of particular meanings) relevant to the identity (Burke, 2007). The model consists of five components.

The first component is the identity standard. An identity standard is the individual's set of meanings about how this individual perceives himself or herself. The second component is the perceptual input. This is the input the individual receives from other persons in the situation in which the identity is activated. This input contains the meanings of how other persons perceive the 'self' in the situation. This perceptual input is part of the social interaction in the activated situation. The third component is the comparator. The comparator compares the meanings in the identity standard with the meanings the person receives from others (the perceptual input). The fourth component is emotion. Emotion is the outcome of the comparator. Emotions are positive when the meanings from the identity standard and the meanings from the perceptual input correspond. Emotions are negative when the meanings in the individual standard and the meanings in the perceptual input do not correspond. Negative emotions are, for example, sadness or anger (Burke, 2006; Stets and Burke, 2014). The fifth component is output in the form of the person's behaviour within the situation.

Figure 1

Identity model, also known as perceptual control model or identity control theory



Note. This model is taken from Stets and Burke (2005, p. 46).

Important to note is that, according to identity theory, it is not the perceptual input but rather the meanings in the identity standard that are leading for a persons' behaviour (Burke and Stets, 2009; Stets and Serpe, 2013). In this, the aim is to let the perceptual input correspond with the identity. If there is no correspondence between the identity standard and the perceptual input, the person will then try to change the perceptual input. Changing the situation in order to change the perceptual input from others should lead to a match between the perceptual input and the identity standard (identity verification). Thus, the output (the person's behaviour) does not only aim to change the situation itself, but first of all aims to change the meanings of others towards the person's identity. In other words, according to identity theory, the verification of someone's identity standard meanings is prioritised, and this prioritisation forms the main objective of the behaviour.

Useful theoretical concepts of identity theory

Processes as identified in identity theory can shed light on the dynamic process (Ammerman, 2003) of a person with a religious identity in interaction with broader society. Particular aspects of identity theory can serve the interpretation of interview data with religious parents. In the following paragraphs these theoretical aspects will be outlined.

Enactment of identity: identity hierarchy, identity salience and identity prominence

A basic assumption in identity theory is that a person has multiple identities (Finch and Stryker, 2020), which are stored in a hierarchy. Whether a person enacts an identity or not depends on the hierarchical position of that identity (Stryker, 1980/2002). Both the probability of a person enacting the identity (identity salience), and the value a person places on the identity (identity prominence) are related to this identity hierarchy. In this regard, the position of the religious identity in the identity hierarchy and its expression show its receptivity to change (Peek, 2005). Those concepts will now be further outlined to give insight into the relevance of these concepts for this study.

First, identity salience is about the probability that one will enact the identity across situations. Brenner (2019) looked at religious identities and gave an example of the enactment of a religious identity in a religious situation (on a Sunday, in church, interacting with a priest), compared to a non-religious situation (on a Wednesday choosing to go to a Bible study group or to do something else). The higher the identity salience, the higher the probability that the religious person will enact a religious identity in a non-religious situation as well (go to the Bible study on Wednesday). The arrangement of identities (higher or lower) in the identity hierarchy determines the identity salience. Sometimes more identities are highly salient and identities need to 'compete' with other identities. Brenner describes this as 'competition due to other high salient identities' (2019, p. 80). As Serpe, Stryker and Powell (2020) stress, identity salience does not determine the enactment of the identity, but only indicates the probability of

enactment: ‘individuals choose to enact’, in which the enactment of the identity is ‘an agentic aspect of social life’ (p. 14). Thus, persons can ‘seek out opportunities to enact’ the identity (p. 14).

Second, identity prominence is about the emotional value that someone connects to an identity, compared to other identities. According to Brenner (2019), the concepts ‘identity importance’ (Marsh, 1986; Ervin and Stryker, 2001, as both cited by Brenner, 2019) and ‘psychological centrality’ (Rosenberg, 1979, as cited by Brenner, 2019) are synonyms of identity prominence. All are about the persons’ ‘emotional connection’ to a particular kind of identity (Brenner, 2019, p. 78). Brenner (2019) adds that these two concepts, identity salience and identity prominence, are connected: high scores on identity salience will often accompany high scores on identity prominence. For instance, research has supported the hypothesis that identity prominence can cause identity salience (Brenner, Serpe and Stryker, 2014, as cited by Brenner, 2019), although this causality is not generalisable. Here, Brenner (2011, as cited by Brenner, 2019) uses the example of religious identity among Americans who have a high identity prominence but a low identity salience: many Americans often do not show their religious identity. The opposite can also be true, as Brenner argues (Asencio and Burke, 2011, as cited by Brenner, 2019) that a highly salient identity (being a prisoner) can be actively disvalued, which means that it is low on identity prominence.

In this study, when interpreting interview data, especially the concept of identity prominence is used, that is, the emotional value that someone attaches to an identity. Identity salience will only be studied by exploring whether or not parents ‘choose to enact’ (Serpe, Stryker and Powell, 2020, p. 14) their religious identities, which then will be related to the parents’ disclosure of their identities (Ragins, 2008, see under ‘Disclosing a religious identity’).

Types of identity

As mentioned before, identity theory defines ‘three bases’ for an identity: group identity, role identity, and person identity. Group identity is location specific; it is bound to certain situations and unrelated to new content (Stets and Serpe, 2013). A person identity, however, is ‘salient across situations and contexts’ and will therefore also be activated in new situations and when new identity threats appear (Burke, 2004, p. 10). If a person’s religious identity mainly constitutes being a group-member (group identity), and is less a person identity (personally involved), it could be expected that the behavioural action differs. For example, Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2014) found that people’s response to appeals for protests from within a religious group, for example, will not be strong if the identity is mainly a group identity, rather than a person identity.

Thus, in my study, a religious identity experienced and expressed as a person identity, rather than a group identity, could provide an explanation as to why parents undertake action.

The specific type of identity can provide insight into the parents' actions to change a situation in contexts of frictions in the educational environment of their children.

Identity content and identity structure

An identity is not only a structure of subjective experiences ('the way individuals subjectively experience their identity', in Hardy, Nadal and Schwartz, 2017, p. 96), but it also involves content. Seeing religion as part of an identity helps to relate the persons' subjective experiences (the identity structure) to the issues related to religion (the identity content) (Hardy et al., 2017). Hardy et al. (2017) argued that religion as identity content motivates the person to become that kind of person an individual wants to be. A definition of a religious identity only in terms of identity structure would lack the content of the 'set of meanings' constituting a religious identity. It would accentuate the importance of subjective and social experiences over the content of the religious issues.

Therefore, studying a religious identity as inclusive of 'identity content' helps to value the importance of the contents of religion to one's identity, in researching religion in educational environments. The religious convictions of parents are thus to play an important role in this research. In addition, the use of identity theory is regarded as especially helpful as it takes both into account social processes as well as the individual's 'set of meanings' (what it 'means to be religious'), stored in the identity standard.

Disclosing a religious identity

When it comes to the social process of parents with a religious identity within the school environment, it is first of all important to investigate whether parents *disclose* their religious identity at all within these educational environments. The disclosure of religious identities itself is important to take into account, especially as both the disclosure and the hiding of a stigmatised identity is related to a negative emotional impact (Ragins, 2008; Berkley et al., 2019). Several authors mention religious identity as a potentially stigmatised identity (Ragins, 2008, p. 194, 195; Brenner, 2019). The extent to which parents disclose their religious identity in the social process within the school environment is thus important to take into consideration. Therefore, this study includes the process of disclosing (enacting) or hiding a religious identity, making use of theoretical concepts of identity disclosure as developed by Ragins (2008).

According to Ragins (2008), disclosing an identity is determined by three antecedents: First, the process of self-verification and the centrality of an identity (the more central or prominent an identity is to someone, the more willing that person is to self-verify their own identity). Secondly, the possible consequences of disclosing an identity, and, finally, in terms of these consequences, the environmental support for the disclosure of that particular identity. According to Ragins (2008), the processes of identity disclosure and identity integration are both processes on a continuum, with integration on one side and non-integration on the other

side. Somewhere in this grey area in-between, the individual chooses to stop integrating the identity or to continue integrating. These theoretical concepts are used in order to better understand parents in educational contexts, and thus serve the theoretical framework in the analysis of the interview data.

Compartmentalising identities

Individuals have the possibility to 'compartmentalise' different identities in different contexts (Manning, 1999). Manning found that women who are both feminist and conservative religious compartmentalise their religious and work identities. In other words, they separate their religion from their work life. This means that at their work they are feminists, but in religious environments the women are conservative religious. In this context Manning (1999) writes about a separation of group structure on one side and the activities and behaviour on the other side. Ecklund (2005) came to the same conclusion when studying women's Catholic and feminist identities.

In light of the current study, this implies that whether or not parents seek to verify their religious identities in their children's school setting will not only depend on concepts related to their identity hierarchy, or to the disclosure of their religious identity, but can also be related to the separation of different identities. Parents who separate their religion from the rest of their life fields (for example, from the education of their children), would possibly have fewer problems with contexts of friction related to their religion in educational settings.

Analytical focus on parents: 'identity agents'

In the paragraphs above, 'religious identity' was conceptualised and central theoretical aspects of identity theory were outlined. The following final paragraphs will focus on theoretical approaches, particularly in relation to the religious identity negotiation of the parents in the contexts of education. These theoretical aspects were added to this research in the going back and forth between theory and data (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012) in the data analysis (see chapter 4). These theoretical aspects are taken out of the field of identity formation and development, and have shown to be useful in the analysis of the interview data of parents' religious identity negotiation processes.

Identity processes of parents in children's identity development

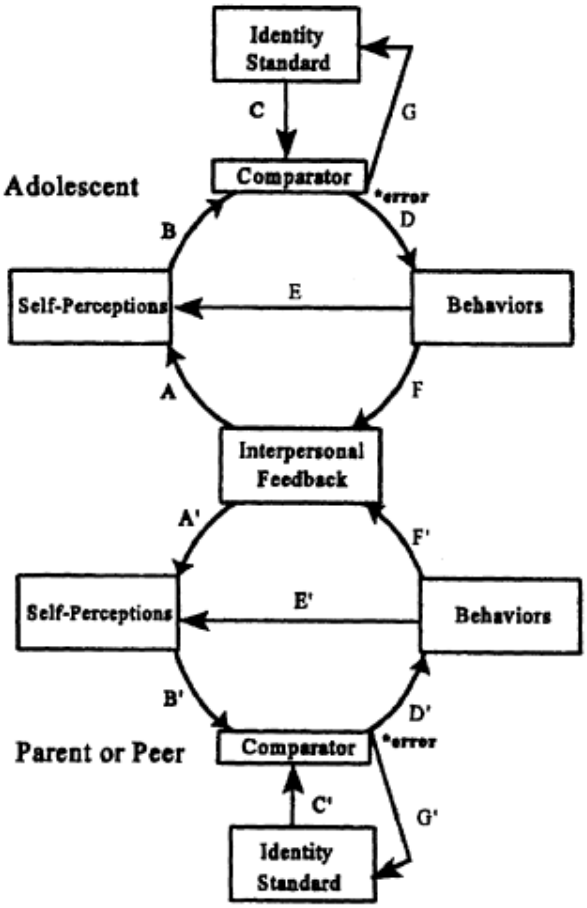
Many studies on religious identity have focused specifically on the formation and development of the religious identities of children or adolescents (Moulin, 2013; Visser-Vogel, 2015; Phalet, Fleisschman and Hillekens, 2018). These studies reside in the field of identity formation and development of adolescents (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966, 1980; Grotevant, 1987), and the religious identity development of adolescents in particular (Visser-Vogel, 2015; Moulin, 2013; De Bruin-Wassinkmaat, 2021). Related to this field, a less comprehensive strand of studies has taken the particular role of identity processes of parents in children's religious identity

development into account (Kerpelman, Pittman and Lamke, 1997; Schachter and Ventura, 2008), where some have related these theories to theoretical aspects of identity theory.

In the processes of interaction between the parents' identity and the child's identity formation, Kerpelman, Pittman and Lamke (1997) proposed to use the identity control theory (see Figure 1 and Figure 2) as a framework. In doing so, Kerpelman et al. (1997) approached the process of the child's identity development in more detail, using the term 'microprocesses' (p. 338). Kerpelman et al. (1997) point to the interactional processes of identities, which guide the child's identity development. They have conceptualised these microprocesses in a theoretical model of 'reciprocal identity processes' (p. 337). These reciprocal identity processes involve both identity processes, or identity systems, of the parent and the child (see Figure 2, reflecting an extension of the Identity Control Theory or Perceptual Control Model by Stets and Serpe, 2013, as previously shown in Figure 1). These microprocesses involve the interaction between parent and child.

Figure 2

Reciprocal identity control processes



Note. This model is taken from Kerpelman, Pittman and Lamke (1997, p. 339).

Notably, Kerpelman et al. (1997) were especially interested in the processes in which a parent responds to an adolescent's identity exploration processes. They argue that, in light of these exploration processes, an adolescent can experience possible identity non-verifications. These can lead to 'identity disruptions' (p. 338), which in turn can lead to interpersonal conflict. However, more generally, Kerpelman et al. (1997) note that both the child and the parent negotiate their own identities in the parent-child relationship. In this, these processes are intertwined, and thus both identities are reciprocally influenced. Within the scope of this study this model shows how, in line with Kerpelman et al.'s model (1997), parents negotiate their identity standards in response to their child's identity negotiation processes, whilst children negotiate their identity standards in response to their parents' identity negotiation processes.

Schachter and Ventura (2008) elaborated upon the work of Kerpelman et al. (1997), and approached parents as 'identity agents' in the identity development of their children. Based on this, Schachter and Ventura (2008) formulated six components comprising the parents' 'identity agency' (p. 457): 1) identity concern (the parents' concern for the identity of the child, thus not a specific identity), 2) goals (the parents' favoured specific identity content of the child), 3) praxis (practices to reach the goals), 4) assessment (assessing both child and the social context, to better act as a mediator between the context and the child), 5) implicit theory (owning implicit theories on the identity formation that guide the praxis), and 6) reflexivity (reflecting on both goals and praxis, to assess and refine these). As Schachter and Ventura (2008) argue, these components offer insight into the identity processes on a 'micro-system level' (citing Kerpelman et al., 1997, in Schachter and Ventura, 2008, p. 454) in the parent-child relationship.

Kerpelman et al. (1997) have called for broadening these reciprocal identity processes as occurring not only in the parent-child relationship, but also in relationships with peers, siblings and close others. Later, Harrell-Levy and Kerpelman (2010) further extended this theorisation, by adding the teacher as an identity agent in the identity processes. In line with these studies, in this current study both reciprocal identity control processes in the parent-child relationship and in the teacher-child relationship are taken into account (chapter 8).

Contextual view on identities: the micro and macro contexts

In light of taking the context of identity processes into account, the ideas of Adams and Marshall (1996) and Schachter and Ventura (2008) are viewed as facilitating the analysis of the personal experiences of the religious parents. These theories are again taken from the field of identity development. In contrast to other fields in which contextual approaches were

conceptualised (cf. Skeie et al., 2013; Fancourt and Ipgrave, 2020, or within identity theory[5]: Stets, Serpe and Hunt, 2005), in the studies of Adams and Marshall (1996) and Schachter and Ventura (2008) parents are particularly viewed as identity agents (Schachter and Ventura, 2008) and part of the contextual influence (Adams and Marshall, 1996) in their children's religious identity development. Additionally, in these specific studies (as both cited by Koepke and Denissen, 2012) parents are seen as 'mediators between contexts' (Koepke and Denissen, 2012, p. 75). In the following paragraphs, these ideas will be presented, and they will be more extensively described in chapter 6.

Adams and Marshall (1996) argued for an interpretation of identities from a person-in-context perspective, and distinguished between a macro and a micro context. They state that the macro context constitutes the 'cultural/historical/economic/religious dimensions of society', while the micro context constitutes the 'day-to-day social interactions that occur between people' (Adams and Marshall, 1996, p. 439). In this respect, Adams and Marshall describe the interplay between influences arising from both contexts. They present resulting effects of such interplay on the 'individuality' of an adolescent in the process of identity formation.

Similarly, Schachter and Ventura (2008) distinguished studies in identity research 'on a micro-system level' (p. 454), involving the social processes in families, and identity research involving 'macro-sociological, historical, and cultural processes', such as 'postmodern social structures and concomitant modes of thought' (p. 454). In this, Schachter and Ventura (2008) elaborated on the role of parents as agents. Here, they defined the actions ('praxis', p. 470) of the parents in linking the micro and macro contexts. For instance, parents alter their own social networks to form 'boundaries' for their children's identity formation, or they practise a 'continuous open dialogue' with their children to protect them from 'possible harmful influences' from the macro context (p. 470).

Experiences that come up in the interview data will thus be analysed using the ideas of Adams and Marshall (1996) and Schachter and Ventura (2008) on distinguishing between the micro and macro context as a framework to analyse the personal experiences of religious parents. A further adapted categorisation will be outlined in chapter 6. Based on the current

[5] It is important to mention the social structures underlying identity theory, and worked out by Stets, Serpe and Hunt (2005). These social structures are formulated as concerned with boundaries defining social relationships. Here, the 'large social structures' are defined as gender, age and social economic status, and the 'intermediate social structures' as schools and neighbourhoods. However, as the personal experiences of the religious parents are often shown to be deeply related to ideological, political, and religious issues, these distinctions by Stets, Serpe and Hunt (2005) were viewed as less facilitating in the data analysis of the context of identity processes.

and previous chapters, the research questions of this study are described in the following paragraph.

Research questions

In light of the aim of this study, and the subsequent described theoretical aspects above, the following research questions were formulated:

Question 1. How are the religious identity standards described and experienced by the religious parents?

Question 2: What are the personal experiences of religious parents (Christian, Muslim) in educational situations in which parents perceive a lack of self-verification of their religious identities?

Question 3: How do parents negotiate their religious identities in situations as explored under research question 2, and what is the influence on the social interaction in the educational environment?

Question 4: Is there any difference (regarding the results on question 1, 2 and 3) between the two religious groups of parents (Christian, Muslim)?

In seeking to answer these research questions, interview data from the parents of the two selected religious groups (as described in chapter 2) are collected. The analysis of these data consists of a combination of both deductive and inductive analysis, so-called abductive analysis (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). This implies that the data are analysed both inductively, as coming up from the data, and deductively, using theoretical aspects. This aspect is developed further in the next chapter, but mentioned here to clarify the approach taken on answering the research questions.

Question 1: *How are the religious identity standards described and experienced by the religious parents?*

This first question focuses on the parents' descriptions of their personal religious identity standards. As this research project aims to study the religious parents' processes of identity negotiation in educational contexts, it is first of all important to understand how participants themselves define their own identity meanings and how they formulate their religious identities (Stets and Serpe, 2013). Therefore, this question seeks to explore parents' own descriptions of their religious identities. In addition to an inductive approach, theoretical aspects as the 'identity bases', including the role, person, and group identity (Burke, 2007; Burke and Stets, 2009; Stets and Serpe, 2013; Savage et al., 2017), identity hierarchy, identity prominence

(Brenner, 2019) and identity concern (Schachter and Ventura, 2008) are used to interpret the data. The findings on this first question are presented in chapter 5.

Question 2: *What are the personal experiences of religious parents (Christian, Muslim) in educational situations in which parents perceive a lack of self-verification of their religious identities?*

This second question explores the personal experiences of religious parents in educational situations, in which possible frictions are located. Theoretically, these situations are understood in light of parents experiencing a lack of correspondence between meanings in their identity standard and meanings in the situation (Burke, 2007; Sets and Serpe, 2013). In the analysis of the interview data and presentation of the findings, the 'lack of self-verification' (or 'identity non-verification') is understood in a broad sense, pointing to situations in which parents experience a friction with their religious identity in relation to interactions in the educational context of their children. In locating the frictions in parents' experiences, the ideas of Adams and Marshall (1996) and Schachter and Ventura (2008) (as both cited by Koepke and Denissen, 2012) on distinguishing the micro and macro context, are used as a framework. These ideas are applied and adapted to locating parents' experiences in 'discrepancies' between meanings in the macro context and the meanings in the micro context, and 'discrepancies' within the micro context. The findings on this second question are presented in chapter 6.

Question 3: *How do parents negotiate their religious identities in situations as explored under research question 2, and what is the influence on the social interaction in the educational environment?*

This third question explores how parents negotiate their religious identities in situations such as defined under research question 2. In addition, it explores the influence of parents' religious identity negotiation on social interaction in the educational environment. In addition to the inductive analysis of the data, theoretical concepts of identity theory are used, such as identity (non-)verification (Swann, 1987; Stets and Serpe, 2013), identity prominence (Brenner, 2019), identity disclosure (Ragins, 2008), additional theoretical aspects on identity assimilation and accommodation (Bosma and Kunnen, 2001), and reciprocal identity processes (Kerpelman et al., 1997). The findings on this third question are presented in chapters 7 and 8.

Question 4: *Is there any difference (regarding the results on question 1, 2 and 3) between the two religious groups of parents (Christian, Muslim)?*

Although the low number of participants does not allow for a comparison of both groups, this fourth question aims to explore emerging differences and similarities in the data as collected

from the parents of the two religious groups. This is particularly relevant as this study focuses on finding patterns in religious identity negotiation among 'religious parents' (see chapter 1). The findings on this final question are conveyed throughout the chapters of results.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the theoretical framework for analysing the interview data with religious parents is presented. The psychological and sociological perspectives of the theoretical aspects of identity theory align with the aim of this study, namely to understand religious parents (*identities of individuals*) in educational contexts (*social interaction* and *embedded within society).* These are therefore seen as useful in serving as the analytical framework in this study. These theoretical concepts reflect the view of a religious identity as a dynamic process, rather than a fixed notion (Ammerman, 2003; Moulin, 2013). The theoretical aspects of identity theory, and identity salience, identity prominence, and the disclosure of an identity, in particular, serve to gain a better understanding of religious parents' perceptions, experiences and thinking processes in educational contexts.

Furthermore, theoretical approaches such as reciprocal identity processes and approaches for studying identities in the broader context, serve the analytical framework on religious parents in societal educational contexts. In both of the latter approaches parents are viewed as 'identity agents' or 'mediators' in their children's identity development. This offers insight into parents' actions surrounding their children's religious identity development and negotiation in contexts of education, and can serve the analytical understanding of interview data. Overall, the sociological and psychological perspective of identity theory and related theoretical concepts tie in with the aim of this study. The next chapter will provide an overview of the methodology underpinning this research.

Chapter 4. Methodology

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapters, this study explores the religious identity negotiations of Muslim and Christian parents. The aim is to provide explanations for events in which these parents experience friction in relation to their religious identities in educational contexts. As a framework for the analysis, theoretical aspects of identity theory are used as set out in the previous chapter.

In this chapter, the philosophical and methodological foundations of this research will be outlined, and the subsequent methods for seeking answers on the research questions will be described. The research questions as already formulated in the previous chapters are:

Question 1. How are the religious identity standards described and experienced by the religious parents?

Question 2: What are the personal experiences of religious parents (Christian, Muslim) in educational situations in which parents perceive a lack of self-verification of their religious identities?

Question 3: How do parents negotiate their religious identities in situations as explored under research question 2, and what is the influence on the social interaction in the educational environment?

Question 4: Is there any difference (regarding the results on question 1, 2 and 3) between the two religious groups of parents (Christian, Muslim)?

To find answers to these questions, it is first of all important to define what exactly is researched in this study (ontology) and how this can be known (epistemology). This chapter presents this ontological and epistemological basis, which belongs to the philosophy of critical realism. These underpinnings form the foundation from which answers to the research questions are sought.

This chapter discusses how these foundations determined the method of research, which consists of semi-standardised interviews, and the analysis of these interviews, which consists of abductive data analysis. The specific methodological procedures are described and research portraits of the interviewed religious parents are given. Importantly, the ethical considerations surrounding the conduction of the study are outlined. Finally, the detailed steps of the data analysis are described. In doing so, I aim to give insight into the way I have explored the processes of religious identity negotiation of the religious parents, and how I have arrived at the findings as presented in chapters 5–8.

Research philosophy

In this section I will start to formulate an answer to the first question, which concerns ontology: what do I think reality constitutes and what is researched in this study. Then, I will address the second question, namely how reality, and that which I am exploring in this research, can be known. I will end this section by outlining the positions of the theories in this study, taking the ontological and epistemological positions into account.

Ontological position

Just as Plato saw the ultimate principle of being and knowledge in the Idea of the Good, Augustine saw the ultimate principle of knowledge and being in God (Taylor, 1989, p. 128). In Augustine's view, God is 'primarily the basic support and underlying principle of our knowing activity' (Taylor, 1989, p. 129), as He gives 'light to see'[6] (Wijdeveld, 1983: *De Civitate Dei,* XI.27). In this view, reality is thus seen as going beyond human thinking and perception, and humanity is part of this reality. From this perspective on reality, this study attempts to explain the identity processes and related events, concerning religious parents and education in Dutch society, as taking place within this broader, created reality by a trinitarian God[7] (Wright, 2003, 2012). Hence, the ontological perspective underpinning this study can be positioned within the philosophy of science of critical realism (Wright, 2012; Archer, 2016).

Within critical realism, reality is seen as existing independently from human knowledge and discourse. The philosophy of science of critical realism can be summarised using three core philosophical principles (Wright, 2012): ontological realism ('reality is independent of human perception'), epistemic relativism ('knowledge of reality is limited'), and judgmental rationality ('judging between truth claims is possible, but judging always remains open to adjudication') (pp. 11-15). With regard to this current study, the researcher's 'empirical' reality is seen as approximating, rather than determining, the 'actual' and 'real' reality (Fletcher, 2017, p. 183) of the parents in their religious identity negotiation processes.

Taking the identities of individual persons as the objects of my study, my ontological perspective corresponds with the critical realists' view of the study of individual persons, as formulated by Wright (2012): 'It is not merely that we *perceive* individual persons as biological, social and moral beings; rather they are, in themselves, *intrinsically* and *simultaneously*

[6] See also the NIV Bible, Psalms 36 verse 10: 'For with You is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.'

[7] Wright (2012) uses the example of a sunset: 'the ontological reality of a beautiful sunset imposes itself on human observers, rather than human observers forcing the category 'beauty' onto the event in an expression of subjective taste (…)' (p. 12). In this example, individuals attach a meaning ('beauty') to the situation of the sunset. Here, reality does not 'arise' in the communication processes of human observers, but it is already given.

biological, social and moral' (p. 12). As ontology is viewed as always preceding epistemology, resonating the principle of 'ontological realism', the individuals studied in this research are viewed as part of a broader reality, and as existing in themselves (Archer, 2016; Wright, 2012).

Epistemological position

Following the ontological basis of this study, the second question concerns how reality, and the processes of religious identity negotiation in particular, can be known. Considering different views on the concept of identity, the study of identity negotiation of the parents in this thesis is seen as a way of knowing this reality, while acknowledging that the knowledge of this reality will always be limited compared to what it actually is (Wright, 2012). Several authors who study religious identities have described it as 'a dynamic process' (Ammerman, 2003, p. 224). According to Ammerman, this process must be seen as multiple, complex, and related to many contexts. Ammerman writes: 'Understanding religious identities will require that we listen for stories in all their dynamic complexity, situating them in the multiple relational and institutional contexts in which contemporary people live their lives' (2003, p. 224).

Accordingly, Moulin pointed to the importance of social interaction related to the 'multifaceted nature of postmodern societies' (2013, p. 43). He argues that religious identity construction is a constant process 'across conflicting systems of representation and recognition' (p. 43). These thoughts on the complexity of religious identity processes point to the complexity of an identity in itself. For instance, Woudenberg (2000) stated that an identity is foremost a mystery, unrelated to one's own remembering, physics and even to one's own self-image. In essence, according to Woudenberg, a person cannot discover the own identity. How then study religious identity negotiation?

Considering these different views on the concept of identity, it is important to emphasise that a complex process as 'identity negotiation' should not be determined by such theoretical concepts. Rather, the concept of identity, as conceptualised in identity theory, is seen as *helpful* in approaching the religious thinking and being of the religious participants. It is viewed as facilitating the understanding of the religious parents, as the concept of identity is about self-understanding and self-representation, while the possible fallibility and incorrectness (Bhaskar, 1975) and limitations in determining what it actually is (Wright, 2012) are acknowledged.

In addition, according to critical realism, generative mechanisms (Bhaskar, 1975, in Bryman, 2016) that produce the social phenomena cannot be directly observed. These can only be known by their observable effects, implying that reality (the 'world') can be accessed, but not directly. It is accessed only while mediated by observing effects. This is reflected in this study, as it is acknowledged that a religious identity must be studied by its observing effects, which produce the social phenomena. Observable effects are seen as products of deeper generative mechanisms. This study will seek for the generative mechanisms that produce the

social phenomena in the social events in which the religious parents are involved, by studying its observable effects.

Position of theories

Recognising the epistemological limitations towards reality described above, this study aims to explain events concerning religious parents and education in Dutch society (chapter 2), by exploring their processes of religious identity negotiation. For this purpose, theoretical concepts will be used that are mainly taken from identity theory (chapter 3). This implies a position of explanatory hypotheses for these theories (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). From this position, the reality within which the events occur is not viewed as theory-determined, but rather as theory-laden (Fletcher, 2017). In other words, some theories get closer to reality than others. Therefore, the use of theories is seen as helpful to 'get closer to reality', that is, to 'identify causal mechanisms' (Fletcher, 2017, p. 182) or the previously mentioned generative mechanisms. As such, the theories are also seen as helpful in providing 'sociologically interesting ways' (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012, p. 176) to approach religious processes and related events and to facilitate a 'deeper analysis' of the data (Fletcher, 2017, p. 184). From this perspective on the theories, the theoretical concepts of identity theory were selected to approach the interplay between religious thinking and being of religious parents, society, and interactions. The historical and social position of the researcher played a crucial role in the selection of these theoretical concepts, which I elaborate on further in the 'Epilogue' of this study.

The selection of useful theories and views on identity in this study implies that theories can be taken from a diversity of fields, with different ontological bases. In these theories, (the construction of) reality can possibly be viewed differently than the position taken in this study. I will explain this using identity theory's ontological perspective included in this study, which is symbolic interactionism, in order to provide insight into the way such difference is dealt with. In symbolic interactionism reality is seen as actively created by individuals, as they attach meanings to situations (Blumer, 1969). Epistemology then precedes ontology. This is a different ontological perspective from the one taken in my study. In line with the philosophy of critical realism, I view ontology as preceding epistemology. In other words, I view reality as preceding human knowing.

These diverse ontological positions have different consequences for the way an identity is viewed in a research study. For instance, the 'conception of a substantive soul' (Mead, 1934, p. 1) was abandoned by one of the founding philosophers of symbolic interactionism, George Herbert Mead (1934). Instead, he focused on studying the individual from 'within the field of his experience' (p. 1). The self, then, arises out of communication processes. According to Mead (1934), the behaviour of an individual can thus only be studied in light of these communication processes and the larger social group. In contrast to Mead's (1934)

perspective, in critical realism, generative mechanisms that produce social phenomena are acknowledged. These cannot be observed directly, but can only be known by their observable effects (Bhaskar, 1975, in Bryman, 2016). Abandoning the 'conception of a substantive soul' as Mead (1934, p. 1) maintained, would not be necessary. In critical realism, unobservable hypothetical entities are acknowledged, as no theory determines reality. Instead, theory is seen as facilitating an understanding of reality.

This latter position is reflected in this study, as possible 'generative mechanisms' in the parents' religious identity negotiation will be researched by their observable effects in qualitative interviews with the participants, as outlined further in the next paragraphs. Identity theory and related theoretical concepts will be used as facilitating an understanding of the processes in the parents' religious identity negotiation or, in other words, to search for causal mechanisms that underlie the social phenomena. From this perspective, the theoretical concepts, though from different ontological bases, are viewed to be valuable in providing a framework that cultivates a 'deeper analysis' (Fletcher, 2017, p. 184) of the data. Thereby theories are seen to facilitate the way of knowing reality (Wright, 2012), to understand the parents' religious thinking processes, by finding explanations for the social events in which they are involved.

Research methodology

The previous section delineated the ontological and epistemological perspectives of this study, as positioned within the philosophy of critical realism. In doing so, this study's perspective on the position of theory in this research was described as well. This section presents the research methodology by which knowledge about the religious identity negotiation processes are gained and how this aligns with and follows from the taken perspective of critical realism. Examples of studies with a comparable approach in methodology and identity theory are discussed.

In light of the central idea in critical realism that ontology precedes epistemology, human knowledge of reality is limited compared to what reality actually is (Wright, 2012). In the context of this study, any perceived reality by the researcher who studies the parents' religious identity processes, therefore, only approximates the reality of the parents. In line with this so-called 'epistemic relativism', researchers should 'adapt the epistemic tools in response to the objective demands of reality', instead of bringing reality 'into conformity with their epistemic tools' (Wright, 2012, p. 15). From this view, the purpose of a study determines the method to be used.

As discussed previously, the aim of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the processes of religious parents' religious identity negotiation, in order to explain the social events that involve their religious identities. For the purposes of deepening the understanding of the religious parents' identity processes and seeking causal explanations for social events,

the most appropriate methods are considered to be qualitative methods (Coyle and Murtagh, 2012). Furthermore, to understand 'social objects' and its processes (Parr, 2015, p. 196), critical realists argue for 'intensive research', associated with 'causal explanation in a specific or a limited number of case studies, be it a person, organization, cultural group, an event, process or a whole community' (Sayer, 2000; in Parr, 2015, p. 196). Thus, a qualitative method of in-depth interviews with a limited number of persons is seen as useful to achieve the aims of this study, especially in clarifying 'complex relationships and processes that are unlikely to be captured by predetermined response categories or standardised quantitative measures' (Parr, 2015, p. 197).

Thus, a 'detailed and focused approach' (Parr, 2015, p. 196) is centralised when studying the processes of religious identity negotiation, to explore the 'subjective meanings and individual meaning making' (Flick, 2009, p. 57) of the religious parents. A methodological principle of symbolic interactionism will also be adopted here, namely: 'researchers have to see the world from the angle of the subjects they study' (Stryker, 1987, p. 259, as cited by Flick, 2009, p. 58). Attempting to see the world from the religious parent's perspective is an important methodological principle in this study.

In addition, the qualitative accounts will be explored to abstract 'structures and mechanisms' from the data that can explain the parents' stances in educational contexts. As discussed in the previous section, theories serve 'explanatory purposes' (Zachariadis et al., 2013, p. 863) in this study, to support the analytical strength of the research methods. The theories thus conceptualise 'objects and structures' at the 'abstract level about necessary or internal relations' (Sayer, 1992, p. 143 in Zachariadis et al., 2013, p. 863). In this respect, the theoretical framework of identity theory serves to analyse the empirical data of the qualitative interviews on an abstract level, and thus facilitates the analytical framework in the qualitative research design. Alongside identity theory, an iterative process of data collection and analysis opens up the possibility of adding new theories to this explanatory and analytical framework of this study. Before continuing to delineate the methodological details of the semi-standardised interview method, I will use the following section to elaborate on qualitative studies that use identity theory as a framework.

Qualitative or quantitative: an overview of existing studies

Identity theory is used as a helpful analytical framework in the conduction of qualitative research in this study. However, whereas most research on the concept of 'identity' is qualitative, research using identity theory has been mostly quantitative and concerned with testing hypotheses. In light of this, several leading authors have called for awareness of the limitations of quantitative research that uses identity theory, and have argued for the use of more qualitative measures. For instance, Brenner (2012) studied religious identities while making use of identity theory, and showed that survey research into identities can give an

inflated view. Brenner found a difference between reported behaviour (church attendance) by respondents on a survey versus their time diaries. Based on this research, Stets and Serpe (2016) reminded researchers 'to be aware of and guard against', 'biases inherent in survey measures' (p. 13) in identity theory research.

In addition to this argument for qualitative methods, Kerpelman et al. (1997) had already argued that interviews can offer 'much richer data' (p. 340) on participants' identity standards compared to quantitative methods, such as scale-based assessments. Accordingly, Coyle and Murtagh (2012), who studied the related Identity Process Theory, argued that quantitative research would be useful when 'testing theoretical predictions' (p. 55), whereas qualitative approaches should be used when the research project aims to 'enrich and extend understandings of identities' (p. 60). Stets and Serpe (2013) have argued that identity processes surrounding social movement activity at the individual level, compared to research into collective identities, 'tend to get omitted from the analysis' (p. 53). Thus, Stets and Serpe (2013) have called for studies on the individual level of collective identities: 'it is important to examine how identity theory concepts and processes enhance our understanding of movement participation at the individual level, (…)' (p. 53).

Several researchers have indeed used identity theory as a framework for qualitative studies. A recent qualitative study, using identity theory as a lens, was carried out by Finch and Stryker (2020). In-depth interviews and observations were conducted to examine defense lawyers' challenges to identity verification in the context of processing the procedures of undocumented immigrants. Using identity theory as a lens provided Finch and Stryker (2020) with the possibility to 'conceptualize key elements' of the lawyers' specific 'situational challenges', their 'constraints and opportunities on their responses' and their adopted 'identity management strategies' (p. 120). Studying identities with the use of identity theory as a lens allowed the researchers to 'engage in theoretically-informed meaning interpretation' (p. 120). According to Serpe, Stryker and Powell (2020), Finch and Stryker's study (2020) shows that 'field research can benefit from the precise conceptual apparatus offered by identity theory, at the same time as field research can ground empirically a set of new theoretical propositions that advance the theory' (p. 25).

Apart from Finch and Stryker (2020), more researchers conducted qualitative research using identity theory. To name a few, Miller, Taylor and Rupp (2016) demonstrated how qualitative research, with the use of identity theory, can improve understanding and provide deeper insight into individuals' identities, in relation to collective identities in highly politicised situations. Granberg (2011) interviewed people with a stigmatised identity about weight loss, also making use of identity theory, and Davis (2019) carried out a qualitative study of students' experiences on social media, again using identity theory. Turning back to the current study, the aim of my research is to gain deeper insight into the religious identity negotiation of parents

in educational situations. To achieve this aim, as in the studies described above, qualitative interviews are conducted using identity theory as the analytical framework. In the following section I will provide more in-depth information on the qualitative methods applied in this study.

Research methods

This section discusses the specific research methods applied in this study. The process of data collection is described further, including the way in which the religious communities were accessed, the way participants were selected and, importantly, considerations surrounding research ethics. In order to introduce the participants, relevant informative aspects are described to give insight into the participants' backgrounds. Finally, the process of data analysis is described in five phases. Throughout all of this, I have sought to ensure reliability and validity in the data collection and analysis. Therefore, I will first set out the approach taken on these issues.

Ensuring reliability and validity

To ensure reliability and validity in the field of qualitative research, many qualitative studies apply techniques after the conduction and analysis of the interviews. However, according to Morse et al. (2002) 'procedures *outside* the research process itself' cannot guarantee the rigor *inside* the research study. Morse et al. (2002) used the example of an audit trail, which only provides insight into the detailed steps taken in the data analysis, but which is 'of little use for identifying or justifying actual shortcomings that have impaired reliability and validity' (p. 16). Another example are member-checks, conducted afterwards to ensure the reliability and validity of the research. In member-checks, participants or other researchers are asked to check if the analysis has been conducted correctly after the data analysis. Using strong terms, Morse et al. (2002) called this a 'threat to validity' (p. 18). The authors also argued that it forces researchers to 'restrain their results' by keeping 'the level of analysis inappropriately close to the data' (p. 16). Furthermore, Boeije (2014) argued that researchers often have more information to use for their interpretation, such as a theoretical lens for their analysis. In addition, Boeije (2014) argued that, with regard to member-checks, respondents can have conflicting interests towards the outcome of the research.

As the theoretical framework in particular plays an important role in this study's research design (see this chapter, under 'Position of theories'), I have sought alternative measures to ensure reliability and validity in this research project, in line with Morse et al. (2002). Rather than checking for reliability and validity after the phases of the data collection and analysis, Morse et al. (2002) argued that the focus should be on the 'verification' of the data *during* these phases. To achieve this, Morse et al. (2002) formulated five so-called 'verification strategies' to be applied during the ongoing phases in a qualitative research project. These strategies are described below and were used in this research. As the

verification strategies of Morse et al. (2002) are 'woven into every step of the inquiry' (p. 17), I reflect on the application of the relevant verification strategies in the described phases of data collection and analysis. In this manner I aim to give insight into how I have attempted to ensure reliability and validity during my research. Below, the verification strategies are described first.

Fundamental to the research project, Morse et al., (2002) first described a basic verification strategy of 'investigator responsiveness' (p. 17, 18), pointing to the capacities of the researcher to act sensitively in the process of data collection and analysis, and the agency to adapt or adjust any component in this process, in order to actively pursue the validity and reliability of the findings. The investigator responsiveness is then expressed through the use of the following five verification strategies, during the process of data collection and analysis.

The first strategy is 'methodological coherence', which is about the ongoing process of matching the research question and method, for instance by necessarily changing components in the data collection or the research question.

The second strategy is that 'the sample must be appropriate' (Morse et al., 2002, p. 18), that is, consisting of the best representatives in the topic of study, based on the best knowledge of the topic. This should ensure 'sampling adequacy' (p. 18), namely data saturation indicated through a replication of the findings. Apart from an appropriate sample, this idea of saturation is viewed slightly differently in this study. In abductive data analysis, saturation of data is regarded as especially related to the saturation of a single experience by revisiting the perception of it. This single experience can be revisited by perceiving an observation at different points in time from different theoretical viewpoints, as 'the same observation changes' (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012, p. 176). Thus, 'the phenomenon always overflows our initial perception of it' (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012, p. 176), and the saturation of the observation emerges when the data is revisited.

Third, the iterative process of 'collecting and analysing data concurrently' is, according to Morse et al. (2002), the 'essence of attaining reliability and validity' (p. 18). Going back and forth between data collection and analysis fosters a continual check of the validity of the findings and a search for the reliability of the findings when new data is obtained. Taking this study's perspective of abductive analysis on saturation this also opens the possibility to revisit the data.

Going from raw data to more abstract thinking, the fourth strategy concerns 'thinking theoretically' (Morse et al., 2002, p. 18), which is the constant (re)checking for the reconfirmation of *ideas* in new data, and checking these new ideas with ideas that have already emerged from data.

The fifth and final verification strategy formulated by Morse et al. (2002) concerns 'theory development' (p. 18), in which the researcher moves from the data to a broader theoretical understanding. The developed theory is the outcome of the research ('rather than

being adopted as a framework to move the analysis along', Morse et al., 2002, p. 18), and can serve future comparisons and developments of theory. Based on the previously described ontological positioning of the theories in this study, this final strategy is adopted while theory both serves as a framework for analysis and is abductively developed as the outcome of the research. In these final two verification mechanisms, the data can be theoretically revisited while also pursuing the third verification mechanism. The following paragraphs will describe the processes of data collection and analysis in which these verification strategies were taken into account.

Individual interviews

The aim of this study, as mentioned before, is to gain deeper insights into and understanding of the processes of parents' religious identity negotiation in the context of education. To achieve this aim, individual interviews were conducted with religious parents of two specific religious groups. A total of ten interviews were carried out, with a total of sixteen participants (see Table 2 for an overview of the participants). Of these ten interviews, four interviews were conducted with Muslim parents and six with Christian parents. The interview recordings lasted between 71 and 102 minutes, with one exception lasting 212 minutes (with Muslim parents). The interviews were conducted with either both parents or individual parents; where one parent was interviewed it was always the mother. When the interview was conducted with both parents, there was often the possibility to speak to one of the parents individually when the other parent left the room, for instance to put children to bed.

Initially, I planned to conduct both individual and focus group interviews. However, I changed this initial plan to individual interviews only. I came to this decision for two reasons. Firstly, during the first couple of individual interviews, I realised that they were all full of a richness of data, which would offer enough to provide an in-depth analysis in order to seek answers to the research questions. Here, I pursued the verification mechanism of 'methodological coherence' (Morse et al., 2002) by changing a component in the method, aligning the method and research question coherently. Secondly, the focus group interviews had to be conducted online due to the covid-19 crisis. As I was already conducting individual interviews, I believed it was important that the religious parents felt safe to open up about their personal religious identities and to express their personal processes of identity negotiation. During the individual interviews, I started to doubt whether such an online interview method would offer the parents enough safety to discuss their very personal being, thinking, and negotiations in an online meeting, via their laptops, whilst being recorded, and with other parents listening. In short, based on my experiences during the individual interviews, I started to feel hesitation about organising these online group sessions without being able to provide a safe face-to-face context for the parents. Having discussed these two reasons with my supervisory panel, I decided to change to individual interviews only.

In line with the purpose of this study, I aimed at interviewing a low number of participants and an in-depth analysis of these interviews. Thus, pursuing the 'methodological coherence' (Morse et al., 2002) in this study, a 'detailed and focused approach' (Parr, 2015, p. 196) was formed to offer space to study the 'subjective meanings and individual meaning making' (Flick, 2009, p. 57) of the religious parents. In light of this purpose, one finding is already useful in providing insights into a specific process (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006) to find meaning and deepen the understanding of that process. This also implies that this study does not aim to generalise findings. It rather seeks to give comprehensive insight into the religious identity processes of religious parents and aims to explain these. Thus, the low number of respondents fits the purpose of this study, as it provides the opportunity to conduct an in-depth analysis whilst theoretical abstractions serve to search for underlying structures and social mechanisms. Additionally, a lower number of respondents is common in identity research using qualitative methods (Kuusisto, 2010; Awokoya, 2012; Visser-Vogel, 2015; Saada and Gross, 2021) and in studies on processes of (religious) parenting (Choluj, 2019).

The semi-structured interview guideline was based on the theoretical framework. Derived from the theoretical framework, sensitising concepts were formulated that were strongly related to the research questions (see Appendix V). As part of the theoretical framework of this study, these sensitising concepts served the theoretical sensitivity (Boeije, 2014) of the researcher during the interviews and subsequent analyses. During the interviews, these concepts were only expressed in suitable language for participants, that is, easy to understand in non-scientific language.

In designing the semi-structured interview guideline, both the research questions and these sensitising concepts served as background knowledge in the formulation of 'main questions' (Rubin and Rubin, 2012, p. 133). In the design of the semi-structured interview guideline, I used Moulin's (2013) PhD study as a helpful example. Moulin studied identity construction and negotiations of religious adolescents. Similar to Moulin, I aimed to formulate short and open questions, forming the 'basis' and 'starting point' (Moulin, 2013, p. 136) for in-depth conversations. The following basic interview questions (see also Appendix IV) were used:

1. What does your religion/faith mean to you?
2. How do you feel as a Muslim/Christian parent at your child's school?
3. Do you feel or think that people (e.g. teaching staff,
other parents) are interested in or have respect for your faith?
4. Do you experience benefits or problems because of your religion in the school?
5. In which situations (in the education of your child) is your Muslim/Christian
faith important?

o How do people around you respond to you/your religion in these situations?

o What do you think of their response to your religion/faith?

o How do you respond, or would you like to respond, in these situations?

o How do you want to raise your child in an Islamic/Christian way and life, in current society?

6. Given that I would like to know what it is like for a Muslim/Christian parent with a child in education – is there anything else you would like to share?

The interview stage was divided into two phases. Five interviews were conducted in the first phase, simultaneously transcribed and fully analysed. The detailed steps of the data analysis are described under 'Data analysis: abductive approach' (in this chapter). Informed by the transcription and analysis of these first five interviews, the data collection continued with another five interviews. This was followed by a transcription and analysis of these interviews, which coincided with a further analysis of the first five interviews. Before outlining the processes of analysing data in more detail, the next section will describe aspects in the process of data collection.

Accessing religious communities

As set out in chapter 2, two specific religious groups in the Netherlands were selected to recruit participants for his study. The first religious group consists of Dutch-Turkish Muslims who attend Diyanet mosques. The second religious group consists of Dutch orthodox reformed Christians who attend churches of the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland*). The participants were recruited from their religious places of worship, in various regions in the Netherlands, both in mid-sized and large villages and mid-sized and large towns. In this manner I pursued the second verification strategy, namely that 'the sample must be appropriate' (Morse et al., 2002), consisting of the best representatives in the topic of study, aiming to understand the religious identity negotiation of religious parents. In this section I will describe the process of accessing these communities in more detail.

In practical terms, I first sought to contact the particular religious institutions (mosque/church). Most of the times I got in touch with contact persons in the relevant religious institutions by using contact details, such as phone numbers or email-addresses found on the websites of the religious institutions. I then had a meeting with a relevant person, for instance a contact person in the church, just as an introduction. This helped me to introduce myself into the social environment of the religious institutions, to know more about the local religious community, and to explain my research project to the contact person. During this initial contact, I asked the contact person for opportunities to interview parents who attend that particular

religious place of worship. The process of selecting specific participants is described in more detail in the next section, under ‘Sampling process’.

The processes of accessing the two selected religious communities differed for the two groups. Having grown up in the religious community of the orthodox reformed parents myself, the so-called Bible Belt, helped me to understand the world of the Christian participants from within. Due to being more familiar with the Christian communities, it was easier to relate to the persons I met in these churches. For instance, I explained my research project, and then added my personal background, telling them about my membership of a related church denomination. In my perception, this made me familiar to gatekeepers, and helped me to receive access to the Christian communities. In order to guarantee enough distance between myself as researcher and the participants, I approached a specific church denomination (*Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland*) from within the Bible Belt, of which I was not a member myself.

In contrast to the orthodox reformed communities, the world of the Muslim parents was relatively unknown to me. I therefore invested considerable time in informal conversations with Muslims parents, and visited a community spot for parents in a Muslim neighbourhood. In addition to these visits, I sought to receive more in-depth insights into the worlds of the participants, by having conversations with religious leaders and Muslim friends, and by becoming a member in Muslim Facebook groups. This all helped me to obtain insight into the daily lives of Muslim parents and their experiences with raising their children. These conversations also helped me to interpret the data, as it led to a deeper understanding of the experiences of Muslim parents in the Netherlands. However, in accessing the Muslim communities, I nevertheless had a strong feeling of being perceived as an outsider (Mullings, 1999), especially during the phone calls. This was understandable. The boards of the Diyanet mosques seemed to be very cautious in providing me with access to their regular visitors. I sought to counteract this by explicitly informing them that my research was not affiliated with governmental organisations or inspections, and also added this to the information letter. In addition, some gatekeepers asked me for the precise interview questions, which I provided, under the condition they would not show these to the participants. If I attended Muslim neighbourhoods or mosques, I also sought to explicitly show respect in my clothing, wearing a headscarf and long sleeves. Nevertheless, the sampling process had to change to snowball sampling, as it was too difficult to receive access solely via gatekeepers in mosques.

This change to snowball sampling was also related to the fact that this process took place during the lockdown months of the covid-19 pandemic (autumn 2020, spring 2021). Both churches and mosques were visited by fewer members than usual, which made it, in many cases, impossible for the gatekeepers to reach out to the parents who were not able to visit the mosques and churches regularly at that time. In contacting mosques I was often told that there was no structured record or list of regular visitors with information about family

composition added to the contact details. Additionally, I was often told that mosques relied upon direct contact with regular visitors of the mosques, but as there were fewer regular visitors during lockdown months, gatekeepers had fewer options to ask participants. This led me to change the sampling techniques, as described in the next section.

Sampling process

The selection of participants started with purposive sampling, by asking parents who attend the religious places of worship to participate via gatekeepers. I adopted two selection mechanisms here: firstly, I asked the gatekeepers to contact parents who were active visitors of the religious place of worship (with an attendance of once a week, at the very least twice a month) who, secondly, had children in the final three years of primary education. I included the latter selection criterium to ensure that parents would have ample experience with primary schools. Thus, I aimed to pursue the second verification strategy, that 'the sample must be appropriate' (Morse et al., 2002), consisting of the best representatives in the topic of study, with the best knowledge of the examined topic.

Regarding the first selection criterium, I *assumed* that parents who practise their faith by going to religious places of worship would have religious identities. It is important to acknowledge that this is an assumption: it cannot guarantee anything about the theological orthodoxy or intensity of the parents' religiousness. In this regard, Visser-Vogel (2012) developed a framework to identify 'highly religious adolescents'. Moulin (2013) criticised this framework, as many authors argue that a religious identity is a complex and dynamic process, and continually negotiated (see also Ammerman, 2003). A framework would not take the complexity of religious identities and their different contexts into account. In addition, the continual negotiation of a religious identity would also not be taken into account. Therefore, no specific criteria based on theological orthodoxy or intensity were used in this study, but instead the selection solely focused on the participants' *regular* attendance of selected religious places of worship, as known and perceived by the contacted gatekeeper.

After conducting several interviews, purposive sampling slowly turned into (purposive) snowball sampling (Ritchie and Lewis, 2003), as participants brought me into contact with new participants from their churches or mosques. Here, the existing participants served as 'gatekeepers' to these new participants. The same selection criteria were applied as described above. The final sample consisted of parents from a range of educational backgrounds, geographical locations, and the participants were between 30 and 45 years old. For more detailed information on the backgrounds of the participants, see 'Introduction of the participants' (in this chapter). The process of contacting and informing them about a possible participation is described in the next section, as part of the description of the ethical approach in this study.

Importance of research ethics

In preparing for the semi-standardized interviews, I submitted an ethics application at the Ethics Committee at Canterbury Christ Church University, which was approved in the Summer of 2020 (see Appendix I). As human participants take part in this research study, the ethical treatment of these participants and their data form a crucial basis for this study. Ethical principles are therefore fundamental to the research design of this study. As this study is conducted in the Netherlands, it is an international study and, therefore, I have taken the relevant codes of ethics of both the United Kingdom and the Netherlands into consideration.

The Dutch Code of Ethics for Research in the Social and Behavioural Sciences involving Human Participants[8] (*National Ethics Council for Social and Behavioural Sciences,* 2018) and the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (British Education Research Association, 2018) are based on similar key principles. These principles are the dignity of participants and their context, a minimisation of any harm, holding an 'ethical attitude' of being 'mindful of the meaning, implications and consequences of the research for anyone affected by it', the continuous and active awareness of any 'ethical issues that may arise', and the ability to act upon and communicate about this (p. 3). Confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent, including the possibility to withdraw at any time during the interviews, are all crucial in both ethical guidelines. These principles formed the basics of my ethics application.

The guideline of the British Education Research Association (BERA) is more extensive than the Dutch Code of Ethics. After a close consideration, I have not found any specific topics in the Dutch Code of Ethics that are not covered in the BERA-guideline, as the BERA-guideline is more comprehensive and detailed. In light of this, I have followed the BERA-guideline in the ethical considerations of this study.

[8] The authors of the Dutch Code of Ethics mention that the Dutch code should be a basis for the 'ethical review procedure' and that the code's 'detailed implementation may vary' based on a thorough ethical awareness of the researchers and in line with 'the questions and considerations put to them in the ethical review procedure'. It is important to mention that the Dutch Code of Ethics aims to provide a guideline for 'the broad spectrum that constitutes the social and behavioural sciences'. It takes into account a variety of research methods, 'from surveys to participant observation, and from minimal physical interventions to ethnography'. This means that the Dutch guideline is a general guideline, and the authors therefore emphasise that researchers always should explain their choices fully, as some situations may 'require researchers to depart from the code' (p. 3).

Sampling process: confidentiality of participants and informed consent

In the process of contacting and recruiting participants, steps were taken to assure an ethical and 'sympathetic' treatment of participants and to safeguard the protection of their personal data and their interview data[9]. These steps are outlined below.

First, during the initial sampling process gatekeepers were asked to share an information letter (see Appendix II) with members of the place of worship (mosque, church). As the sampling process, which changed to snowball sampling, was continued, participants were asked to share the information letter with potential other participants. This information letter served to insure participants that they would be well-informed about their possible participation, including the anonymisation of the interview data, the anonymised use of their interview data for scientific purposes, and the possibility to withdraw from the interviews without giving a reason. The information letter informed participants about this, before they were asked to take part in an interview ('a conversation') about their faith in relation to the education of their children. As I had initially also planned to conduct focus group interviews, the initial version of the information letter included the request to take part in the group interview as well, which was removed after this plan had changed (see 'Individual interviews' in this chapter, and see Appendix II for the final version). In case there were any questions from the participants, the researcher's email-address and phone number were mentioned on the information letter. However, these were not used by any participant. All participants received this information letter before they decided whether or not to take part in the interview.

Second, to assure the confidentiality of the data, an important requirement was the protection of the participants' personal data (name, phone-number, e-mail addresses), which were collected during the sampling process of this study. The gatekeepers or 'previous' participants asked the new participants' permission to share their contact details with the researcher only. The previous participants or gatekeepers already had an existing relationship with the participants, being friends or fellow-members of their particular places of worship, and thus already had access to these personal details. Once received the participants' personal details were kept confidentially by the researcher, and the researcher contacted participants as soon as possible.

Third, before the interviews in this study were conducted the participants all signed the informed consent form (see Appendix III). In asking for their informed consent the parents are

[9] In accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2020), during the interviews data falling under the two 'special categories of data', political opinions and religious or philosophical beliefs, were collected. According to GDPR, Article 9, 'personal data falling under these categories can be processed only under specific circumstances'. In this study, two of these circumstances, defined under Article 9 (2a, 2j), are addressed: informed consent has been given (2a); and, the study is conducted in light of scientific research purposes (2j).

regarded as able to decide and reflect whether or not to give consent (Flick, 2009), as they were all adults without any ‘mental or physical health conditions’ (Choluj, 2019, p. 79). In the statement accompanying the informed consent form participants were asked to consent to the audio recording of the interview and the use of their interview data for scientific purposes. As in the information letter, the participants were again assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their data and the possibility to withdraw from the interview at any time.

Fourth, interview data was stored for as long as needed for the continuation of the research. Processes such as recording, transferring, and keeping the recordings safe have been carefully carried out, and the utmost care was taken to assure the safe and confidential storage and handling of the data. Practically, the university’s OneDrive has been the secure location for the storage of the data, and the folders were password-protected and only accessible to the researcher. They required the researcher's access ID to gain access. Files were only stored online, not on a local computer and not outside the university’s OneDrive.

Fifth, the anonymity of the participants was further assured by removing the participants’ names, and by not mentioning their exact geographical locations. For example, instead of naming the town from which the participant was recruited, I only reveal the area (‘western part of the Netherlands’) where the participant comes from. Wherever personal details in the interview data could make participants recognisable, these were removed or given without reference to the fictional name of the particular participant. This latter could be the case, especially as the sampling process turned into snowball sampling. This implies that participants know fellow participants and are thus able to recognise them based on specific detailed information. The anonymity of the participants was thus assured.

Conducting the interviews: handling sensitive topics

An ethical approach became even more central during the interviews themselves. Most importantly, I aimed to establish a safe and ‘comforting space’ (Choluj, 2019, p. 80) for my participants during the interview. Although highly unlikely, as this study was not focused on hidden or closed communities, participants could have revealed information related to state authorities (e.g. illegal unregistered schools) during the interviews. Before the initiation of the study, a university risk assessment was conducted in which it was established that should illegal information have appeared (which did not occur), the advice of the supervisor would have been sought immediately. If there would then be any remaining reason for concern, the ethics committee would have been informed and asked for advice. In light of the religious convictions of the participants, it could also have been possible that participants made statements which could be regarded by others as homophobic. If anything would arise, it was to be discussed with the supervisory panel.

Although participants were not directly asked to talk about any sensitive issues (see the interview questions under ‘Individual interviews’), the possibility that participants would

bring up sensitive issues was present. For instance, during the different conversations with religious parents, many described having experienced ‘fear’ concerning the upbringing of their children within the current secularised society and communication within the educational setting. This required an adequate handling of this emotional sensitivity during the interviews. In the following section I will give an overview of my reflections and applied methods regarding these sensitivities.

Firstly, I changed the approach to the start of the interviews. The first interview question introduces the research topic by seeking to define the parents’ religious identities. However, during the first few interviews, I found that parents were hesitant to answer this question. They remained silent for a few seconds before discussing their inner, personal convictions surrounding their personal faith. Although there had been some time (around ten minutes) for introducing ourselves and the research, I felt that more time was needed to make parents comfortable enough to answer this first question.

Based on this experience in the first two interviews, I took more time for discussing the context of the parents during the following interviews, by discussing their jobs, the place where they lived, the different ages of their children, and so forth. Doing this before starting the actual interview helped to build trust by having a friendly conversation about more general aspects of our daily lives. Often, parents enthusiastically started telling about experiences in their lives, either related to their faith or more general life stories. Then the first interview question opened the conversation and helped the interviewee(s) to reflect on the core of the research topic and its meaning to them personally. Thus, the participants seemed to experience a safe space to open up about personal matters, and to experience openness and safety in doing so from the first stages of the interview. Having established this basis, the interview continued with, in some cases, more emotionally difficult topics. These were carefully discussed and, as I was very aware of possible risks in this respect, I was ‘attentive to the emotional state of the interviewee’ (Choluj, 2019, p. 80).

This attentiveness meant, first of all, non-judgemental listening to the participants, showing nonverbal signs of empathetic understanding, and unconditional acceptance of expressed emotions. Verbally, it meant asking careful and open questions and aiming for a peaceful and safe continuation of the conversation in sensitive moments of the interview at all times. During such sensitive moments, I allowed the participants time to search for the right words and adequate formulations. In addition, I then verbally reflected on their experiences and emotions, by carefully naming them to check whether I felt and understood them correctly and to affirm them in their expressions. I also comforted and encouraged my participants when they explicitly stated to speak ‘broken Dutch’, or not to be ‘a political person with stories’. In brief, I aimed to create a hospitable environment to all the participants.

Before the interviews, I sought to build and develop this awareness particularly when I reflected on the participants' role in my study, imagining what it would be like to do what the participant is expected to do in the study (Flick, 2009). Imagining the participants' roles in my study required knowing them and the context of their lives. Thus, before the sampling process had even begun, I visited places of worship in both religious communities. I also had several informal conversations with religious persons in these communities, such as religious educators, leaders, friends, and parents. As I was especially inspired by these parents' stories, experiences, and feelings, to the extent that envisaging their role in my study was already occurring before I had begun my empirical research.

In addition, I heard that parents were happy to let their voice 'finally' be heard during those informal conversations, about issues they had to deal with in relation to their religion. Beforehand, I had therefore assumed participants to be willing to participate in – and not be harmed by – discussions concerning difficult issues related to their religious identity. Based on these assumptions, and following the informal conversations, I also had a cautious expectation that taking part in the interviews would be a positive experience for the parents. In several cases, parents thanked me 'very much' for the interview, and in all cases parents expressed positive feelings after the completion of the interviews. Thus, ethically, both seeing my participants as humans and seeking to foster the 'human right of the freedom of belief' were centralised here (Moulin, 2013, p. 142).

In one case, however, a specific ethical issue emerged, as participants sought to interact with me on religious issues. During an interview with a couple of Muslim parents, the father tried to explicitly discuss the differences between Islam and Christianity with me. He guided the conversation into a comparison between Christianity and Islam and mentioned the main differences between Christianity and Islam. He stated this without reference to the topics in the interview guideline, and he only especially expressed to be convinced about the truth in Islam compared to Christianity. I carefully explained that I was not attempting to persuade or be persuaded about particular differences between religions, but instead was interested in their experiences regarding the topics in the interview guideline. This helped to guide the conversation back to the research topics. At the end of this interview with the Muslim couple, they again explicitly asked for my personal opinion. They were particularly interested in my own religious identity and asked what my opinion was when hearing their religious Islamic views. As I personally recognised their engagement and personal relationship with a God, I expressed my reflections on this recognition towards them. At the same time, I expressed the importance of knowing Jesus Christ personally as a God and human both, as for me, this is of the utmost importance to find real peace with God, knowing Jesus as Saviour. This led to an interesting conversation which, as it happened at the end of the interview, did not impact the interview data. However, in most cases, the Muslim parents mentioned the commonalities

between the two religions, and the importance to them of finding connections between religions (see also chapter 7, 'Building connections between religions'). As the interviewer, I expressed my religiousness towards the Muslim parents as something 'we had in common', saying I was also religious, and I expressed my understanding towards them.

In the final phase of this study, it was important to be aware of possible sensitivities when presenting the results. In order to maintain confidentiality, the results were presented whilst no details were shared that could reveal identities of specific persons. At all times, caution was taken in presenting results which could be regarded as sensitive.

Confounding factors

Several possible confounding factors have to be mentioned in the context of this study. Firstly, despite the fact that the questions in the interview guideline were formulated neutrally, as the interviewer I could have influenced the negotiation and thinking processes of the participating parents, through the unspoken expectations participants have towards me or the research study or vice versa. Researchers have defined such processes as the 'co-construction' of the religious identities and the identity negotiation processes that occur during the interview (Sealy, 2018, p. 73, 74; see also Moulin, 2013). This suggests that the identities of both the researcher and the participants, being in social interaction with one another, can influence the interview data.

Therefore, in line with Moulin (2013), interviews were conducted 'with minimal prompts', as otherwise these could have influenced the parents' negotiation processes even more (Moulin, 2013, p. 106). Additionally, the interviews were conducted across two different religious groups and across different places, lessening the overall influence of the researcher. Here, it is relevant to mention that, as the parents often took part as a couple, they knew each other's (thinking) world, were raising the same children, and attended the same place of religious worship. As a result, they often reflected on each other's contributions during the interviews, by correcting one another or adding to one another's contributions. This could have countered my influence as the interviewer. The interactions during the interviews also impacted my thinking. See the epilogue of this study for a reflection on the impact of the conversations on my own thinking, including 'Reflections by the researcher'. Notwithstanding all of this, it is still important to realise that these ongoing negotiation processes could have influenced the data, and should therefore be regarded as 'negotiated', emerging from within a mutual conversation.

Secondly, as the interviews were often centred on the personal experiences of parents in the context of education, the participants retrospectively reflected on these experiences. This retrospective aspect of a research study is often regarded as 'highly subjective' (Schweitzer, 2014 in Visser-Vogel, 2012, p. 154) but, at the same time, offers the opportunity

to gain insight into participants' negotiations and thinking processes after they had elaborated on certain issues. In other words, the participants' reflections on these experiences at a later stage offer more profound insights into the more comprehensive thinking processes and related occurrences than direct observation would have done. In addition, as these experiences were situationally distinct, the context was taken into account, using theoretical insights provided by additional theories (chapter 6). The following section provides background information on the group of participants.

Introduction of the participants

In the following paragraphs the participating religious parents will be introduced anonymously. For an overview of the participants, see Table 2. Ten interviews were conducted, of which four interviews with Muslim parents attending Diyanet mosques and six interviews with Christian parents attending churches of the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands. Six interviews were conducted with participants living in the western parts of the Netherlands, three interviews were conducted with participants living in the middle or middle-south parts of the Netherlands. One interview was conducted with a participant living in the far south-western part of the Netherlands.

The interviewed participants constitute a diverse group of individuals. Providing detailed information on each participant in so-called research portraits (see e.g. Choluj, 2019) would provide in-depth knowledge of each individual participant, but would also reveal their identities to other participants due to the snowball sampling technique (see this chapter, 'Sampling process'). Therefore, I have chosen to describe detailed aspects of the participants without linking these aspects to their fictional names. As a result, this description gives insight into participants' backgrounds, without revealing their identities. This detailed information often contains aspects of the parents' personal life histories, which are deeply related to their religious identities. For instance, parents explain how severe illness formed their religious and existential thinking processes.

Apart from one interview conducted in a spare room in a mosque, all other interviews were conducted in the parents' homes. This brought me into their private home context and helped me to more closely experience how parents live and to understand their day-to-day conditions. It brought me from small houses in cities to a villa in a larger village, to a friendly farmhouse in the countryside. The parents invited me into their living rooms, gardens, or kitchens. As described above, at the beginning of the interviews the conversation was often about general issues, and somehow often started off with parents' employment, which I will describe in more detail in the following section.

Political and working class identities

As reflected in the fathers' occupations in particular, the group of participants consists of diverse individuals: from a Christian father who is involved in real estate, to a Muslim father who is a teacher, to a Christian father who is a mechanic for domestic appliances. During the interviews, these parents often illustrated the interrelatedness of their religious identities with their working identities. For instance, the father who is a mechanic often referred to conversations he has with his customers related to his faith and his conversations with other religious or non-religious people. Another Christian father works as a commercial manager in the agricultural sector. During the interview he explained how he experienced God's guidance in finding this job.

Several times parents' thinking on the topic of this study seemed to be inspired by their work or involvement in relevant activities. For instance, one of the Christian fathers works as an agricultural estate agent, whilst also being a member of the church council at his local church and being involved in a local political Christian conservative party. During the interview, it seems that both of these latter positions have informed and already activated his thinking on issues surrounding the education of his children. While this father is active in politics, another Christian father illustrates the opposite as he explains that he has his 'hands full with running this family, with all the worries that come with it', and he does not view himself as being very active in society or politics. At the end of the interview, the father mentions that he is glad the interview went well, as 'we're not people who get involved in politics, we don't make a big story, no'. Thus, politically active as well as less politically active parents participated in the study.

The interrelatedness of parents' employments with the research topic was especially expressed by two parents who worked as teachers at a religious school. Both religious communities considered in this study had a participating parent who worked as a teacher at a mono-religious school. One Muslim father works as a teacher at an Islamic primary school, and one Christian mother works as a teacher at an orthodox reformed primary school. During the interviews, both this Christian mother and Muslim father reflected on their positions as teachers in the context of their children's education. They showed to have gone through similar thinking processes before during the discussions. The Muslim father was very open to expand on his views as a father, to include his views as a teacher at an Islamic school. He often illustrated his thoughts on his children's education by describing experiences from his place of work. He also often argued from the perspective of a teacher. For instance, he comprehensively explained the importance of teaching about the history of the Islam and the history of Turkey in particular in Islamic schools. He communicated his views on certain events, such as the murder of Samuel Patty in Paris. Obviously, to conclude anything about the views of teachers requires a whole new research approach, and thus goes beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, these parents' views were especially valuable in acquiring a broader and

more profound understanding of the views of parents who are involved in education at religious schools.

While the fathers' work situations are diverse, the balance of employment amongst the couples is less diverse. In a total of six families, from both groups, the mother is a stay-at-home mother. As one mother says, she has 'a job at home', whereas the fathers in these families have full-time jobs outside of the home. In four families, divided amongst both groups, the mother has a part-time job, while the fathers again have full-time jobs. These mothers' employments range from working for an insurance company to being a cleaner, a teacher (see above), and an administrative worker. It is important to realise that these work situations position the interviews into the context of the participants' societal positions. As the interviewer, I sought to interact carefully with participants on this, aiming to find out which aspects were deeply related to their religious identities, and which were irrelevant to their religious identities but influenced processes in education as a result of their societal and political positions and working identities.

Cultural traditions

Cultural traditions, such as hospitality or taking shoes off inside the home, seemed to play a crucial role in the lives and the educational contexts of children for the Turkish-Muslim parents. When it comes to education, taking shoes off had become an issue when a teacher visited the home of a Muslim family, without taking his shoes off. The mother explained that this was the main reason for her to move her children from a Protestant-Christian school to an Islamic school. As there were already issues concerning grades, this issue was the final, decisive push they needed to change schools.

The Muslim parents' hospitality was expressed in particular when a couple kindly invited me for the Iftar meal, which is the meal at the end of a day in the month of Ramadan. During the interview we moved from the living room to the kitchen, and continued the interview during the Iftar meal. Meanwhile, the father of this family prayed with his son, while I had an individual conversation with the mother. This interview lasted the longest of all the interviews, 212 minutes. The Muslim mother explained the role of hospitality and caring in taking care of her neighbours when they had to go to the hospital, for example. During the interview, she described such situations in detail.

The Turkish identity played a central role in the lives of the Turkish-Muslim parents. For instance, they describe how they themselves were raised with a focus on the Turkish national identity, and one mother explicitly stated that her Turkish identity was paramount above her religious and parenting identity. This was expressed in her home as she had the Turkish flag hanging in the living room. Several times, the Turkish-Muslim parents explicitly reflected on issues related to the Turkish identity, for instance, on being seen as an 'immigrant' in activities outside of education, such as at a football club. A father described how he can be extra aware

of situations in which his children might possibly be discriminated against. The Turkish-Muslim mothers also repeatedly described their hesitations about wearing their headscarf and experiences of possible discrimination as a result. Thus, feelings of discrimination due to participants' national and ethnic identities were shown to play a pivotal role in these parents' lives.

These aspects demonstrate the complexity of processes of negotiation. The central role of cultural and religious traditions in the interaction with teachers resonates with the study of Booijink (2007), who researched communication between teachers and immigrant parents. In their study, one teacher reported the importance of traditions amongst Muslim parents (p. 53), where a male teacher could only visit a Muslim family at home when more men were present. It is important to take the significance of such cultural traditions into account when interpreting the data in this study, as it emphasises that the Turkish-Muslim parents in particular strongly negotiate their ethnic and national identities in addition to their religious identities (see chapter 5, 'The relevance of the ethnic and national Turkish identity').

'Broken Dutch'

As one Turkish-Muslim mother speaks 'broken Dutch', as she formulates it, an Islamic educator from the mosque was present to provide translations where needed. Only rarely did the mother turn to the translator for help. This mother answered all of the questions and was very well able to express her thoughts, experiences, and perceptions. As the interviewer I also encouraged her to use her 'broken Dutch' as much as possible, as I assured her that her language was good enough for me to understand her. During the interview, the translator only rarely stepped in to help the mother.

However, as an educator for children in the mosque, the translator sometimes expressed her own views as well as the mother's remarks. Wherever she made additions to the mother's words, I tried to carefully check the mother's facial expressions, to see if she sincerely agreed, to ensure that the translator did not influence the mother during the interview. In most cases, the translator added to the mother's comments and expanded her views with examples or further information.

The impact of severe illnesses

Two mothers, one in a Christian and one in a Muslim family, had cancer. In both cases, they were no longer under treatment at the time of the interview, although the impact of the illness was still noticeably present in both families. The parents reflected on the impact of the illness during the interviews, and described how the illness had formed their existential and religious thinking processes. The Muslim mother illustrated how this illness brought her closer to her faith, led her to travel to Mecca, and how this profoundly influenced her personal life, including the religious upbringing of her children. During the interview it was especially notable how she

deeply and personally reflected on her religious feelings and experiences surrounding this illness.

The Christian mother's illness also had a deep impact on the family. Fourteen years ago (from the time of the interview) the mother was diagnosed with cancer whilst being pregnant, which caused the death of the unborn child. During the interview, both the mother and father of this family expressed how the loss of this child and the cancer treatments still had a profound influence on the family's daily life. Apart from the obvious emotional influence, the mother received 10 years of treatment, due to which she is still daily suffering from fatigue. The parents especially described how they experienced God's guidance in the discovery of the rare diagnosis by a specialised doctor and receiving the appropriate treatment.

In several families, children were diagnosed with learning disabilities or developmental disorders. In two families, children had more severe conditions, such as a child with Down's syndrome and a child with severe spasticity. This heavily impacted these families, especially as in many of these cases the diagnosis led to alternative school choices by the parents on which they comprehensively reflected during the interviews. Generally, these issues are part of the parents' life stories and impacted them personally and often practically in their daily lives.

Non-religious backgrounds in families

Especially in the Christian families, non-religious backgrounds were present and seemed to have impacted the parents' thinking processes as expressed during the interviews. One interviewed mother was raised non-religiously and became a Christian when she married her Christian husband. She often reflects on this during the interview, taking the perspective of a non-religious person, as she had been in earlier years. This background influenced this mother's thinking, as she was especially able to see issues from an alternative perspective to the religious parents' perspectives.

During the interview one Christian mother freely discussed all her children, of whom two, now young adults, have become non-Christians. During the interview, this mother expressed how this deeply influenced her thinking as she had gone through issues of seeing her children leaving the Christian faith. One of these children is homosexual and had been in a relationship, which had been ended at the time of the interview. The mother only briefly reflected on this, but more deeply reflected on her children leaving the faith. As these children were emerging adults at the time of the interview, she reflected less on this issue in relation to the educational context.

In another Christian family, the husband of the interviewed Christian mother was raised non-religious and still is. During the interview, the mother explained the impact this has on her life, especially as marrying a non-religious person is 'not allowed according to the Bible'. She describes the marriage as 'a very difficult choice', but adds that she had many conversations with her husband about this and fully trusted her husband that she would be able to raise their

children in a Christian way. She also described how this marriage influenced her religious thinking, especially as she really had to explain her religious belief and behaviour: ‘That's what I really learned in those years. And maybe we had that before we got married, but that's because we talked a lot, but some things you really have to explain; why you don't want this, or just think that. I think.’ The mother also emphasised she often thinks about how ‘the outside world looks at us’: ‘Well, I often have … that I think of a lot of things, actually like – and that is of course also really because we are married to each other – how actually the outside world looks at us.’

During the interview with the mother, the father came in and joined the conversation. Both parents then explained how they agreed to raise their children in the orthodox reformed faith. However, as their children get older, the father has more conversations with his children, exchanging thoughts. He added: ‘What I only try to watch out for is that you translate it *against* the church, so to speak. I try to watch out for that. That you are not going to influence them in such a way that you say, you better leave there, or you are completely wrong there, or you are too old for it or I don't know what.’ While the father is strictly non-religious, he thus supports this choice to raise their children based on the orthodox reformed faith. For instance, he encourages the children to learn their lessons for church education and to attend these classes.

In these families, the ‘outside perspective’ of non-religious persons is more familiar and present in the thoughts of these parents. They often mention to reflect on issues from the perspective of someone who is not religious. However, such empathy was also reflected by the other parents, who often argued from perspectives of non-religious persons they knew, for instance non-religious neighbours. Overall, in the interpretation of the findings it is important to keep in mind that participants had in-depth relationships and experiences with people from non-religious backgrounds, which could have impacted their identities and thinking processes.

Distance from society

While in several families non-religious backgrounds were present, it is worth mentioning that several of the families explicitly stated that they sought to distance themselves from the rest of society. For instance, none of the Christian parents had a TV, which is common among Christian orthodox reformed communities (Smits, Knoppers and Doodewaard, 2019). All Muslim families did have a TV, although one couple of parents mentioned they had just removed their TV from their living room, as this father expressed:

> *Muslim father: … that we do not lose ourselves to eh… all kinds of earthly things, [our] TV is gone too, [it] is now upstairs.*

Like this father described, it is important for both Christian and Muslim participants to ‘not lose’ themselves to ‘earthly things’.

Specific appreciation of research by participants

Participants appreciated the opportunity to talk about their religious identity in relation to educational contexts. One parent stated that she was motivated to participate because she had the feeling that ‘the media’ missed a basic ‘truth’ that is possibly existent in religions. She thus did not want to change society’s perception of faith, but rather wished to add to the general perception of her religion in society and saw the study as a way to make her voice heard:

> *Muslim mother: … whether you believe in something or not. Whether you are Muslim, or Jewish, or Buddhist, it doesn't matter; Christian, um, we actually miss the "truth" behind it. What we all see and hear in the media these days, that isn’t it at all actually. So that's why I actually find this very important.*

At the end of the interviews, parents explicitly thanked me for the opportunity to take part in the interview. This appreciation of the parents also made me aware of the ideological need to express their thoughts in society, which is also important to realise when interpreting the findings. Parents seemed to be happy to have found an ‘opening’ to express their views.

Table 2

Information participants

Interview	Religion	Immigrant generation	Demographics	Children, school type
Interview 1	Muslim	First generation	Middle part of the Netherlands, small town (65.000-70.000 inhabitants)	Five children, Protestant-Christian school, changed to Muslim school
Interview 2	Christian	-	Western part of the Netherlands, small to middle-large town (115.000-200.000 inhabitants)	Five children, orthodox reformed school, one child Protestant-Christian school
Interview 3	Christian	-	Western part of the Netherlands, small to middle-large town (115.000-200.000 inhabitants)	Four children, orthodox reformed school
Interview 4	Christian	-	Western part of the Netherlands, small to middle-large town (115.000-200.000 inhabitants)	Five children, orthodox reformed school
Interview 5	Muslim	First generation	Western part of the Netherlands, middle-large village (20.000 inhabitants)	Three children, state school, changed to Protestant-Christian school
Interview 6	Muslim	First generation	Western part of the Netherlands, small to middle-large town (115.000-200.000 inhabitants)	Three children, state school
Interview 7	Muslim	Second generation	Western part of the Netherlands, small to middle-large town (115.000-200.000 inhabitants)	Three children, Muslim school
Interview 8	Christian	-	Middle-south part of the Netherlands, middle-large village (15.000-20.000 inhabitants)	Five children, orthodox reformed school
Interview 9	Christian	-	Middle part of the Netherlands, small town (65.000-70.000 inhabitants)	Five children, orthodox reformed school, one child state school
Interview 10	Christian	-	Far south-western part of the Netherlands, village (5.000-5.500 inhabitants)	Ten children, orthodox reformed school, one child state school

Note. To guarantee the participants' anonymity, participants' fictional names are not given in this table.

Data analysis

In this section I will further outline the process of data analysis, as aligned with the ontological and epistemological position of this study, and the detailed steps I have taken. Abductive analysis, or as Fletcher (2017) called it a 'flexible deductive approach' (p. 182), is closely aligned with the ontological and epistemological positioning in critical realism (Fletcher, 2017; Ritz, 2020).

As mentioned earlier, according to critical realists, ontology is not 'reducible' to epistemology as they acknowledge that knowing the nature of reality is only partly possible. The argument has been that in positivism ontology is problematically limited to epistemology, as in positivism it would be possible to empirically know 'reality' (Bhaskar, 1998, see Fletcher, 2017). Therefore, positivism has been criticised for using theories to determine reality. Constructivism, in turn, has been criticised for using theories to construct reality solely by 'human knowledge or discourse' (Bhaskar, 1998, see Fletcher, 2017, p. 182). The inductivity of grounded theory, as often used in constructivism, has been criticised for collecting data without resulting in a development of theories (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). It is argued that this caused a change in the character of grounded theory, it became too reflexive and focused on an interactive process.

In contrast, critical realists argued that reality is not theory-determined but theory-laden, as some theories get closer to reality than others (Fletcher, 2017). In line with this thinking, Timmermans and Tavory (2012) argued that the construction of meaningful theories only becomes valid when abduction is seen as essential to the research process. Abduction, as Timmermans and Tavory noted, implies that 'a researcher is led away from old to new theoretical insights' (p. 170). Theories are selected to 'get closer to reality' (Fletcher, 2017, p. 182), although there is always a strong acknowledgement of the possible fallibility of these theories. Timmermans and Tavory (2012) gave no specific recommendations for the kind of theories that could be useful for abductive analysis, apart from being empirically grounded and adding inspirational value. They recommended a focus on the design of the project and argued that the theories themselves, used in the research project, will shape the design of the project. This design must be open to abduction, that is, open to surprising findings.

Thus, central to my data analysis is an engagement with theories to explain the religious parents' experiences, by getting closer to ('approximating') their processes of religious identity negotiation. Alongside this theoretical engagement, I took the given contexts of the parents into account to 'get closer' to the parents' realities and be better able to understand, analyse, and explain the social events in which the parents were involved. Whilst going back and forth between theory and data during the process of data analysis, I also included additional theories. This helped to move from 'the manifest phenomena of social life,

as conceptualized in the experience of the social agents concerned, to the essential relations that necessitate them' (Bhaskar, 1975, p. 32, in Fletcher, 2017, p. 189).

In the data analysis, I first aimed to analyse the individual interviews in their particular contexts. This helped me to understand and explain the specific experiences and events the parents described individually. I then searched for common descriptions and more abstract, theoretical interpretations of these common patterns in the parents' experiences, perceptions, and identity negotiations, in order to gain insight into (or get closer to) processes of religious identity negotiation of parents in educational contexts in the Netherlands. In the search for these theoretical interpretations, I used the theoretical concepts of identity theory and added theories as an explanatory framework (see the section on 'Position of theories'), so-called abductive analysis (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). By going from the individual and contextualised accounts of the individual parents to the more general descriptions and subsequent theoretical interpretations of (specific aspects of) their processes of religious identity negotiation, these findings could be continuously linked to particular research questions.

I have used the work of Faber (2012) as a helpful example in my data analysis of the interviews in this study. Faber (2012) studied the institutional religious identity of schools and also applied abductive data analysis to interview data, conducted with teachers and school principals. In her methodology chapter, Faber described her method of analysis in five phases. I have used these five phases to structure my data analysis, as detailed below.

Phases of data analysis

To begin with a short overview, the interviews took place in two 'rounds'. First, five interviews (three Christian families, two Muslim families) were conducted over a period of two months. The conduction of the interviews and the transcription occurred synchronously. After these five interviews were finalised, they were further analysed in-depth by consolidating relevant parts, thematising, open coding, selective coding and exploring theoretical interpretations of the individual accounts. A coding scheme was set up for two interviews, serving to further familiarise myself with the data and to give insight into the possible structures of the remaining interviews. Combining deductive and inductive analysis, I designed schemes and word webs to investigate underlying structures and mechanisms arising from the data.

This initial and explorative round of concurrent data collection and analysis informed a second round of five more interviews (three Christian families, two Muslim families). Here, again transcription (and analytical thinking) and the actual interviews occurred synchronously, and also took around two months. The analysis of these subsequent five interviews resulted from a going back and forth between the analysed data of the initial five interviews and data in the additional five interviews. In the newly conducted five interviews, new findings,

theoretical interpretations, and needs for additional theories emerged which were, where possible, associated with and checked against findings in the initial interviews in the first round. Finally, in these concurrent phases of data collection and analysis, I moved away from descriptive findings to seek social mechanisms, in order to offer theoretically informed explanations and insights into parents' religious identity processes in educational contexts. To achieve this, I revisited the data using new theories.

I analysed data of both Christian and Muslim parents throughout these phases. Whilst acknowledging that the low number of participants in this study does not allow for strong comparisons between both groups, the presentation of the findings mentions if findings were found among both groups, if a finding was only found in one group but was not mentioned in the other group, or if different findings emerged from both groups. If there was a difference, or a finding was only found in one group, possible explanations were formulated. Below, the detailed steps of the data analysis are outlined.

1. Familiarising with the data

This first wave of interviews was conducted over two months' time. In between the consecutive interviews, I was working on the transcription of the already conducted interviews. Doing transcriptions one day and conducting an interview the other day informed my analytical thinking alongside the process of interviewing. Thus, I also familiarised myself more and more with the data, by observing the parents, taking notes during the interviews, reading through the transcripts, and listening to the recordings again after transcribing. When I was transcribing the interviews I also wrote down many notes in the transcription documents, which formed the basis for the coding process (see coding). In these notes, I also (sometimes possibly even subconsciously) associated interview segments with theoretical concepts and insights, and already sought for any emerging underlying structures in the individual accounts.

Although this theoretical thinking and selective analysing during the transcription of these interviews was very premature and only a drawing and sketching of some initial lines, it already formed the starting point for the in-depth analysis of the interview data. According to Timmermans and Tavory (2012), this is a 'crucial part of the abductive analysis', as in this phase notes and precise transcriptions serve as 'heuristics for the construction of original theoretical insights' (p. 175). In addition, these steps served to increase the 'resistance of the phenomenon to our interpretations', as the researcher is forced to not adapt the interpretation of the data to the 'narrative we want to tell', but instead to 'check against' this tendency and 'faulty memory' (p. 175). It thus cultivated the pursuing of the reliability and validity (see this chapter, 'Ensuring reliability and validity') of the findings, in sharpening my 'investigator responsiveness' (Morse et al., 2002) towards the reality of the participants. Performing these first steps in the data analysis concurrently with the collection of data also helped me to pursue

the third verification strategy, by continually checking the validity and reliability of previous data with new data and vice versa (Morse et al., 2002).

At this stage, I did not translate whole transcripts, but went through the data in the original language. In some cases I already translated segments, and included these in notes or in the coding scheme. I also translated a whole transcript to share with my English-speaking supervisor. Nevertheless, I translated the majority of the extracts in the final version of the results in the chapters. As the process of translating had already partly begun in this phase, I will provide insight into the conducted process of translation in the following section.

In translating the interview segments, I had first carefully read, interpreted, and thought through the segment in the original language, and reimagined the moment, context, body language, tone of voice, and emotions (Bilic, 2013) with which the participant had formulated their views. With these also nonverbal aspects (Bilic 2013; Choluj, 2019) in mind, I translated the extract using Google Translate for an initial translation. I then compared the automised translation to the extract in the original language, taking the previously described partly nonverbal aspects *and* the original language into account. In this considerate comparison of the words, the sentences, their structure, and the extract as a whole, I sometimes (partly) changed the automised translation to an adjusted translation, closer to the original meaning. Here, I sought to align the translation with how I observed the participant expressing the content of the extract during the interview in the original language. This required a careful approach, in which I had to recollect the initial circumstances of the interview, and in which I aimed to stay 'as close as it could be to the original meaning' (Bilic, 2013, p. 103) in the original language. Advantageously, having Dutch as my native language helped me to stay as close as possible to this original meaning.

It is relevant to note here that, in line with Rubin and Rubin (2012), only some specific alterations have been made to the citations in the presentation of the findings. First, if long interview segments were used that included passages irrelevant to the topic, these irrelevant passages were replaced with ellipses: '(…)'. This was only done if it did not harm the contextualised understanding of the interview segment and, as Rubin and Rubin (2012) argued, whilst the meaning of the original segment is still preserved. Second, if a translation did not fully approximate the original language, or if more words were needed to make a sentence grammatically correct or to illustrate how the extract relates to previous parts of the interview, text is added to the extract as '[*text*]'.

2. Consolidating relevant information

Alongside familiarising myself with the data of the first five interviews, I started to sort out which parts of the interviews were particularly relevant to the focus of this study. To achieve this, I focused on the main topics relevant to the research questions. These topics concerned

the religious identity of the parents, the transmission of their religious identity to their children, their personal experiences in which they expressed to negotiate their religious identity in relation to their children and their education, and the processes of religious identity negotiation of the parents in educational situations.

In consolidating the interview segments relevant to these topics, I interpreted the participants' responses, that is, I searched for the participants' own meaning-making and thus aimed to stay close to the meaning the participants intended to express in their responses. By relating the segments to the formulated topics above, like Faber (2012), I sought to continually answer the question: 'what does this statement tell me about the phenomenon I want to explore?' (Alexiadou 1999, in Faber, 2012, p. 114). Thus, the abductive approach emerged by both inductively interpreting the participants' responses, and deductively abstracting responses by associating these with the theoretical concepts formulated in the topics above. This sorting out of the relevant parts concerned an initial abductive process of segregating relevant parts in light of the research questions and the theoretical concepts involved.

After consolidating these relevant parts, the remaining parts of the interviews were valuable to get to know my participants and especially served as background information to better know and understand the individual parents in their personal contexts. Nevertheless, most of these parts did not (indirectly) answer the research questions. For instance, parents shared parts of their life histories with me, for example how they had met as a couple in their younger years, or how they had found their current jobs. These parts were not related to the actual research questions, but served to get to know the participants and helped to place their responses in their particular contexts. A description of these parts are given in the previous paragraph, 'Introduction of the participants'.

In this consolidation of the relevant information I intended to specifically pursue the first verification strategy of 'methodological coherence' (see this chapter, 'Ensuring reliability and validity'), namely, matching the applied method to the research question. As the method of in-depth interviews was shown to be helpful in answering the research questions concerning the selected topics mentioned above, these remaining parts were included in the data analysis if they were relevant in understanding the findings in their particular contexts. Additionally, interviewing the parents in their home-context helped me to locate their personalised negotiations and was clearly the appropriate method to answer the research questions.

3. Organising and clustering the provisional codes

Alongside sorting out the relevant parts, as described above, interview segments were categorised under specifically formulated themes, by interpreting segments as thematically consistent paragraphs in the transcripts. These themes were placed in the transcript to offer an overview of and insight into the main topics covered in the interviews. In the formulations

of these themes, both relevant theoretical concepts and literal responses of the participants were used. Here, an initial coding process emerged. More extensive than in the previous phase of the data analysis, in this phase the parents' responses were sometimes interpreted inductively, with grounded thinking through the participants' responses, and sometimes deductively, with the formulation of theoretical abstractions, such as 'religious identity negotiation', 'verification identity' or 'reciprocal identity processes'. These theoretical themes had already been defined as the sensitising concepts when the interview guideline was set up, whilst new sensitising concepts also emerged from abductively relating interview segments to concepts from the theoretical framework.

Through the attachment of the themes to these paragraphs in each interview transcript, the chronological order of the interview itself was retained in the document. This ensured that no specific paragraph would be taken out of the context of the interview itself. Thus, I regarded the interviews as 'holistic' (Bilic, 2013, p. 104), interpreting segments as part of the 'whole story', and as belonging to a particular family. As the interview guideline had directed the main course of the interviews, most of the formulated themes could be used to structure other transcripts, and allowed a comparison of parts of the different transcripts in the next phase of data analysis, using a coding scheme. Notwithstanding this overlap, new themes also emerged from the different interactions, which were then used to structure these particular interviews as well.

It is important to mention that, within the different parts of the interviews, specific smaller interview segments could be related to other themes than the theme under which it had been categorised. In this respect the coding process was a crucial methodological step. The first round of coding consisted of open coding. It is interesting to mention here that most of this first round of coding was done during the transcription of the interviews. Formulating these codes while listening to the parents and transcribing their input helped me to be as engaged with the parents' expressions as possible. I attempted to adequately relate the codes to the context of the interview, without isolating relevant interview segments from the context as they emerged in the rest of the interview. Thus, the formulation of the initial codes occurred inductively where possible. After transcription, this coding process was continued further by going through the individual interview transcripts, where I both inductively and theoretically informed coded the interview segments. In this, I once again did not isolate specific sentences from the larger context of the interview. For instance, if a parent explained something, he or she often used examples from daily life, or related it to previous parts of the interview. Therefore, I sometimes coded larger interview segments, to prevent the isolation of specific parts from the context in the interview.

To help structure this process, a coding scheme was set up for some individual interviews, starting with data from the second interview and later also with data from the first

and third interview. The formulated themes were used to provide the preliminary structure of one specific coding scheme. Alongside the column with the themes, I included a column with 'first order constructs' (grounded thinking; codes in words or phrases; subcategories; the codes as formulated in the transcripts of the interviews) and a column with 'second order constructs' (deductive thinking; theoretically interpreted codes). While filling in the themes and codes in the coding scheme, I started to subcategorise the themes and codes, which led to the emergence of a hierarchical structure. A third column included references and more in-depth associations to the relevant theory and the theoretical framework. This helped me to keep a clear view of possible associations between data and theory. At the same time I was cautious to avoid theorising the data too much. Realising this possible pitfall, open coding and reading through the data with only the main theoretical concepts in the background of my thinking were important here.

The aim of setting up these coding schemes was not to develop perfectly complete coding schemes. Rather, it offered the opportunity, in these initial steps of the data analysis, to further familiarise myself with the data, to think thoroughly about the formulated themes again, and particularly, to subdivide and categorise the data, formulate subthemes (subcategories on themes) and codes on hierarchical levels, and to identify relations between data and theory. This informed and inspired the process of analysis in the following interviews, although particular attention was paid to newly emerging findings as well.

4. The construction of shared descriptive patterns, themes, and categories

After this abductive coding of the first five individual interview transcripts, the aim in this fourth phase was to compare the different interview transcripts and seek 'shared descriptive patterns, themes and categories' (Faber, 2012, p. 115). As the interview guideline was used for the interviews, general themes formulated in the previous third phase often overlapped in the resulting transcripts. Thus, similar issues appeared in the analysis of the interview data of different respondents. While the interviews were semi-structured, each interview also included unique parts. Participants described personal issues that originated from their personal experiences. Patterns that were found to be 'shared' between participants were thus based on similar or comparable answers of participants to identical interview questions. In addition, here the 'investigator responsiveness' (Morse et al., 2002) was crucial once again, to reflect on participants' responses and decide whether responses by different participants were comparable, given their different contexts.

In this phase of the analysis, I continued with the second round of interviews. Similarly to the first round of data collection and analysis, in this second round I again pursued the third verification mechanism, the concurrent collecting and analysing of data (Morse et al., 2002). In this second round, I also pursued the fourth verification mechanism, by constant checking

ideas in new data and vice versa. Furthermore, the first round of conducting and analysing interviews informed my analytical thinking during the second round of interviews, and led to the initial codes, themes, categories, and theoretical interpretations and ideas to be checked in this second round of conduction and analysis.

In this second round, the process of familiarising, transcribing, thematising, and abductive coding occurred in a similar way to the first round of coding, as described in the previous phases. This fourth phase of analysis then continued by comparing the emerging findings and theoretical ideas in the second round of interviews with previous findings and ideas from the first round. This resulted in new themes and insights, sometimes resonating with previously unseen findings in the first round. The analysis of the results then continued with a more in-depth search for social mechanisms and building theory, described in the next phase of data analysis.

5. Moving from descriptive findings to social mechanisms

In this phase, the emphasis lay on gradual theory building. This phase thus gradually arose from the previous phases, in which the thinking in theoretical concepts had already begun. In this final phase, I thus especially pursued the fifth and final verification strategy, 'theory development' (Morse et al., 2002). In line with the abductive approach in this study, in this phase, I explicitly involved the theoretical framework by reading through the original sources used in the theoretical framework again, alongside going through the analysed data as described in the previous phases. This then continued with a careful theoretical interpretation of the empirical data as identified in the previous phases. Thus, 'in discussion with the theoretical framework' (Faber, 2012, p. 117), the interview data was further interpreted.

I revisited (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012) the interview data several times, using new theoretical insights to advance a deeper understanding. For instance, after conducting the first round of interviews, I designed schemes in PowerPoint to draw and outline the comprehensive dynamics in the identity processes emerging from the data. Alongside conducting the second round of interviews, I revisited the previous data, and started reading about such identity processes. I found that adding the model of Kerpelman et al. (1997) was helpful, as the reciprocal identity processes between parent-child, child-teacher, and parent-teacher could offer an explanation for the comprehensive dynamics I had outlined in PowerPoint before. Thus, I chose to include these additional theories to be better able to explain the parents' situations which involved their children and their children's teachers.

In this phase, the use of identity theory was expanded by several more theoretical approaches, whilst acknowledging that these theories are fallible but useful to offer explanations. In some of these instances, specific participants helped me to realise the importance of particular new theoretical insights. For instance, the need for a broad, somehow

holistic approach, a contextualized analysis, of the parents' experiences especially emerged when I interviewed Maysa during the sixth interview. Maysa made me realise that parents' experiences reside in a very comprehensive field, much broader than interactions in educational contexts alone. They reside in the field of television programmes, government policy, and so forth. This thought was reflected in previously conducted interviews, although I had not consciously realised it before. Simultaneously, I found that I needed a theoretical approach of the context in which the orthodox reformed parents described experiences in the context of the religious schools. Based on these thinking processes, I started reading theories on the context of identity development and formation, and adapted and adjusted these into the abductive analysis of the interview data.

In this gradually building of theory, I was also led from old to new theoretical insights in several cases. For instance, based on the centrality of 'identity verification' in identity theory, and 'identity recognition' in the writing of Taylor (1994) and other research (Hopkins and Blackwood, 2011; Rissanen, 2020), I expected parents to aim for the recognition of their identities in social interactions within educational contexts. However, I found that the parents were primarily aiming to live for 'God as the significant Other' instead. Furthermore, based on theory on the social identity of religious identity (Ysseldyk et al., 2010), I expected to find the identity base of group identity to be the driving force behind the parents' stances in society. However, surprisingly, I repeatedly found individual religiosity (Ter Avest, 2021) and 'person identity', rather than 'group identity', to be the driving force behind the parents' stances. This change in theoretical insight offered a better explanation and resonated with other theoretical insights (Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2014).

In this phase, I also sought to abstract causal structures from the data. According to critical realists, a causal structure can manifest itself in different ways in the empirical domain. Such a 'key causal mechanism' (Fletcher, 2017, p. 189), being 'capable of generating the phenomena that have been observed, measured or experienced' (Zachariadis et al., 2013, p. 866), seemed to be the parents' identity concern towards their children's religious identities. This identity concern often seems a causal structure that allows the parents to correct for educational influences in a diversity of ways at home. Additionally, the aspect of 'generativity' of the parents' religious identities seems to play an underlying causal role, both as elaborated upon in theological or dogmatic understandings (understanding of baptism, child as gift from God/Allah) as well as originating from the parents' emotional involvement in their children's religious identities. Thus, I sought and abstracted several causal structures 'capable of generating the phenomena' from the data (Zachariadis et al., 2013, p. 866). In the following chapters these findings will be presented.

Conclusion

To answer the research questions formulated at the beginning of this chapter, the ontological and epistemological positioning of this study serves the research design, including the data analysis. In line with the philosophy of critical realism, reality is viewed as preceding epistemology. Thus, the purpose of this research study determined the best appropriate method. As the purpose of this study is to gain deeper insights into and understanding of parents' processes of religious identity negotiation in the context of education, a qualitative method of in-depth interviews with religious parents was chosen as the best appropriate method for achieving this purpose.

Participants were selected via gatekeepers at religious places of worship in two religious groups: Turkish-Muslim parents (Diyanet mosques) and orthodox reformed parents (churches Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands). Accessing the religious communities during the covid-19 pandemic proved to be challenging. From purposive sampling via gatekeepers in places of religious worship to snowball sampling, sixteen participants were recruited who took part in a total of ten interviews. The participants were informed via an information letter, in which ethical aspects of the research procedure were stated. Informed consent was gained before the start of the interviews. Apart from one interview conducted in a mosque, all interviews were conducted at the parents' homes. This introduced me into the parents' home contexts, offering insight into the participants' backgrounds. These were shown to be diverse, especially in terms of employment and social positions.

There were two phases to the in-depth interviews. In the first phase five interviews were conducted, simultaneously transcribed and analysed. Informed by the transcription and analysis of these first five interviews, the data collection continued with five further interviews, followed by transcription and analysis of these, which occurred together with a further analysis of the preliminary five interviews. During the interviews, the ethical and 'sympathetic' treatment of the participants was central. Open ended questions guided the conversations, while I sought to establish a safe space for the participants and to interact empathetically, offering space for any emerging emotions.

Particularly central to the interviews and the analysis of the interview data were the ethical considerations, and considerations regarding the reliability and validity of the data. To pursue the reliability and validity of the data, verification mechanisms (Morse et al., 2002) were applied and reflected upon during the ongoing phases of data collection and analysis. In the abductive analysis of the data, findings were analysed based on a combination of inductive and deductive analysis, and continually linked to the research questions. The data analysis moved through five phases, from familiarising myself with the data, to consolidating relevant parts, to organising, thematising and coding the data, and finally, to abstracting social

mechanisms and underlying structures from the data. In the following section, I give an overview of the chapters that present the results.

Outline of the chapters that present the results

This final section outlines the structure of the chapters (five to eight) that contain the results. These chapters present the findings abstracted from the data as collected during the interviews with religious parents in order to answer the research questions. Chapter five presents an exploration of the parents' religious identities. In this chapter, I attempt to capture the parents' religious identity standards, in order to provide insight into the basis from which the parents negotiate their religious identities in the educational contexts. Here, an interwovenness of the parents' religious and parenting identities is presented. Chapter six explores the personal experiences of the parents, which are structured based on the interpretation of the contextual meaning of these experiences. In this chapter, I discuss how parents' experiences reside in a comprehensive context, broader than only the school world.

By describing and abstracting both the basic identity standards and the personal experiences of the religious parents in chapters five and six, I set the stage for the findings presented in chapters seven and eight. Chapter seven provides the analysis of the processes of parents' religious identity negotiation. This chapter starts with the parents' negotiations which, surprisingly, seem to go beyond the search for verification of their religious identities. It is then demonstrated that parents often do not disclose their identities in educational contexts. Aspects in processes of parents' (non)disclosure of their religious identities in educational contexts are also comprehensively explored here. The data suggest that religious parents often do not disclose their religious identities in challenging situations, but instead 'unseen dynamics' seem to play a role. The seventh chapter ends with a presentation of these unseen dynamics that find place in the educational contexts.

Finally, in chapter eight, flowing from these unseen dynamics, I will present so-called 'reciprocal identity processes'. Parents seem to turn to these reciprocal identity processes, wishing to correct educational influences on their children. These identity processes are especially relevant when more than one identity system is involved in the process of the parents' religious identity negotiation. Here, the parent-child, parent-teacher, and teacher-child interactions and relationships are seen to be involved. In some minor occasions, the parents outline how children reciprocally influenced parents' identity systems, as such, impacting the processes of the parents' religious identity negotiation. These result chapters are then followed by chapter 9, which presents the discussion and conclusion of this study.

Chapter 5. The religious parent: identity standard across situations relating to a living God

Introduction

In this research project, I examine religious parents' processes of identity negotiation in educational contexts. These processes originate from the parents' basic self-defined identity standards (Stets and Serpe, 2013). Therefore, in studying identity processes, it is first of all important to know how participants define their own identity meanings and how they formulate their religious identities, rather than imposing a pre-defined identity (Stets and Serpe, 2013). For this reason this present chapter will explore parents' religious identity standards in-depth, thus answering research question 1:

Research question 1. How are the religious identity standards described and experienced by the religious parents?

Aiming to find how the parents subjectively view and experience their religious identities, in the interview guideline, they were asked an introductory question concerning what their religion, and thus their religious identity, meant to them. According to Taylor (1994), over the years, an identity has been related to the ultimate sense of being yourself, the 'own particular way of being', also called 'authenticity' (p. 28). Taylor mentions the work of Mead (1934) as influential in this respect. In line with Mead (1934), Taylor argues that the recognition of such an identity is about the 'ideal of authenticity', the idea of 'being true to oneself' (1994, p. 31), which has become morally significant over the years. This chapter explores how parents describe their religious identities using theoretical aspects of identity theory[10], which is rooted in the work of Mead (1934). Doing so, the aim is to understand how parents experience this particular 'own way of being' with regard to their religious identities.

The findings in this chapter are presented in three sections. First, this study found that parents express their religious identity standards as individualised, related to a personal God and relevant across situations. This relevance emerges especially in parents' moral actions,

[10] As outlined in the methodology chapter, this study uses theoretical concepts of identity theory as explanatory hypotheses (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012) and to 'identify causal mechanisms' (Fletcher, 2017, p. 182). Theoretical concepts are not viewed as determining religious parents' realities. Rather, the concepts facilitate the analysis in providing 'sociologically interesting ways' to approach religious parents' responses in the interviews (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012, p. 176). From this perspective, theoretical concepts of identity theory are applied in this study.

pointing to a unity of their moral and religious identities. Second, parents indicate an interwovenness of their religious and parenting identities. This interwovenness emerges in three ways: in their actions, in their transcendental relational aspects, and in their religious responsibilities towards their children. For the Turkish-Muslim parents, their ethnic and national Turkish identity additionally plays a role alongside their religious identities. Related to the interwovenness of the religious and parenting identities, parents formulate specific content they want to transmit to their children, such as teachings from the Prophet Muhammed or knowing Jesus as a Saviour. Thus, parents emphasise transcendental relational aspects they want their children to be involved in. In this study, this facet is approached as part of parents' identities, using the theoretical concept of 'identity concern' (Schachter and Ventura, 2008), that parents hold towards their children's religious identities. The third and final section of this chapter will present the differences which emerge between the identity standards of the Muslim and Christian parents. Following these foundational aspects, parents' experiences and the in-depth processes of their religious identity negotiation are presented in chapters 6, 7 and 8.

Religious identity standard: relating to a personal God across situations

All parents describe their religious identities as relevant in a range of situations. Each parent points to the importance of the religious identity across situations, as all use terms such as 'everything' and 'everyday'. For instance, Selim, a Muslim father, describes a diversity of aspects in which his religious identity is relevant and practically present:

> *Selim: … It has to do with everything. How we treat our children, how we treat people, how we treat neighbours; everything goes back to religion. It's not something we... we don't say we were raised Muslim. We are just Muslims and we live Islam. Literally.*

Both Christian and Muslim parents mention the relevance of their religious identities in different situations, and an awareness of relating to an existing, living God. Selim illustrates this with the importance of prayer, stating that its aim is to be 'reminded of God five times a day':

> *Selim: It is what we wake up with and what we go to sleep with. So you get up with prayer, that's what it's for. And you go to sleep after prayer. (…) You get up with God and you go to sleep with God. (…) that you are reminded of God five times a day, and that you kneel all the way down before God with your head on the ground and… there is no place where you are more humble than completely… [stops talking]*

Here, Selim especially maintains his humility towards God, when he says 'that you kneel all the way down before God with your head on the ground (…)'. In describing their religious

identities, parents describe this relationship with God as relating to a higher Being above human beings. For instance, Marianne, a Christian mother, describes knowing ‘that there is a God Who stands above your life’, which forms the ‘basis from which you think, act, do, raise children’:

> *Marianne: Well, I do think the awareness, what you have yourself - but it's not about ourselves of course - that we uh... yes, are created and that we are dependent in everything and that you know that there is a God Who stands above your life. I think that is a basis from which you think, act, do, raise children. Yes. In all daily things, actually. Without… - a very important [Bible] verse: "Without Me you can do nothing".*

Apart from the relevance of her religious identity in various situations, in the extract above Marianne emphasises the dependency on the Person of God. To illustrate her argument Marianne cites from a religious source, the Bible. Thus, all parents mention the relevance of their religious identities across all domains of their lives, and they especially stress their relationship with a higher God, just as Marianne expresses that she is dependent on God. The importance of their religious identities across all domains of their lives points to the value parents attach to their religious identities, and reflects the high identity prominence (Brenner, 2019) of their religious identities.

Alongside these two main aspects, several parents describe the social aspects of their religious identities. For instance, Zamira mentions both the pervasiveness of her religion in her daily life and her thoughts about the Person of Allah, ‘I don’t only think of Allah when I’m having a hard time’. In addition, Zamira notes she is grateful for many things, including ‘those contacts, that bond’:

> *Zamira: In everyday life we focus on faith, which shows us the way. Ehm, I can't do without that, if it's up to me, I can't find my way. That makes my life easier, from all sides. Yes that means a lot to me, that means everything to me.*
> *Interviewer: What do you mean easier, 'it makes my life easier'?*
> *Zamira: With everything, like dealing with difficulty, loss, raising my children, standing strong on both feet. And… how you look around you. (…) … I don't only think about Allah when I'm having a hard time. Not that. There are also many things that I remain grateful for, that I’m also very happy and glad about. So not just that I'm just in sorrow and then, 'oh yes Allah helps me', not that. But if I get something nice, say, if something nice happens in my life, yes, actually everything, in life I am grateful, [for] those contacts, that bond.*

In describing their religious identities, besides relating to God, many parents like Zamira mention their connection to members within their religious communities. Several specific

theoretical concepts of identity theory can facilitate a deeper analysis in this respect. Identity theory defines 'three bases' for an identity: group identity, role identity, and person identity. A person identity distinguishes a person from other persons, as the identity meanings of a person identity are unique to each individual (Burke and Stets, 2009; Savage et al., 2017, p. 513; Stets and Serpe, 2013, p. 38). Additionally, these unique identity meanings of a person identity are applicable across situations (Burke and Stets, 2009). In contrast, a group identity is location specific, bound to particular situations and unrelated to new content (Stets and Serpe, 2013). As noted above, all parents mention the relevance of their religious identities across situations, reflecting the theoretical concept of the person identity.

As these theoretical concepts were included in the interview guideline as sensitising concepts, the categorisation of the religious identity as a group or a person identity was also discussed. Evert and Dianne, for example, compare their membership of their church with their personal religious identity:

> *Evert: I feel, of course, in a certain group - I am a member of the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands [church denomination], (...) I feel related to that.*
> *Dianne: Yes, me too.*
> *Evert: But there are also things that I have experienced there, that I definitely do not feel related to. So in that sense, that group, to that… no.*

As the parents indicate, they do feel committed to their religious group, but they also have an individual motivation to believe. Even more, they show agency to think as individuals, to think differently from their religious community:

> *Evert: In the end it is also, it should be a bit, eh, people are kind of herd animals... you join something of course, but... There, I think that we... yes, we really are as a person [in that]…*

Evert illustrates this, by explicitly stating he acts as an individual within his religious community. According to Evert, there is no difference between acting as an individual when undertaking something individually and acting as an individual within his religious community, in other words, while 'walking in that group':

> *Evert: Look, I behave in that sense, um… not much different from when I walk in that group [the religious community] than when I walk through the zoo as an individual.*

Later in the interview, Dianne explains that she was confronted with an identity-relevant situation in the educational context of her child. When asked what role her church-membership played in the situation, she responds:

> *Dianne: I think at that time it wasn't a matter of what kind of church I came from, but I just thought that song was irreverent. Had I been in the Reformed Congregations [church denomination which majority of children of that school attend, different from the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands which the selected group of Christian parents attend], I would still have found that song irreverent. That is really my conscience, my feeling, this is not possible. This doesn't fit my way of believing, I'm just mentioning it, so to speak.*

It seems that Evert and Dianne experience their religious identity standards more as a person identity rather than as a group identity. As Dianne says, 'that is really my conscience, my feeling'. As Stets and Serpe (2013) have noted, role, group and person identities can also overlap. This becomes apparent when Evert and Dianne mention both their commitment to their church group membership and their personal convictions on religious issues, or when Zamira describes both the relevance of her religious identity across situations and 'those contacts, that bond'. Here, it seems that the parents experience their religious identity as a person identity as well as a group identity. As all parents predominantly state the prominence of their religious identities across situations and the individual relevance of their religious identities to them, these religious identities could primarily be considered as person identities. The daily and practical relevance of the parents' religious identities especially emerges in their accounts of moral actions, outlined in the next section.

Moral actions originating from parents' religious identities

As noted above, the parents in this study explicitly describe the practical and daily relevance of their religious identities in their lives. This relevance of their religious identity in all life domains seems to be ingrained in an awareness of and a relationship with 'a God who stands above your life'. Parents express this awareness and this relationship in their (parenting) behaviour, and especially in more concrete terms in their moral behaviour.

For instance, Maria, a Christian mother, describes how she approaches her children on 'doing wrong things', where she seeks to emphasise the relational aspect with God towards her children:

> *Maria: … so if you do things. Doing wrong things. That it is not only called: 'you did that wrong so you get punishment', but 'you also aggrieve the Lord with that'.*

Thus, Maria's moral parenting behaviour seems to originate from relational aspects in her religious identity, namely telling her children 'you also aggrieve the Lord with that'. In the context of education, a concrete situation of a parent expressing moral parenting behaviour that originates from his religious identity appears, when Evert, a Christian father, cites something his child said. In this situation, his child expresses negative thoughts about a teacher. Evert seems to interpret the situation from the perspective of his religious identity, and based on this, describes his moral stance:

> *Evert: 'That teacher, that is nothing'. Well, that's not how we talk about grown people. You know, valuing everyone. (…) So you really try to have the Bible as your guideline in everything. Really in everything.*

For Evert, his religious identity is central in a concrete situation concerning a moral issue in his child's upbringing. During all of the interviews the religious identities of the parents seem to form the background from which they draw concrete moral conclusions to aid the upbringing of their children. Maysa, a Muslim mother, mentions the importance of 'life' in her faith, and how 'life' is valued in her daily life:

> *Maysa: Because according to our faith, and in the Quran, we must not kill anyone. Let alone another person. But not an ant either. My children respect that too, when they see an ant, or a bee…*

In the extract above, Maysa connects different aspects: 'our faith', a religious source as the Quran, the moral issue of killing, and concrete situations such as killing a small ant. Maysa concludes with combining all these aspects in her children's upbringing, 'my children respect that too (…)'. Apart from situations related to parenting, this morality is visible across life domains. To illustrate this, in Emine's perception, her moral behaviour of 'helping someone', seems to *originate* from her religious considerations, which are focused on the awareness of and a relationship with Allah, namely, 'for Him' and 'because it is a creature of Allah':

> *Emine: … you help someone, not so that he will help you as well, but you have satisfied Allah, you have done it for Him. You gave money to, say for Him [Allah], not for that person actually. Yes you help that person, but because it is a creature of Allah.*

These relational aspects with Allah, as the content of Emine's religious identity, seem to form the basis from which she enacts any behaviour. In addition, the discussions of moral issues by most parents again show the comprehensive relevance of religious identity in many

domains of parents' lives. Zamira maintains how moral behaviour, for example not stealing, is strongly related to a religious activity, such as prayer:

> *Zamira: … prayer stops from doing things like that [stealing etc.]. Then you are religious, then you are a good person.*

Viewing a moral identity as inspired by religion, or even arising from the religious identity, is in line with the work of Schachter and Ventura (2008), who found that orthodox Jewish parents use their religious identity as a 'medium' for moral behaviour. In contrast to Schachter and Ventura (2008), psychological theories on religious identity have often focused solely on religious aspects, and distinguished religious identities from moral identities (Hardy et al., 2017). However, such an approach could be too limited to gain a deeper understanding of processes in which religious and moral aspects are intertwined. As shown in the data above, moral aspects provide the parents' religious identities with 'identity content' (Hardy et al., 2017), rather than emerging independently as two distinguished types of identities, as a moral identity and a religious identity. Therefore, I argue that, within the educational context, the religious and moral identities of the parents should not be seen as separate constructs, but rather as one pervasive, interconnected, and relevant unity in all domains of life. This points to the next paragraph, where the interwovenness of both the parenting and religious identities of parents is explored.

Interwovenness of multiple identities: '… that is actually very much intertwined'

In terms of identity theory, Stryker (1980/2002) argued that a person has multiple identities, which are stored in a hierarchy (see also Finch and Stryker, 2020). Both the probability of whether a person will enact the identity (identity salience) or not and how a person values the identity (identity prominence) are related to this identity hierarchy. The theoretical concept of multiple identities, including the positions of identities in the identity hierarchy and the identity prominence they have for parents within their identity hierarchies, were included in the interview guideline as sensitising concepts.

As the parents describe their religious identities as relevant in all domains of their lives, during the interviews, the domains of parenting and parenting identities emerge as central topics in the discussions of their religious identities. Interestingly, instead of preferring one identity over another, most parents point to the interwovenness of both their religious and parenting identities. The parents express this interwovenness in three ways: in the their actions, in their transcendental relational aspects, and in their religious responsibilities towards their children.

Interwovenness expressed in actions

First, several parents express the interwovenness of their religious and parenting identities in their actions. For instance, Evert, a Christian father, maintains that he would not be able to prioritise any of these identities, substantiating his argument by using a Bible verse that represents the idea of the unity of both identities in actions:

> *Evert: You are a father and a Christian in one. I don't see much difference in that.(…) It says in the Bible[11]: 'You will teach your children when you go on the road and when you get home'.*

Evert also defines his identity standard as a Christian dad in more concrete terms, illustrating the unity of both identities by describing his own actions:

> *Evert: Dad puts the children to bed, we pray together. Dad reads from the Bible.*

Here, Evert seems to express his parenting identity *through* religious practices, such as praying and reading from the Bible, which he has interwoven in typical parenting activities, such as putting his children to bed. Thus, the identity of being a Christian dad, which implies two identities in one, is expressed through activities, bringing together these two identities. In addition, Evert locates these combined identities across time:

> *Evert: Yes, I don't believe I'm the Christian on Sunday and the father on weekdays - that's not how it works.*

According to Evert, both identities are continually interwoven, both across time and across situations, as he emphasises the unity of his religious identity and parenting identity. Emine, a Muslim mother, conveys this unity in actions when she describes her religious responsibility as expressed in the activity of raising her children:

> *Emine: Because I am responsible for myself and for my children. How I raise them and how I prepare them for this world.*

Thus, it seems that Emine includes any activity related to raising her child as her religious responsibility. Everything she does in order to prepare her children 'for this world' is related to her religious responsibility.

[11] Deuteronomy 6 verse 7 (Bible NIV): 'Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.'

Interwovenness expressed in transcendental relational aspects

Second, the interwovenness of both identities is expressed by parents when they describe relational aspects they experience with God. When asked how she views both identities, Emine reflects on this by explaining that she views them both as 'intertwined'. Emine does not distinguish between her religious identity and her parenting identity, as she says: 'it is actually not separate from each other'. She then substantiates her response, by arguing she 'received' her children 'from Allah':

> *Emine: … that is actually very much intertwined, it is actually not separate from each other. Look, um, I take care of my children because I know I received them from Allah.*

Here, Emine views the parenting and religious identities as interwoven, due to the relationship she experiences with Allah. She views her parenting identity as a gift from Allah, and thus, as connected to her religious identity. Emine explains further:

> *Emine: Allah loves us so much and He has put some of that [love] into motherhood. Do you understand? Because… no one else can be our mother in this world. But Allah has given that feeling to a mother. So you have to consider how great... how great are - yes what do you call that? How much he actually loves us. How great his love is for us. Because he… he gave motherhood to us, but then you have to think about how great his mercy is towards mankind.*

As Emine describes here, she views her parenting identity as interwoven in the relationship with Allah. She explains that she views the gift of motherhood as an ultimate gift of love from Allah, 'he gave motherhood to us, but then you have to think about how great his mercy is towards mankind'. Emine appears to be almost emotionally involved here. Apart from seeing her children as received from Allah, Emine also mentions that the Prophet Mohammed stressed the importance of parents in Islam:

> *Emine: The Prophet also said of uh, heaven is under your mother's feet. So that is how important your mother is. Father is also important. Parents are very important in Islam anyway…*

This interwovenness of the religious and parenting identities is also expressed by Sara, a Christian mother, who formulates her religious identity by associating it with what she wishes for 'everyone', including her children. Sara points to knowing Jesus, which she describes as a privilege which 'only Jesus can give':

> *Interviewer: What does your faith mean to you? In everyday life, and more personally?*

Sara: Everything. Yes, that uh… If you get to know Jesus, you are so privileged. Yes, you wish that for everyone. Also your children. But only Jesus can give that. Yes, so uh…

Sara emphasises the relational aspect with God as central to her religious identity standard, namely 'if you get to know Jesus, you are so privileged'. Sara wishes this for her children too, showing that she spontaneously associates her religious identity with her children. She states she is dependent on Jesus, pointing to the relationship with God and His authority in providing her children with the knowledge of Jesus. Thus, her relationship with God seems to play a pivotal role in the interwovenness of both Sara's religious identity and parenting identity.

Additionally, Sara's direct response of 'everything' in the extract above links back to the findings presented in the beginning of this chapter, where parents' religious identities were analysed as relevant across various situations. It also points to the high prominence of Sara's religious identity, as she attaches a high personal value to her faith by stating that her faith means 'everything' to her.

Interwovenness expressed in religious responsibility reflecting identity prominence

The interwovenness of parenting and religious identities is furthermore expressed in parents' explanations of their religious responsibility towards their children. For instance, Emine interprets motherhood and fatherhood as part of Islam, based on her view that her responsibility for the religious upbringing of her children falls under parents' responsibility:

Emine: Because I am responsible for myself and for my children. How I raise them and how I prepare them for this world. Because I see my children as my followers to say good things and leave good things behind, because that is my purpose in life. Not to judge other people.

Emine explains how, based on her religious convictions, she is not responsible for or able to judge other people, but is only responsible for her own and her children's intentions and behaviour. She mentions: 'I am responsible for myself and for my children', and thus views her children as an integral part of her own responsibility. This view, that children fall under their parents' religious responsibility, seems to constitute an important part of the parents' religious identity standards. Indeed, for Emine, being responsible for her children as her 'followers' and leaving them with 'good things', is her 'purpose in life'.

This final phrase, 'that is my purpose in life', once again draws attention to the high identity prominence of both interwoven identities for Ermine. It indicates that being responsible for her children's religious wellbeing is highly personally relevant and important in this religious mother's life. Furthermore, Emine mentions how her whole life is aimed at living for Allah, and her children are taking part in reaching for this higher aim:

Emine: In our faith, um, your child is a test for you. Because your child is one of you, you see. (…) Why have we come here, not for our children, but for our Lord. And you have to educate your children like that for your Lord.

As Emine explains, her child is 'one of' her, which again reflects the mother's responsibility for both herself and her children. Again, due to this, her parenting identity is interwoven with her religious identity. Emine describes this as 'your child is a test for you' and 'you have to educate your children like that for your Lord'. As Emine states, she feels responsible for educating her children, but her children are also part of her own religious life: 'a test'. In the same vein, 'we have come here, not for our children, but for our Lord', even suggests how, within the interwovenness of both identities, aspects of Emine's religious identity have a higher identity prominence over aspects of the parenting identity.

In the same way that Emine describes her 'purpose in life', a Christian mother, Maria, mentions a similar example, where this identity prominence is highlighted. Maria discusses the knowledge of 'the Lord Jesus as their Saviour', which is 'ultimately the goal of our lives, including their lives':

Maria: … by that I mean to say that they must know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. That's what it's all about in the end. And that, of course, is ultimately the goal of our lives, including their lives [children's lives]. Yes. And you so much wish that for them. [emotional]

Maria ends the final sentence emotionally overwhelmed. Maria expresses that she not only feels responsible for her children but also that, she is emotionally involved in wishing her children to 'know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour'. Here, the emotional value of the interwoven parenting and religious identities emerges for Maria, reflecting again the identity prominence of both interwoven identities. At the same time, the relational aspect of knowing God is central to Maria.

The interwovenness of the parenting and religious identities in parents' religious responsibilities towards their children is also expressed by Lea, a Christian mother, as she describes how she feels her children 'are entrusted' to her and how she sees a task in her children's 'spiritual wellbeing':

Lea: Well, from a certain feeling that you then say: yes. That child is traveling with me, so to speak. (...) Yes, sometimes you can feel that those children are entrusted to me. That I too… also for their spiritual wellbeing – yes… that's what I took the baptismal vow for. You will feel that. Yes.

In line with Lea's religious responsibilities towards her children, she 'took the baptismal vow'. Here, Lea's view resonates with Emine's view, namely, the view of receiving children from Allah, ('those children are entrusted to me') and therefore raising the children religiously. However, an interesting difference between the Muslim and Christian parents appears to emerge here. In Lea's view, as described in the latter extract, the baptism of children plays an important role in her experience of her religious responsibility. All the other Christian parents also mention the importance of baptism, the religious activity in which children are baptised in the name of a trinitarian God. Baptism points to the washing away of sins by God Himself, and part of the baptism is the parents' promise before God to raise their children in a Christian way.

This promise is comparable to Emine's view on religious responsibility towards children. However, here, Lea's promise is associated with God's promise of the washing away of sins. In contrast, Emine views her children as a test in her faith to live for Allah, Maysa describes how she tells her children how they can 'collect pearls' to enter heaven, and Selim stresses that 'Allah forgives whom he wills'. Thus, it seems that these Christian parents primarily base the upbringing of their children on God's promise, whereas the Muslim parents primarily base the upbringing of their children on their own efforts in their religious lives. The scale of this study is too small to be able to conclude whether this difference is a significant generalisable difference between Muslim and Christian parents' experiences, or to conclude if this has any significant implications for their religious identity negotiations. Similar and recurring among both groups of parents is the sense of religious responsibility towards their children, pointing to the interwovenness of the religious and parenting identities.

Finally, in some cases, the parenting identity shows to reinforce the religious identity. For example, Maysa, a Muslim mother, stresses how she became more religious after she had gotten pregnant. As Maysa explains she became more intrinsically motivated to practise her religious identity after she realised its importance for her child:

> *Maysa: … when I was 26, I learned to read the Quran. (…) Because I was pregnant with [name son], and I was like, if I don't learn that now, I can't give it to him like that. With that feeling, I was also - yes also with hormones and everything - I myself went to the mosque twice, to really learn it. And then there was the prayer, then the Imam called - and I always thought it was so important that my child heard that already in my womb. So I always tried, before the evening prayer, I was always in the mosque. To learn it myself, to actually update myself again.*

Based on these accounts, it seems that distinguished concepts for the two identities ordered in a hierarchy is not the most well-suited way to approach both identities. Rather, it would be better to view both identities as an interwoven and unified entity. Both the interwovenness and

the identity prominence of the two identities give insight into parents' basic attitudes in educational contexts. Before the parents' identity concerns that arise from their religious identities are analysed, the next section will examine the relevance of ethnic and national Turkish identity, in light of the multiple identities of the parents.

The relevance of ethnic and national Turkish identity

In light of the multiple identities of the parents, for the Turkish-Dutch Muslim parents it should be noted that ethnic and national identities (Wiley et al., 2019) also play a distinct role in relation to the parents' religious identities. In several instances, the Muslim parents express the importance of their national and ethnic identity to them, and state the relevance of it to their parenting. For instance, Maysa mentions the importance of national identity in parenting her own children, which she expresses through taking her children to national celebrations:

> *Maysa: And I always try to take my kids to Turkish events, Turkish parties too.*

Maysa expresses regret and sadness, seeing that, despite taking her children to Turkish activities, they cannot speak fluent Turkish. In this respect, she views the transmission of national identity in a more negative light compared to the transmission of religious identity, about which she feels much more positive, saying 'I think I'm doing well':

> *Maysa: But I also say: I got it a bit extreme from home. And I want that too. I really want to feel that. Living [that] very hard [/extensively]. And I just miss that. That's the only thing really… with faith I don't miss anything, I think I'm doing well, that I'm doing enough, but not with the Turkish nationality. And that hurts me the most of all. There I eh… why not? I do not know. Or, for example, I would really like my children to be able to speak Turkish the way they speak Dutch. But they can't. When [name son] speaks Turkish you really hear such an English accent, you know.*

Here, Maysa tells about her own upbringing and the emphasis her parents laid on the national identity in this. During the interview, she also expresses some doubts on whether her religious or national identity would prevail, but then gives equal priority to her religious and national identity, and, in contrast to Emine, places these both above her parenting identity:

> *Maysa: [about the Turkish national identity] … yes, is it beyond my faith? I have doubts about it. That is the only thing. Not parenthood, but Turkish nationality and my faith, parenthood might weigh less heavy than my nationality...*
> *Interviewer: And faith?*
> *Maysa: And faith. And faith. Yes. [It is] very hard.*

It is important to note that the parents differ in their prioritisation of the religious, parenting, ethnic or national identities. As Maysa expresses here, placing national or religious identities above the parenting identity was not common among Muslim parents. Rather, as previously discussed, most parents point to the interwovenness of the religious and parenting identities.

Important to note is that, for the Turkish-Dutch Muslim parents, their national identity appears to be deeply socially and historically rooted. As Maysa states in the following abstract, her father played an important role in maintaining the national identity in her family:

> *Maysa: … my father always said: we live in the Netherlands, we respect, we must participate in society, with the norms and values, but you absolutely must not lose your own norms and values. You have to hold on to it, that's all you have left in your life. So that's why I said in the beginning: in our house the Turkish flag has always hung in the living room. Always.*

Sometimes, those close to the parents influenced their practical choices regarding the upbringing of their children. Both Christian and Muslim parents often discuss details of their own religious upbringing and argue in line with persons they remember as being authoritative in their lives:

> *Dianne: Well, we used to have an elder and he always said at catechism that ….*
>
> *Maysa: My father, before he died, always said that it is a very good school.*

Emine, a Muslim mother, also stresses the difference she had observed in a western society, such as the Netherlands, concerning parent-child relationships. In this, she strongly relates to her social and family history:

> *Emine: Because it's very sad: in our society [Dutch], 18 years old - then children want to get out of the house. Then children want... but with us [Turkish-Muslim] it is actually like: how long you can stay with your parents... you actually only leave when you are married, because you want to be with them [parents], you want to help them. For example, I think it's very important for my mother… I need to hear her voice, you know, every day. Because I think it's important. She gave birth to me, she carried me in her belly for nine months, she took care of me.*

Here, the intergenerational aspect comes up once again when a mother points to her relationship with her own mother. In short, regarding the multiple identities of the parents, the data in my study suggest that the parenting identities and the religious identities in particular are deeply connected and cannot be positioned in a hierarchy. Ethnic and national identities additionally play a crucial role for Turkish-Muslim parents and, in some cases, are even

prioritised above the parenting identities. The next paragraph examines the parents' identity concerns arising from the interwovenness of the parenting and religious identities.

Interwovenness synthesised in religious identity concern

The previous paragraphs presented findings on how parents almost naturally seem to associate their parenting identities with their religious identities, which especially emerges through their actions, by centralising the relational aspects with God and their religious responsibilities towards their children. As mentioned in the literature review, Schachter and Ventura (2008) found that parents are involved in their children's religious identity development and defined this as the parents' 'identity concern'. Here, the parent fulfils the role of *identity agent* in the child's identity development. According to Schachter and Ventura (2008), this identity concern is not focused on 'imposing' a specific identity, but is indeed a concern, an involvement, of the parent with and a willingness to participate in the child's religious identity (development). Even more, this involvement is 'part of the agent's own identity, and may be part of the agent's generativity' (p. 469).

In line with this, this particular paragraph will explore this specific part of the parents' identity standards, namely their *identity concern* towards their children's identity development. In essence, it can be argued that the interwovenness of the parenting and religious identities, as part of the parents' own identities, resides in or is synthesised in their identity concern towards their children's identities. During the interviews, the parents express how they are involved in their children's identities. It is interesting to note that the parents particularly focus on specific contents. This contradicts the findings of Schachter and Ventura (2008), who noted that Jewish-orthodox parents were especially concerned with the structure their religious identities could offer their children, rather than the 'specific contents of Jewish Orthodoxy' (p. 470).

Such an identity concern is reflected when Selim notes 'we give that to our children', in contrast to the content of gender ideologies he says to observe in 'Dutch society', which he does 'not want to adopt':

> *Selim: That's what we call [Arabic word], how you behave in certain situations. We give that to our children. That is an aspect of Dutch society that we really do not want to adopt. That free… and that… you don't have to. That is a certain development in their life, it must happen in a normal way, as our Prophet taught it. And not forced.*

Selim seems to point to his identity concern as a 'basis', which differs from what he encountered in daily life in Dutch society. He then continues to stress that what he seeks for his children diverges from 'this society', and instead formulates his identity concern bringing it in line with his religion, 'as our Prophet taught it'. This seems to clearly point to content of

Selim's religious identity. Selim illustrates his viewpoint with the example of billboards promoting cheating within relationships:

> *Selim: I don't want to, I hate all those billboards. I once saw a billboard with 'Second Love'. For married people. That's just a website for married people. You know, where are we going in this society. That is a basis that I want to pass on to my children, very important. For me, he doesn't need to read about so many sexual erotic things at such a young age.*

Here, while explaining the identity concern Selim has about the identities of his children, Selim also describes his ideas and experiences with the frictions he encounters between his religious identity and ideas within society at large. Rather than being committed to a certain structure for the child's future life, his ideas and experiences seem to be particularly related to specific content, for instance, related to gender ideologies or, again, what 'the Prophet taught' (parents' experiences are explored more in-depth in chapter 6).

This focus on (religious) content in the parents' identity concern is also reflected by Maria, a Christian mother, when she discusses how she views the future of her children. Maria formulates her thinking carefully, as she expresses her worries for her children in an unknown future. Maria also conveys her involvement in and concern for her children's religious identity commitments, stating 'by that I mean that they must know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour':

> *Maria: Well, I have to be honest that I am looking forward to that with some concern. If I also look at the time in which they grow up. Then... yes. Then I worry about that, then I think: how will it all go? But then the most important thing is that they... eh... that they are safe. Look, of course they should, if they get the life that they can get older, old, we don't know how long the world will last. But the point is, if they die, what will it be like? That's actually what it eh... what weighs heaviest anyway. Wherever you have your responsibility, for the temporary life they have to go through, are allowed to go through.*
> *Interviewer: And you say, being safe. Ehm... suppose I was not religious, how would you...*
> *Maria: Yes, how would I explain that then? Ehm... I find that a bit difficult, because just... eh... yes, they must be safe, by that I mean that they must know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. That's what it's all about in the end. And that, of course, is ultimately the goal of our lives, including their lives. Yes. And you wish that so much for them. [emotional]*

In the extract above, Maria's thinking originates from contrasting the whole of her children's lives against 'if they die, what will it be like?'. From this standpoint, Maria notes what she views as most important in her children's lives, namely knowing God as a Person: 'they must know the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. That's what it's all about in the end'. Here, as Maria describes, her concern about her children's religious identities seems to originate from her deepest and

most basic religious convictions, which she completely connects to the ultimate 'goal' of her own life, as 'including their lives'. Thus, Maria's identity concern about her children not only arises from specific convictions, but rather is all encompassing, contrasted to notions of death, the ultimate goal in her own and her children's lives, and is ultimately focused on being 'safe' by knowing Jesus.

The parents' identity concerns reflecting identity content are also seen when Emine expresses her identity concern about her children's identities. Especially in conflicts surrounding 'good and evil', Emine turns to what she wants 'to show' her children, namely: 'Islam is the faith of Allah'. She says: 'that's good, that's what you want to get back to':

> *Emine: Look uh, look good and evil is in every human being. It doesn't matter what belief you are in. (...) You have such an assessment system internally. (...) And that assessment system; ehm I actually want to show my children: Islam is the faith of Allah. (...) And that is why it is very important that your assessment system internally, whatever you say about Allah, or about God, however you want to say it: that's good, that's what you want to get back to.*

In Emine's view her faith is universally applicable to 'every human being': every human being is part of it, as everyone has the 'assessment system', 'from Allah, or from God'. In this view, the right 'assessment system' for every human being, Muslim or not, is related to Allah. This suggests how Emine views her religion and stance in society, on which she bases her identity concern about her children's identities. Emine views her perspective as relevant to every human being. From this perspective, Emine's identity concern about her children's identity development arises.

Patrick, a Christian father, describes a similar perspective when he notes that the possibility of knowing God 'is really there for everyone'. Patrick sets out what aspects of his religious identity content he views as highly important for his children to become aware of, in Patrick's words, 'to reach the conscience':

> *Patrick: … we also try to live up to… (…) Who is God now. Is He just uh... Are we only relating to Him from our sinful hearts? That can of course be an approach, but we also try to pass on Who He is in His grace and mercy. And also that that possibility [of knowing Who God is] is really there for everyone. But that we also stand in our own way and that we also dishonour Him. And in the end we don't answer rightly to what the Lord… for [/with] us... what His message is to us. That you try to reach the conscience [among the children] that it is actually a conscious rejection that we do not return to the Lord. And that… yes, then you hope that makes them think. And not just from… that we have deserved punishment due to sin, but also that in the end, missing Him is the worst. And also what He has wanted to do for sinners, the lacking of*

that very thing [in our lives]… that that [what He wanted to do for sinners] receives no value in life: that is the worst.

In this extract Patrick sets out what he views as 'the worst', namely, the absence of God and not valuing what 'He has wanted to do for sinners'. Patrick deeply conceptualises his notions of Who he thinks the Person of God is and what he thinks is important to pass on to his children. He then continues to mention his child's conscience of the notions he has just carefully formulated: 'that you try to reach the conscience that it is actually a conscious rejection that we do not return to the Lord. And that… yes, then you hope that makes them think'. Patrick seems to be consciously engaging with his children's processes of religious identity formation and negotiation here, by taking their thinking processes into consideration. He mentions he hopes that his appeals to his children's consciences will enact a thinking process in the children themselves, reflecting the identity concern Patrick holds about his children's religious identities. In this context, Patrick says that he seeks to pass on knowledge concerning 'Who is God now'.

The extract above illustrates how in parents' identity concern with their children's religious identities relational aspects to God as a Being are centralised once more. Patrick shows to be deeply concerned with his children to be related to God. This also surfaces when a Christian mother[12] expresses her deep sadness that two of her children are no longer religious (see for similar findings Barrow, Dollahite and Marks, 2021). Although these two children are emerging adults at the time of the interview, the mother still negotiates her identity concern about these older children. As she notes, she especially relies and expresses her dependency on this relationship with God as a Being: 'And His name is Wonderful, so it is not too wonderful for Him either':

Christian mother: … And you know, I bring all that to the Lord Jesus, all my shortages, yes. Because yes, He also promises that if you teach the children when they are young, that when they are old they will not deviate from it. But um, we have two kids who don't want to know much about it at the moment, so um... that's um, quite difficult.
Interviewer: Yes, I can imagine that... But you see that as your own failure or...?
Christian mother: Well, I have to be careful about that. That is, I do get attacked with that yes. That the devil says: 'see, it is not real for you, otherwise your children would follow 'the trail' [Dutch saying, implying that children follow the parents' ways of life]'. Hey, in that too I have to learn that He [Jesus/God] has to do it. And His name is Wonderful, so it is not too wonderful for Him either [the return of her children to Christianity]. I definitely still have hope.

[12] To guarantee the anonymity of this mother, her fictional name is not given.

Alongside the parents' own identity concerns about their children's identities, the parents also express their dependency on God in this respect. For instance, in the extract above, the Christian mother mentions she sometimes views the fact that her children do not attend church as her own failure. Then she feels 'attacked' by 'the devil', but she still has hope for her children. Here, she finds support by 'bringing it to the Lord Jesus'. In their accounts of their concerns about their children's identities, the parents regularly express such a dependency or humbleness towards God or Allah. For instance, both Dianne, a Christian mother, and Selim, a Muslim father, explicitly state their humbleness:

> *Dianne: …teach them more (…) faith, for as far as we humans are able to do that.*

> *Selim: So we try to imitate him [the Prophet] even though we cannot imitate him.*

The Christian mother, having non-religious children, especially points to the importance of the Holy Spirit in her children's faith:

> *Christian mother: But you see, when they do come to repentance later, they take that back. Then you gave them that baggage after all. But God has to apply it, the Holy Spirit has to apply it.*

In these accounts, the parents seem to have an awareness of specifically their 'partial' involvement in their children's religious identity development. In contrast to what Schachter and Ventura (2008, p. 463) found, this partial ability seems not only to be due to the child's autonomy or contextual influences, but also to their awareness of Jesus, Allah, God, or the Prophet Muhammed as being of much more significance than the parents themselves.

The centrality of the perspective of God as a Being, as described above, is clearly expressed in the parents' involvements in their children's religious practices. Zamira, a Muslim mother, explains that she seeks the sincere involvement of her child in religious practice, rather than doing the practice in itself. In other words, the child's motivation should be aimed at the 'use to Allah':

> *Zamira: I can say to her: you have to, then she will do it, but then she will do it for me, not for Allah. That is of no use to Allah. (…) then my children ask: "why do you pray mama, so many times a day? Why do you do that?'. Then I explain to them: 'because Allah wants it, because I believe in it'.*

Dianne, a Christian mother, describes a similar consideration regarding her children's religious practices, when she describes 'we may not want something, but if God does not want it…':

Dianne: You can of course feel something inside as a parent, hey: you can set a certain rule like, well, 'I don't want that', but we try to prove that from the Bible, or at least to teach: that's where it comes from. We may not want something, but if God does not want it, that is ultimately what is… what is important.

In these accounts, 'if God does not want it' or 'because Allah wants it' seem to be the central aims of these parents' identity concerns about their children's identities and lives. Thus, relational aspects with God as a living Being seem to be most important for the parents in their actions and considerations, synthesised in their identity concerns, regarding their children's religious identities. Such relational aspects of God are again reflected in the accounts of Christian parents Patrick and Maria. Patrick stresses that they seek to let their children understand that 'God is a living Being', 'Who we actually touch by our actions':

Patrick: But if you yourself come to an understanding of..., yes, you also try to indicate that... thinking about things... that you are also accountable for that. And not so much task-related, really. We try to stay away from that. Because otherwise it can become so perfunctory. But also to put in certain emotions. Like: so if you do something that is not right, then you also aggrieve the Lord. To try to... certain... a living... God is a living Being. Who not only prescribes laws, but Who we actually touch by our actions. Yes.

Maria adds to this:

Maria: … so if you do things. Doing wrong things. That it is not only called: 'you do that wrong so you get punishment', but 'you also aggrieve the Lord with that'.

In these phrases, Maria describes relational aspects of the Person of God, a Being to Whom her children relate. Patrick explains these relational aspects, comparing them to relationships amongst humans, though also stressing to be careful not to approach God in a human way:

Patrick: You shouldn't do it in a too human way.... But of course it is in the end… But you do try to convey that: you don't do that to each other either. If you get something from each other, then you also owe each other out of love – if it is good of course – at least gratitude. So in everyday dealings with each other. And then in a much higher degree to the Lord, that should be. And also that, that, well let's say, He sees and hears all things, and that also out of, yes not just out of fear. And that you deal with things… ehm… but also, indeed, with a child, with the things of the day. Involve the Lord in this.

Patrick notes how he, on a daily level, tells his children to 'involve the Lord' in 'the things of the day'. In this, Patrick seems to seek to foster a relationship between his children and 'the Lord'. This appears to be the aim of his identity concern towards his children's daily lives. Later in the interview, Patrick associates his religious identity standard, his 'convictions', and religious experiences regarding how he thinks a person can 'be saved', with educational situations:

> *Patrick: Yes, then you still got… look, but that also comes from my thinking. So if you... um... I've had some pretty strong convictions. And also... Yes, imagine that you felt as if [you] were going into eternity and that you felt yourself sinking away, as it were... Look if you have lived through that, and that you really thought of: that you would go into [a] disaster like this... So I can, on the one hand... ehm... yes that, I, I... for myself I think that is a certain... Yes, whether that is an evangelical movement [Patrick points to a situation in school in which he disagreed]? But the impossibility that, so... eh, to be saved, I also think that that... that is of course one's own conviction, that is also seen from within ourselves, really impossible to ehm... hey, apart from the blood and outside of Christ it is also impossible to get grace and go to God. And then you sometimes hear sounds [pointing to situation in school], and then you sometimes hear... And then I think that... And then I am convinced that that [the 'sounds' he heard in the situation at school] is really different, but that that [how Patrick thinks a person can be saved] is not a prescribed way, that you have to say: that must all be lived through so and so. But I quickly become apprehensive as the essential characteristics of the sorrow for God and… because I think that is also, that is of course also written in the Bible[13], that irreproachable repentance [/ repentance without regret]… and what is also essential is that the Lord Jesus will actually get value for you. And that can be so different. That can make a lot of difference in faith knowledge. But if you don't get those – let's say healthy Biblical truths – if these aren't highlighted or neglected… yes, then, then, it kind of hits me. I think we should start with that, back in the Bible. Yes, I did notice a few things at school, what you got in return, we said [something] about that at one point. And we don't do that so quickly, that we immediately write a letter or something. [Doing] that is what I thought at the time.*

Patrick formulates these ideas as very personal, related to what he himself experienced, which again reflects the personal aspects of the religious identity standards of the parents. Peter describes how he had reflected upon these personal convictions in educational situations, and found he missed aspects of these 'essential characteristics' or 'healthy Biblical truths', due to which he addressed the school. Patrick particularly describes his personal religious convictions, constituting religious content, which he finds important for his children. There

[13] Patrick cites a Bible verse, 2 Corinthians 7:10a: 'Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret.'

seems to emerge a connection here between Patrick's identity concerns about his children's religious identities, and specific situations in the education of his children. Thus, his identity standard, of which the identity concern about his children is a part, here seems to become associated with educational situations. Such an association illustrates the impact of parents' religious identities, and in particular their identity concerns towards their children's religious identities, on educational contexts. Parents' experiences in such situations are analysed in the next chapter.

This section on parents' identity concern explored the role of parents' identity concerns about their children's religious identities, as conceptualised by Schachter and Ventura (2008). Interestingly, most parents especially formulate this involvement as originating from the content of their religious identity standards, rather than from the identity structure. This is in contrast to what Schachter and Ventura (2008) found, as they found that orthodox Jewish parents committed to the structure of their traditional Jewish identity in particular 'for the sake of' their children, because of its 'stable anchoring structure in a relativistic world'. They found the 'specific contents of Jewish Orthodoxy' amongst the parents as 'only a secondary consideration if at all' (p. 470).

In my study, the religious parents recurringly mention religious content, in terms of both specific themes and transcendental relational aspects. These seem to be the main elements they are involved with in their children's religious identities. They seek to direct their children towards a relation with a divine Person of God which, in itself, seems to guide the parents in their identity concern about their children. In particular, this involvement appears to arise from the parents' very personal religious thinking, contrasted to notions of death and being saved, as related to their children's lives. Therefore, in line with Schachter and Ventura (2008), this identity concern, this involvement with their children's identities, can be seen as part of the parents' own identity standards.

In some cases, parents associate their identity concerns with experiences of specific situations in their children's education. Before analysing such experiences further in the next chapter, the final section of this present chapter will present some notable differences between the Muslim and Christian parents' accounts of their identity standards.

The different identity standards of Muslim and Christian parents

Some notable differences emerge between the Muslim and Christian parents in their accounts of their personal identity standards. In order to provide as complete an insight as possible into the parents' identity standards, these differences will receive attention in this final section of this chapter. As both Christianity and the Islam are Abrahamic faiths, the religious expressions among both groups of parents consist of many similarities. This is reflected in the interviews, as both groups of parents express similar views of God, reality, eternal life, and their

commitment to their children's religious identities. However, some notable differences in their identity standards also emerge, which reflect the core difference between both religions.

In general terms, the main difference centres on the deity of the person of Jesus, seen as either the Son of God and a human who died and was resurrected to save human beings from eternal wrath (Christianity), or not seen as a God but rather as a prophet alongside the Prophet Muhammed, who stated there is no God but Allah (Islam). This is reflected in the religious identity negotiations of the interviewed parents. More specifically, this is indicated in their views on grace and the related need for a personal conversion. These latter two differences are therefore explored in this section.

In describing their relatedness to God, the Christian parents especially mention the additional need to be saved from their 'indulgence'. For instance, Bart-Jan emphasises that humans are 'naturally inclined to evil'. He stresses the difference between modern thinking and religious thinking:

> *Bart-Jan: Yes, knowing you're dependent. And, and… not knowing [thinking / assuming] that you can do everything based on your own strength. Yes… A person is inclined to evil. The modern [idea] is assuming the good in people, but you just have to be realistic and say; a man is naturally inclined to evil. So you have to be saved from indulgence.*

Bart-Jan views human beings as dependent in relation to God. The 'inclination to evil' and the need 'to be saved from indulgence' is a frequently mentioned aspect, especially among Christian parents. For instance, Patrick tells about his personal search to get to know the Person of God and how he learned about his 'lostness'. During his search he came to realise that it was 'like a closed road'. He then mentions one central event, in which he was 'shown by the hand that salvation now lay in Another', and also later learned more about 'Who He is':

> *Patrick: … then you get to the core, of the value it has. To sum it up a bit, but I then… learned to see the salvation outside of myself. (…) I think you can also say, like: that I have experienced my own lostness, that it [/there] was no longer a bliss and also no longer... no right anyway, but also no possibility to that anymore... eh... it was like a closed road eh... But that was one night, that sermon. And then I was, as it were, shown by the hand that salvation now lay in Another. Later on even more, maybe you can put it that way, [I] received further education in Who that is. Who He is.*

In the extract above, Patrick describes his search for the forgiveness of his sins through the salvation of Jesus Christ. Thus, in relating to the higher Being of God, the Christian parents also mention both aspects of sinfulness in human beings and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. This forgiveness of sins through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ points to an important difference

between Islam and Christianity, and thus between the Muslim and Christian parents. For instance, Selim describes Allah 'forgives whoever He wills', based on the sincerity of 'your actions':

> *Selim: The grace of God: He forgives whom He wills. In the end, uh… God is going to see if you were sincere in your actions. A small good deed is going to give you heaven. But if you pray for 80 years just so people see what a good Muslim that is. Yes, then you have had your reward on earth. Because you seek only the reward of other people. And that's how we look at grace. He forgives whomever He wills. And we see her [little daughter] as one who is without sin. How can she, of 3 years, have committed sin now. This is how we view it in the Islam. Very different from what is viewed in Christianity.*

Similarly, Maysa, a Muslim mother, describes how she educates her children to behave well, so they will 'collect pearls':

> *Maysa: So the more pearls we collect, so many points you will have to go to paradise.*

In contrast, Sara says that 'you don't have to do anything', as she explains how she is saved 'only by the blood of the Lord Jesus':

> *Sara: And at one point he says: only the blood of Jesus Christ. (…) for me, that was just… that's it. Only the blood of the Lord Jesus. (…) Everything, all your trying, all your works. (…) I went to church, and read the Bible and yes, that's all nothing. No. Only you have to land right at the bottom of the cross. Yes, you don't have to do anything. That was such a deliverance: but He has done everything. Yes. So yeah, that uh... Yeah.*

This difference is reflected in the parents' thinking, especially when the Christian parents mention the necessity of a personal conversion, defined as the forgiveness of sins or, as Sara puts it, as knowing 'that joy'. In contrast to the Muslim parents, knowing about such a personal conversion was a recurring theme in the Christian parents' formulations of their religious identities. Interestingly, the Christian parents describe an experienced distinction between the act of being converted and being a Christian:

> *Peter: Yes. Faith is… yes. Purely, of course, you can say of um, that's very personal, isn't it, that might be the question - being a Christian is another question. The personal question is of*

course eh, as stated in the Catechism[14] and how that should be experienced [/felt]. And then we have to... then I have to say, for myself, that we think we don't meet that, at least haven't had a conversion. And we have to say that with shame, anyway, that we do not share that belief. And yes, of course it is also, um, interpretation and someone else might think differently about it. Very personal of course. It is how it is… And um, again an awful truth, that in all the deficiencies you still try to educate and try to give hands and feet to it. To the truth...

Peter mentions he does not 'share that belief', which he says 'with shame'. However, he mentions he nevertheless tries to 'give hand and feet' to 'being a Christian'. This is a recurring theme amongst the Christian parents. This distinction between, on the one hand, personal faith and conversion and, on the other, living as a Christian, is well-known among orthodox reformed groups (cf. De Bruin-Wassinkmaat et al., 2021, p. 8). Sara describes this as a particular difficulty in her church denomination, 'a big struggle', of being sure to be converted and expressing that within the church:

Interviewer: And has it been like that all your life or?
Sara: Um, no. Of course it was a big struggle. Especially if you grow up in the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands. Yes, but I can say that I was stopped at 18, that I really did at 25, I can't say consciously, but I did know that joy. That you don't have to do anything. That the blood of Jesus grants the forgiveness of sins. Yes. But I didn't dare to express that until I was 32. Then in our community. Outside of that, I did dare to have conversations with others… I always went for a walk with the neighbour who didn't do anything [who wasn't religious]. And that uh… [she] asked me about all sorts of things, and that's why she actually came to believe.

In short, in contrast to the Muslim parents, the Christian parents express the need for personal conversion, to know 'that the blood of Jesus grants the forgiveness of sins'. Some of the parents openly describe this conversion, while others are aware of lacking the fulfilment of this need, which they then express to experience as a shameful aspect of their religious identities. The Muslim parents, however, are concerned with collecting 'pearls', instead of experiencing a conversion which constitutes redemption by a human God, Jesus.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to answer research question 1:

[14] Peter cites from one of the leading theological sources in Christian orthodox-reformed churches, the Heidelberger Catechism. This is one of the three confessions on which orthodox-reformed institutions, including schools, have based their (admission) policies.

Research question 1. How are the religious identity standards described and experienced by the religious parents?

In describing their religious identities, parents share a diversity of personal stories, experiences, expressions, and different ways of meaning making. As a result, it is found that their religious identities are reflected in a diversity of life domains, often expressed in their (moral) actions and originating from their use of holy books, such as the Bible or the Quran. In particular, the religious identities of these parents are shown to be focused on the relationship with the divine Person of God. This belief in a 'higher power' or God resonates with many studies on religion and religious identities (e.g. Pargament, 2002; De Bruin-Wassinkmaat et al., 2019).

This relevance of the parents' religious identities across life domains almost naturally results in the parents interweaving both their parenting and religious identities. The parents express this interwovenness in three ways, namely, through their actions, through transcendental relational aspects, and through their religious responsibility towards their children. This expressed interwovenness of both identities resides, or synthesises, in the parents' identity concerns (Schachter and Ventura, 2008) about their children's religious identity development and lives. In contrast to what Schachter and Ventura (2008) found, the religious parents frequently mention religious content, in terms of both specific themes and transcendental relational aspects. Furthermore, they seek to direct their children towards a relationship with a divine Person of God. This involvement seems to arise from the parents' very personal religious thinking, contrasted to notions of death and being saved and related to their children's lives. In line with Schachter and Ventura (2008), this involvement with their children's identities, called identity concern, can therefore be seen as part of the parents' own identity standards. As Patrick expresses, his negotiations surrounding issues in the education of his children follow from his very personal convictions, thinking, and being as a religious parent.

Overall, parents often express a high identity prominence, that is a high emotional value (Brenner, 2019), regarding both interwoven identities. Sometimes aspects of the religious identities seem to have a higher identity prominence over the parenting identities (see for similar findings among Somali-Muslim parents in the Swedish context, Haga, 2019).

As Christianity and Islam are both Abrahamic faiths, the Muslim and Christian parents express comparable views on God, reality, eternal life and their commitment to their children's religious identities throughout (resonating with earlier studies, e.g. Agius and Chircop, 1998; Marks, 2004; Dollahite et al., 2018; Kelley, Marks and Dollahite, 2020). The Christian parents especially express the need for conversion, in other words, knowing that the Person of Jesus, seen as the Son of God and a human, died and was resurrected to save individual people. In

contrast, Muslim parents especially express the need to ‘collect pearls’, by doing good in life for Allah and to thus have eternal life. Regardless of these differences, all parents are equally as convinced of the relevance of their religions in their daily lives. They live their religion in their daily lives, and in the upbringing of their children in particular.

The findings in this chapter offer insight into the basic identity standards from which the religious parents act in a broader educational context. Turning back to the introduction paragraph of this chapter, according to Taylor (1994), thinking on identity has been increasingly related to the ultimate sense of being yourself, the ‘own particular way of being’ (p. 28), over the years. Surprisingly, in the parents’ accounts of their religious identity standards, instead of ‘being true to oneself’ (Taylor, 1994, p. 30), all parents argue from a perspective of relating to a divine Person, to Whom their religious identities are directed. As Zamira indicates, ‘because Allah wills so, because I believe in it’. In the parents’ accounts of their religious identities, this dynamic relationship is relevant throughout all domains of their lives, and constitutes unique person identities rather than group identities (Burke and Stets, 2009; Stets and Serpe, 2013; Savage et al., 2017), reflecting individualised religiosity as described by Ter Avest in her keynote lecture at the ISREV-conference (July, 2021).

This emergence of the parents’ religious identities as person identities could provide insight into their possible appeals for action. A person identity is shown to be ‘salient across situations and contexts’ and will therefore also be activated in new situations and when new identity threats appear (Burke, 2004, p. 10). In line with existing research, if a religious identity can be categorised as a person identity, persons’ responses to appeals for action have shown to be stronger compared to an identity categorised as a group identity (Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2014). This could provide an explanation for the undertaking of actions by parents, such as public demonstrations as introduced in chapter 1.

The interwovenness of the parenting and religious identities shows the generativity of the parents’ religious identities. This intergenerational aspect of the religious identities of the parents sheds light on discussions on individual rights versus collective rights: in the experience of the religious parents, their children are part of their very own religious identities. As Emine noted ‘your child is one of you’. Addressing these parents thus based on ‘individual rights’ disconnects them from their own religious thinking as, according to them, their children‘s identities are in many ways interwoven with their own religious identity and part of their personal religious responsibility.

The interwovenness of the parenting and religious identities also shows that studying the societal participation of parents in the context of education requires an extra dimension. In contrast to other studies in identity research, studying the identity negotiation processes of the parent in an educational context not only requires studying processes of the minority identity,

but also examining the parents' concerns with the child's religious identity processes. This firstly points to studying the identity concern of the parent towards the child (Schachter and Ventura, 2008), and secondly, studying identity processes between parent and child, the so-called reciprocal identity processes (Kerpelman, Pitman and Lamke, 1997). Based on this finding, these two dimensions were included in this study during the ongoing phases of data collection and data analysis. Identity concern has been researched in this chapter, while the reciprocal identity processes are explored in chapter 8.

In conclusion, Taylor summarises possible answers to the question, 'who am I?' as identifications and commitments constituting one's 'frame or horizon' (1989, p. 27). According to Taylor, such a frame or horizon determines the moral stances of the individual, the 'fundamental moral orientation' (1989, p. 29). This is reflected in my findings, as the parents' religious identity standards guide their moral stances. According to Taylor, such a 'frame or horizon' develops in dialogue with 'significant others' (Taylor, 1994, p. 32). It is argued that it is especially this 'dialogical character' (Taylor, 1994, p. 32) of an identity in which recognition can find place (Mead, 1934; Taylor, 1989, 1994). In the next chapter a diverse range of such dialogical situations will be analysed, after which aspects and processes of the parents' religious identity negotiation will be discussed in chapters 7 and 8.

Chapter 6. Parents' personal experiences: a contextualised analysis

Introduction

This chapter examines the personal experiences in which parents negotiate their religious identities, thereby answering research question 2:

Research question 2. What are the personal experiences of religious parents (Christian, Muslim) in educational situations in which parents perceive a lack of self-verification of their religious identities?

This second question explores the personal experiences of religious parents in educational situations, in which tensions concerning religious identity negotiation are located. As noted earlier, the 'lack of self-verification' (also 'identity non-verification') in this study is understood in a broad sense, pointing to situations in which parents experience a friction with their religious identity in interactions in the educational contexts.

The findings in this chapter illuminate how the parents' personal experiences appear to reside in a variety of domains. Therefore, the experiences are sorted into two categories: discrepancies between the macro and micro context, and discrepancies within the micro context. This chapter firstly presents the theoretical approach to these categories. Then, the parents' experiences are presented, structured by these two categories.

A theoretical approach to contextual categories

Although all of them are related to educational settings, the personal experiences of the parents are concerned with a broader context than only the school context. For instance, parents mention interaction with (non-) religious friends, contacts with neighbours on the street, issues related to morality, issues coming up on social media and TV, issues related to political ideologies or differing theological understandings, but again, all related to situations in education. This broad range of experiences is not surprising when previous findings are taken into consideration. As the religious identity standards of parents are shown to be interwoven in contexts inside and outside education in the previous chapter, the same can thus be expected in the case of parents' experiences of identity (non-)verification in education-related situations.

However, instead of solely related to frictions between religious minority groups and so-called 'majority coercion' of broader society (Inspectorate of Education, 2020, p. 11; see also Kuusisto, 2009; Metso, 2018), parents' experiences are shown to reside in a more diverse field of majority versus minority interactions. Surprisingly, parents' experiences are seen to be

related to diverse contextual levels. For instance, parents who sent their children to religious schools note experiences of identity non-verification within the context of these religious schools, unrelated to broader society. In such instances, experiences are related to a (religious) majority in the school, consisting of children belonging to another church denomination, while the interviewed parents form a minority by attending a smaller, more conservative church denomination.

In order to organise and locate all these experiences of identity (non-)verification on different contextual levels, theoretical ideas on 'parents as mediators' (Koepke and Denissen, 2012, p. 75) are taken from the field of identity formation and development (Adams and Marshall, 1996; Schachter and Ventura, 2008). These theories are applied and adjusted, to provide the analysis of the parents' experiences of identity (non-)verification with an explanatory structure, and, in particular, to locate these experiences of frictions in the broad context of the parents. This approach is outlined below.

Theories situating parents as mediators between contexts

Studies by Adams and Marshall (1996) and Schachter and Ventura (2008) distinguish between the micro and macro context when it comes to influences on the individuality of the person in the process of identity formation. According to Adams and Marshall (1996), the macro context involves the 'cultural/historical/economic/religious dimensions of society', while the micro context involves the 'day-to-day social interactions that occur between people' (Adams and Marshall, 1996, p. 439). Adams and Marshall especially describe the interplay between influences arising from both contexts. They present the effects of such interplay on the 'individuality' of an adolescent in the process of identity formation. Similarly, Schachter and Ventura (2008) distinguished studies in identity research 'on a micro-system level' (p. 454), involving the social processes in families, and identity research involving 'macro-sociological, historical, and cultural processes', such as 'postmodern social structures and concomitant modes of thought' (p. 454).

Additionally, Adams and Marshall (1996) connected the micro and macro context as: 'what links the macro- and micro-levels of influence on individuality are the shared ideologies, signs, symbols and messages that are present in both cultural/historical/economic/religious dimensions of society and the day-to-day social interactions that occur between people' (p. 439). Thus, in line with Adams and Marshall (1996) this study argues that, if certain ideologies are not or no longer shared between parts of the micro context and macro context, it could be that parents can no longer be the 'socialising agents' in transmitting the societal values to their children from the macro into their micro context (Koepke and Denissen, 2012). In this case, in terms of the identity control theory, there is a *discrepancy* between the meanings in the macro context (society) and the meanings in the micro context (parents' religious convictions

expressed through interactions between parent and child), which could possibly lead to identity non-verifications.

Theories applied and adjusted

In this study these theoretical distinguishments are applied, but also adjusted, based on the different types of personal experiences parents go through in the Dutch educational context. First, it is important to clarify this study's definition of the micro and macro context. In line with Schachter and Ventura (2008) and Adams and Marshall (1996), the macro context is defined here as broader society and its processes involving 'concomitant modes of thought'. Like Schachter and Ventura (2008) and Adams and Marshall (1996), the micro context is defined as the 'social processes in families' and the 'day-to-day social interactions between people'. However, with regard to the ideological tenets within these micro context social processes, I argue that the Dutch context of different school types requires a more in-depth definition of the micro context. As a result, the definition of the micro context in this study is slightly different from the definitions provided by Schachter and Ventura (2008) and Adams and Marshall (1996). This will be clarified further in the following section.

Generally, education is often seen as the 'arena' (Rissanen, 2020) in which citizens participate in broader society. In most European countries, education would therefore be defined as part of the macro context, functioning as a 'bridge' between the broader ideological values in society and the shared ideologies in the communities and the home (Martínez-Ariño and Teinturier, 2019). However, in line with the freedom of education, parents are free to found their own (religious) schools in the Netherlands.

Based on this, schools have specific religious institutional identities (Faber, 2012), in line with the ideologies of the parents' micro context. For instance, orthodox reformed churches have founded schools, which are attended and led by persons from within the orthodox reformed communities (Bertram-Troost and Exalto, 2019). This is also the case for Islamic schools being founded and attended by persons from within the Muslim communities (Ter Avest and Rietveld-van Wingerden, 2017). Thus, generally, instead of being part of the macro context, the ideological modes in these religious schools can be seen as distinct from the 'macro-sociological processes' (Schachter and Ventura, 2008, p. 453) in broader society.

Therefore, as this study is positioned in the context of such religious communities, situations within these religious schools can be viewed as different from the broader societal macro context. As a result, parents' experiences of identity non-verification, located in the contexts of orthodox reformed or Islamic schools, are defined as different from the macro context, categorised as *within the micro context* in this study. Thus, the micro context is defined as specifically focused on the parents' personal convictions, expressed in 'social processes in families' (such as the parent-child relationship) and in interactions within the

religious communities, including religious schools. Only in some experiences religious schools represented ideological tenets of the macro context, conflicting with the religious convictions in the parents' personal micro contexts.

Two categories of experiences

Based on these definitions of the micro and macro context, the personal experiences of the parents of identity (non-)verification are sorted in two basic categories: 'discrepancies between the macro and micro context' and 'discrepancies within the micro context'. In experiences sorted under 'discrepancies between the macro and micro context', religious parents face situations of non-verification of their religious identities in the 'macro context' of public or Protestant-Christian schools which their children attend. In addition, regardless of school type, all parents experience situations of non-verification related to situations in the broader macro context, for instance, due to a TV news broadcast or government policies. These situations are also categorised under 'discrepancies between the macro and micro context'. In experiences sorted under 'discrepancies within the micro context', religious parents face situations of non-verification of their religious identities in the 'micro context' of the orthodox reformed religious schools which their children attend.

This categorisation, as described above and applied in this study, should primarily be seen as a way to approach the complexity of a multitude of ideas, values, and ideologies that emerge in both face-to-face interactions and in larger processes, such as the media, in society, and in politics. As the reality of the parents' experiences is complex and multidimensional, this categorisation, most importantly, aims to better understand their deeper underlying origins, rather than to determine the parents' described experiences.

Attended school types

Before continuing to give an outline of the experiences that are part of these categories, I will give a short overview of the chosen school types among the participants[15] (see also Table 3). All of the participating parents from the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands have chosen an orthodox reformed school for their children. In some exceptional cases one of their children attends a state school or a Protestant-Christian school. In these instances, a state school was a necessity due to, for example, mental or physical disabilities. The participating parents from the Diyanet mosques differ in their school choice. In two from the four Muslim families children were sent to state schools. One of these two families changed to a Protestant-Christian school. The other two families sent their children to an Islamic school and to a

[15] Due to provided anonymity in light of the snowball-sampling technique, the fictional names of participants are not given here.

Protestant-Christian school. Over time, this last family also decided to send their children to an Islamic school.

Thus, parents from the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands especially reflect on contexts in which their children attend orthodox reformed schools, in which, unexpectedly, experiences of identity non-verification emerge. Only in some exceptionalities do these parents reflect on contexts in which their children attend state schools. In the broad range of personal experiences, regardless of the school type, these parents reflect on issues outside of the context of the religious community, for example, regarding issues related to social media or government policy. Parents from the Diyanet mosques reflect on contexts in which their children attend state schools, Protestant-Christian schools, or Islamic schools. This sometimes concerns situations of school change as well. Similar to the parents from the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands, these parents also reflect on issues related to the broader macro context.

Table 3

Overview of attended schools

Attended school type	Participants recruited from:	
	Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands	Diyanet mosques
Orthodox reformed school	Usually attended	-
State school	Attended as exception	Attended by two families
Islamic school	-	Attended by two families
Protestant-Christian school	Attended as exception	Attended by two families

Discrepancies between macro- and micro context

In this section, parents' experiences that reside in a discrepancy between the macro- and the micro context are explored. These experiences are the most recurrently described personal experiences of the parents, and can be divided into four subcategories. It is important to realise that, due to the multidimensionality of these experiences, some of the parents' experiences could be categorised under more than one of these subcategories, although all are located in a discrepancy between the macro and micro context.

Firstly, some experiences are described as part of a discrepancy between ideologies shared in the macro context versus ideologies shared in the micro context, especially those experienced directly on a personal level. Secondly, some experiences concern misperceptions of religious schools (micro context), in the media (macro context), where the discrepancy is experienced while mediated by an occurrence in society. Thirdly, experiences

concerning misperceptions of the parents' religions in broader society are analysed. Finally, experiences in which especially Christian parents disagree with ideologies of religious schools within the micro context, that are shared with the macro context, are considered. In these experiences, religious schools in the micro context of the parents share ideologies with the macro context, and in that, diverge from the parents' religious convictions.

Disagreement on ideologies: experiences of personal involvement

Discrepancies within the macro context are most often related to disagreements about ideologies in broader society, of which issues surrounding gender diversity and sexuality are the most central. Several personal experiences of the Muslim parents in education are related to national youth television. As the participating Christian parents do not have a television in their homes, and their children mostly attend orthodox reformed schools in which TV news broadcasts are generally not watched, these are mostly mentioned by the Muslim parents.

Youth News is viewed on a daily basis in many state schools. This programme thus puts the personal experiences of the Muslim parents, in the context of education, in a broader context. Maysa discusses Youth News during the interview. She sounds frustrated when she claims that 'four out of five days', the themes include 'boys with nail polish and high heels, who then say: yes dare. Try it. And do it.':

> *Maysa: Our children actually become constantly - it is basically put in their heads that it is just normal. It is normal. But they are going to make your kids think. Look, a grade 1 child, who is just four years old, who has just left home to school, does not need to know that, in my opinion.*

This Muslim mother shows an involvement with what is 'put in' her children's 'heads'. During the interview, she sounds frustrated about the content her child encounters while watching television. In addition, she seems to be worried about situations in which this programme would make her 'kids think'. The enactment of her children's thinking surrounding issues of gender diversity seems to be a concern for Maysa.

A similar discrepancy occurred when a children's programme 'Gewoon Bloot' ['Just Naked'] on national television showed naked adults. Again, Maysa mentions this programme as her children attend a state school where Youth News is watched in the classroom on a daily basis. The ideological background of this programme is described on its website as (NPO Start, 2021): 'Do you sometimes wonder if your body is normal? Not surprising, because on Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok everyone seems perfect! Many people use filters, make-up or even surgeries. A group of children are asking ordinary people 'the shirt of their bodies'. Because our guests are completely naked.'

Maysa contrasts the ideology underlying the television program with her own convictions, 'why do my children have to see naked adults?'. In this, she extends her

argumentation by associating the watching of the programme with an imagined situation of danger, in which her child would be approached by 'some pervert', a paedophile, on the street:

> *Maysa: Why do my kids have to watch naked people on television? Because that's how we actually normalize paedophilia in our country. Because imagine that [name son], – because school and home are just the safe places where the children are, because then they know that they can go to the teacher – If they're going to watch that programme with the teacher, and then some pervert will be right here in the alley, like; can we talk about it for a moment: about my genitals, or about my stomach, or whatever. That my child, yes my child, I will never say never –because I try to consciously pass on to them, as much as possible, that that is just not how it should be– that they could go along with that [person]. There are many insecure children. And then they start thinking: 'oh yeah, we saw that at school too. In fact, there is absolutely nothing wrong with it'. That's actually how we go, we're bringing so much danger, that programme is bringing so much danger, that people, or they're not aware of it, I don't know it all.*

In the extract above Maysa argues that, as a result of watching the TV programme, children can begin to think, 'In fact, there is absolutely nothing wrong with it', and would therefore be more vulnerable to a paedophile. Maysa thus narrates the ideological influences of the macro context as dangerous. She does this by firmly and openly discussing her frustrations surrounding the programme with the interviewer, as she freely sets out her worries about the possible danger of TV programmes such as 'Gewoon Bloot'.

Other Muslim parents whose children attend an Islamic school mention the programme as well, while stating they were happy that this programme was not shown in the classrooms of their children:

> *Emine: Initially, I want to make sure my kids don't see that. That is the advantage of our school [Muslim school]. If they know that there is such a thing, then they just skip that, you know. Then they talk about it, but without those images. I find that really shocking, I don't even want to see that. Then I find it very sad [/ bad] that my son sees that. I think that is very sad [/ bad]. He doesn't need that at all, you see. That is not my way of parenting: "Oh my child is being bullied, or feels less, and when he sees that, he starts to think: oh yes, so I am normal." You understand? Educate your kids just not to bully anyone.*

Emine explicitly emphasises that the programme is incongruent with how she views her 'way of parenting', reflecting a discrepancy between society's ideologies on parenting issues that underlie the programme and Emine's views on parenting. These diverging views on parenting are also reflected by a Muslim father[16] who is also teacher at an Islamic school. He explains

[16] To guarantee the anonymity of this father, his fictional name is not given.

the differences in ideas in educational programmes on sexuality. He then stresses the importance for these parents to not include the ideas from the macro context in the upbringing of their children:

> *Muslim father: … there [at the Muslim school] are no ways of life explained to our children that we do not want them to learn at this age. Look, talking about sexuality to us, it is only at puberty, it is not at the age of four. At the age of four you should not ask children; do you already have a boyfriend or girlfriend. That they start talking about boyfriends or girlfriends at the age of five. We are strict about that, it is not necessary. Nor do they need to read about it or be read about it. That is important to us.*

This father's views on parenting seem to arise from his religious identity standard, as he notes 'we are strict on that'. Once more, the relevance of religious identity standards across different life domains (chapter 5) emerges. This father naturally associates an educational situation of 'talking about boyfriends or girlfriends at the age of five' to what, as he emphasises, 'is important to us'.

Both this relevance across life domains and the impact of this discrepancy with the macro context seem even stronger when this father associates similar themes with his frustration of billboards promoting cheating among married people. The father relates these billboards to 'this society', which he then wants to avoid in the upbringing of his children:

> *Muslim father: That [talking about sexuality] only comes at an age... I don't want to… I hate all those billboards. I once saw a billboard with Second Love. For married people. That's just a website for married people. You know, where are we going in this society. That is a basis that I want to give my children, very important. In my opinion, he [child] doesn't have to read about so many sexual erotic things at such a young age.*

In this father's account it becomes clear how parents continuously relate situations, in which they experience a discrepancy between the macro and micro context in educational settings, to a broader range of experiences that they encounter in their daily lives. The father explicitly mentions ways of thinking in society's macro context, with which he strongly disagrees and which he wants his children to avoid. Interestingly, this reflects his identity concern (chapter 5) towards his children's religious identity development, as expressed in this described discrepancy between ideologies.

A practical experience in an educational setting, in which the discrepancy between ideologies in the parents' micro context versus the broader macro context becomes visible, appears when Derya, a Muslim mother, expresses her concern about gender-neutral-toilets:

Derya: They don't do girls-boys-toilets in the toilets anymore, eh... They are already working on that [gender-neutral toilets]. Well, and I'm like, um… then you fall into the privacy of those kids after all; yes.

Through Derya's experience, it becomes clear how parents' concerns about a disagreement between ideologies within the macro context are reflected in very concrete situations in the context of a state school.

Although the Christian parents in particular did not send their children to state schools, which more strongly represent the macro context, but instead to orthodox reformed schools, they are also concerned with disagreements between ideologies arising from broader society. For instance, Marianne and Peter, a Christian couple, firmly discuss how they experience issues surrounding gender ideologies in the broader macro context of society:

Marianne: Well I think that's a really huge indictment, like, it gets all… the whole creation and so on, that is just wiped out at once, as it were. Yes. The good, how it is meant, and so on, that it is laughed at, so to speak. Like: it doesn't matter. Eh... diversity of a man and a woman. For a child: and a father and a mother, [that] is so incredibly important. I really feel for that, when children grow up with two daddies and two mommies. Yes, that's really bizarre. (…)
Interviewer: Yes, and you just said the word indictment. A charge against creation you say?
Marianne: Yeah eh, how the Lord intended that… Sure, people grew up with the Bible and whatever. But I'd almost say, regardless of the fact whether you grow up with the Bible, I think: guys, uh... take your eyes off it: look around what - at least in most cases - is best for a child. What we say: in an ordinary family, as marriage is intended between a man and a woman. That children grow up there. Yeah, I don't see any other shape that would be better for kids.

Marianne strongly relates the disagreements about ideologies to her religious identity, namely to 'how the Lord intended that'. This links back to the parents' religious identity standard as analysed in chapter 5, as being especially focused on a divine Person.

As shown in the extracts above, themes of gender diversity and sexuality are often central to the religious parents' discussions of discrepancies between the macro and micro context concerning differences in ideologies. However, when children of Christian parents attend public or Protestant-Christian schools, religious issues and practices, or more general television programmes, also play a role. The Christian parents' concerns with Protestant-Christian schools possibly result from the fact that religious institutional identities in Protestant-Christian schools are less strict and less prominent than in orthodox reformed schools (Bertram-Troost et al., 2015; Exalto and Bertram-Troost, 2019).

Some Christian parents discuss cases in which one of their children attended a public or Protestant-Christian school due to disabilities. As these school choices were exceptions for

these parents, both their choices for such schools and their experiences in these, bring forth discrepancies between the parents' ideological micro contexts and the schools' ideological macro contexts. For instance, Evert and Dianne discuss a necessary choice for a Protestant-Christian school. Their son is diagnosed with a concentration disorder, and the best suitable secondary school for him is a Protestant-Christian school. Evert and Dianne struggled as their child would be less 'protected' in the secondary Protestant-Christian school than he would have been in an orthodox reformed school:

> *Evert: So we found that really very difficult. Because religion also plays a role, isn't it, faith also plays a role; what are you going to do then. You come from a primary school that is enormously protected.*

According to Evert and Dianne, the Protestant-Christian school was only religious in name. Dianne illustrates this with the example of school lunches, during which, in contrast to orthodox reformed schools, no joint prayer took place. They thus expected their son to 'show that he is a Christian', by praying during his lunch himself:

> *Dianne: You know those young people get lessons, then they have to do so themselves, they have to eat their bread during the break; yes then you have to pray for your food, right. I'll just call it what it is. All discussed in advance, he does that very faithfully.*

When their son moved to another Protestant-Christian secondary school, Dianne describes their experience in similar words:

> *Dianne: So he then had to show again that he was a Christian. That he prayed for his food – even though it's a Christian school there, nobody prays for his food, that just doesn't happen there.*

A similar experience in which Christian parents sent their children to a school different from their micro context is mentioned by Sara. One of her children was disabled and therefore attended a state school. Sara notes how her child was confronted with 'situations' in the state school, such as children talking about 'all kinds of television programmes[17]':

> *Sara: Well, [name son] is quite young there eh, after 10 or 11 years – there were more and more of those situations huh. Because then you have that they get older and talk about all kinds*

[17] None of the Christian parents had a television, as this is seen as 'worldly' in the reformed-orthodox communities (Smits, Knoppers and Doodewaard, 2019).

of television programmes and... So I was glad he left there after all.... Yes, because they [Sara's children] are sensitive to it.

Apart from her child being confronted by other children's stories about television programmes, Sara also describes how the teachers' stop words in these schools made the discrepancy between her micro context and the broader macro context clear, and how she confronted the teachers about this:

Sara: Well, it wasn't so much the teacher, it was more the children amongst themselves who had seen it [television programme] at home and discussed it together. Say more. So no, the teachers knew very well where I stood. Those… sure enough, we also had to ask quite a few times if they wanted to change their stop words. Because then they would say 'jee' [pointing to 'Jesus'] and 'gosh' [pointing to 'God']. And then they always said that they wanted to do that [change stop words], but that... is more difficult in practice. Hey, yes.

Sara also describes a situation in which she was confronted with discrepancies herself. Here she uses an example of the 'parent evening' in which she had 'a lot of nice conversations' in which she explained to other parents the importance of the Bible to her:

Sara: I myself have had a lot of nice conversations, also at parents' evenings. Then we all had to take something with us, so well, one had a [picture of a] happy face and the other a sad face, because there are all children with a serious disability, so eh... yes, they had a really hard time, those parents... So I say yes, and then it was my turn to say something. I say yes, I have nothing with me. I was already happy to be there. [laughs] I say, but I would bring a Bible. I say: I couldn't miss it [the Bible]. If I don't know what to do, if I sometimes have to give punishment, I wonder; have I been too strict? And then I read again [in the Bible]: 'Whoever loves his child chastens him'. Or if I wonder, how will that be when I am no longer there, what about [name child with disability]?'' I say, 'then I read, "Do not be anxious about anything, but let your desire be made known in all things through prayer and supplication and thanksgiving." Well, and then they [the other parents] just chatted with me for 45 minutes. And then, after the evening, two more women came to me. Because yes, it was nice if you had that …

Sara describes this particular discrepancy in a positive way. Although she experienced a difference, it seems she did not experience a situation of identity non-verification. Rather, she describes how she perceived acceptance of and curiosity for her religious identity, 'Well, and then they [the other parents] just chatted with me for 45 minutes. And then, after the evening, two more women came to me. Because yes, it was nice if you had that …'. This sheds light on the diversity of experiences, demonstrating that situations of disagreement and discrepancies do not always constitute experiences of identity non-verification.

Disagreements about specific ideologies also appear when parents are not personally involved, but where the experienced discrepancy is mediated by an occurrence in society. In that case, as presented in the following paragraphs, the parents' personal experiences concern negative perceptions of a religious school in the media.

Disagreement on ideologies: experiences of religious schools in the media

The religious parents describe several experiences in which they were not personally involved, but that nevertheless deeply impressed them. In these situations, an incident in society mediated the experienced discrepancy between the micro and macro context. A particular case surrounds an issue on gender diversity in an orthodox reformed school. In March 2021, eight former-pupils of an orthodox reformed secondary school were interviewed by NRC Handelsblad (Rosenberg, 2021), a Dutch newspaper. The former-pupils were interviewed about 'what it is like to be gay at an orthodox reformed school'. The former students described how they were forced to come out in front of their parents. The article caused considerable societal upheaval in the Netherlands, and an investigation was launched into the secondary school by the Inspectorate of Education (2021).

The children of Marianne and Peter, the parents in one of the participating families, attended the orthodox reformed secondary school in question. Marianne and Peter show themselves supportive of the interviewed former-pupils, but are still concerned about issues on gender diversity 'being pushed' into the educational context. In particular, Marianne describes that in such a situation, 'when it was such a hassle', she experienced discrepancy with the macro context, formulated as a feeling of 'being pushed', 'quite intensively'. In this, the situation in society seems to strengthen the experience of a discrepancy for Marianne:

> *Marianne: I can't see into the future, but it seems like it's being pushed more and more, so to speak. Yes. It is difficult.*
> *(…)*
> *Interviewer: And do you experience, that 'being pushed', do you ever experience that already a bit? Or have you ever had the feeling that from broader society…*
> *Marianne: Well... No, not that I experience that every day, uh... or anything. Not that. Look, sometimes it's more than other times. When it was such a hassle at [school name] recently, you experience it quite intensively.*

Marianne continues by describing in-depth how she experiences this in her family, though indirectly and without being personally involved:

> *Marianne: We talk about that at home, or you worry about how suddenly the school is being ridiculed. While you know that there are people who work there too… do their work – to the best of their abilities or know-how, and so on. That's fine, I wasn't there, that a teacher was there*

with a clumsy remark. But that it... yes, I think that is very bad that the school is suddenly put in such a bad light. Yes, I really do. Also perhaps with the background of eh: we cannot appreciate it enough that 12-16- or 12-17-year olds can go to an orthodox reformed school. Even if it's a bit more diverse... but um, yes. So, uh, I think that's really nice. Well.

In Marianne's thinking and through the discussions in her home, a concern emerges with how the school is being 'ridiculed', as she mentions the 'people who work there', who 'do the work to the best of their abilities'. Marianne seems concerned with public attention on the orthodox reformed school in question which is 'put in such a bad light'. In all of this, Marianne is not personally involved, but her children attend this school and, most importantly, she reads the newspaper articles on the issue. This situation illustrates how experiences of religious parents can occur in cases in which they are not personally involved. In this respect, it seems that parents experience an 'indirect' identity non-verification, by empathising with the school and educational personnel involved in the issue. When explicitly asked about this, Marianne responds:

Marianne: Well, the school. I think so. Then I just think it's clever – yes, that's what I always think of, phew, as management you know – to give it the right words and tactical answers, and so on. And when I read something like that in the newspaper, I think 'oh, that's well said' [by the school's representative]. Well, I think so... then I'm glad that that's such a nice answer, so to speak.

During the conversation about the way the orthodox reformed school is described in the media, Peter expresses his perceptions on misrepresentation in the press. He argues that investigations are often started, of which the results then put the situations into perspective:

Peter: (…) And while the Biblical view of it [sexuality, gender diversity], can simply be told, there is always a meaning given in the press that does not cover the content [of the Biblical teaching], I'll say. That is, for example, 'gay statement' or 'anti-gay statement', things like that. That is not the case at all. There is no school that signs an 'anti-gay declaration', as is put forward in the press. And for this, of course, the whole orthodox reformed education is put under a magnifying glass.

Peter then continues to argue that, based on these misrepresentations in the media, investigations are initiated that show that the opposite is true[18]. However, 'then there is no

[18] During the interview, the investigation into this school had just initiated and had not been finalised. During the analysis of the interviews, the investigation was finalised, and 'serious shortcomings' in the

newspaper that bothers to rectify anything', while the 'image' has been 'confirmed' in the media and society. According to Peter, the religious schools are thus portraited as 'unsafe':

> *Peter: And then you get investigations, and then you can predict, then the results come and then it's a storm in a teacup. And then um, and then there is no newspaper that bothers to rectify anything. But the image has only been confirmed. That orthodox reformed education has become an unsafe school, gays who want to come out … well those are all eh…*

Peter's perception of the negative views towards religious schools seems to make him frustrated. Again, this situation shows how religious parents, in cases in which they are not personally involved, negotiate frictions with regard to their religious identities. In this case, it seems that the parents experience an 'indirect' identity non-verification, by reading articles about their children's school and empathising with the school and the educational personnel involved. Among the Muslim parents, this 'indirect' identity non-verification emerges especially when they discuss the way their religion is perceived in broader society.

Misperceptions of religion or religious community in society

The finding that parents' experiences are mediated by broader societal events is also revealed when parents describe misperceptions of their religion in broader society. Such discrepancies were mentioned by both Muslim and Christian parents. It is worthwhile to note that these experiences are not directly related to educational situations. Instead, these experiences suggest how the parents' experiences in educational contexts are interrelated and are impacted by a variety of situations. During the interviews the parents themselves initiate the discussion of these issues.

It is important to begin with the fact that the Muslim parents particularly mention negative views in the media due to terrorist attacks. They discuss how they negotiate their religious identities in the broader context of extremism and terrorist attacks, which, according to the parents, fosters a misperception of the Islam and the Muslim parents' personal faith. For instance, Maysa, a Muslim mother, claims that a 'sowing of hatred' among children occurs on national television:

> *Maysa: Also recently [on national TV], "strict Islamic rules", I also emailed Youth News about that; really all channels. NOS, NPO, doesn't matter, I emailed them all. (...) Because they are actually trying to sow hatred amongst children. By saying: "Muslim terrorists", or "due to strict*

school had been found, which was clarified as follows: 'the school community does not pay sufficient attention to safety and equality of pupils who think or act differently from what is generally accepted at [name school], especially where LGBTI pupils are concerned.' (Slob, 2021, p. 1).

Islamic rules the children are not allowed to do this, they are not allowed to do so". [explaining to her child:] I say, because they don't know our faith.

Here, Maysa especially points to a misperception or non-verification of her religion:

Maysa: Because everything that is seen with ISIS, or on television, has totally, really totally, really totally nothing to do with our faith. Absolutely not. We even fight against them. Because through their belief, people see Islam as dangerous. While it is actually not the case at all.

Similarly, Emine mentions how her child was reproached about 'dirty terrorists', as a result of negative perceptions of the parents' religion in the macro context:

Emine: A few days ago, they had left the house to go to the mosque. And a few houses down there, a neighbour of that boy lived. [to her child] 'What did that man say to you when you were with Ahmed? When you walked out?'
Child: Dirty terrorists.
Emine: That bad. Yes I thought that was so bad. (…) I no longer wanted to live in the Netherlands, all those events. If an attack was committed I thought, 'as long as it is not a Muslim'. I was so scared of that.

Such negative perceptions of the parents' religion are also mentioned among Christian parents. For instance, one mother[19] converted to Christianity when she married her husband. She particularly states the importance of her children attending secular (applied) universities to better know the 'image' non-religious persons have of Christian persons in broader society. According to this mother, this includes often a misperception, 'a certain image of you, which is not true at all':

Christian mother: Uh, well what I myself uh, yeah, maybe I see that different than someone else, someone who grew up in the Bible Belt, to put it crudely, [mother was raised non-religious and converted to religion upon marriage], but well, I also think it is good to see how things go in the world, because then you can also better arm yourself against it. It is very often - what I have noticed as a non-Christian - that they still have a certain image of you, which is not true at all.

These experiences have the discrepancy between the micro context and macro context in common, in which the parents' religion is negatively perceived in the macro context.

[19] To guarantee the anonymity of this mother, her fictional name is not given.

Disagreement on ideologies: schools in the micro context representing the macro context

In some exceptional situations, religious schools, categorised in this study 'within the micro context', appear to share ideological modes with the macro context. This leads to a conflict with the religious convictions of parents' personal micro contexts. This is especially clear amongst the Christian parents. For instance, Sara explains she was disappointed after the school bought laptops for pupils. She explicitly mentions the discrepancy in ideologies, pointing to 'promoting that individualism':

> *Sara: I think so. I actually feel like eh, too late maybe, they take laptops just like that. I think ah, what a pity, I am so sorry. It's easy to put a child behind a screen with a programme. But [it is] again a little less communication. Promoting that individualism again.*

Though it seems Sara points to a previous part of the interview, a reinforcement of 'that' individualism 'again', individualism is not a recurring theme in the interview. Possibly, Sara is merely disappointed when she mentions this. In Sara's view, education via laptops reinforces individualism among children, as there is less communication with others. This originates less directly from religious convictions, although, in Sara's view, it seems related.

In another example the discrepancy was directly related to religious convictions. In this case, the religious schools acted in agreement with ideologies in the macro context. For instance, the religious views of Bart-Jan and Tineke, a Christian couple of parents, strongly clashed with the school's policy during the covid-19 crisis. Bart-Jan and Tineke note how they explicitly spoke out against covid policy in the Netherlands, as they saw this as clashing with their faith in being dependent on God. Their children attended an orthodox reformed school, which followed the Dutch government regarding covid policies:

> *Interviewer: Um, if that's the most important thing about your belief, that there are also situations that go against that in education?*
> *Tineke: Well, that is actually, the whole covid policy. That really annoys me: the churches are closing, the schools are closing. Hey? We know that we depend on the Lord. I know you shouldn't start living radically, but then they go to churches. That's the main thing (…): you mustn't let your place empty on Sundays and now… They're closing the churches! Well, I don't get it yet.*
> *Interviewer: Yes…*
> *Tineke: Then where is that dependency?*

As Tineke expresses, she experienced a sharp discrepancy between a core belief in her religious identity, her dependence on God, contrasting with the covid-19-policies in both her church and the orthodox reformed school her children attend. In this respect, the parents also

reflect on a religious, theological source, the Heidelberger Catechism. Just before the covid-19 crisis broke out, the preaching in their church was about the providence[20] of God:

> *Bart-Jan: We had 'Sunday 10 and Sunday 11' [see footnote 20: Heidelberger Catechism, Sunday 10; 27th and 28th questions and answers]. And then it went wrong, didn't it? We forgot about Sunday 10 [see footnote 5] very quickly. Whatever comes to us: the good or the bad, or at least, good and evil, we all receive it from God. And you should not everything… [intelligible], you shouldn't live like a tomboy, and eh… and drink and eat and act unhealthy and do dangerous things.*
> *Tineke: And if you have a cold, stay home. That's not a drama at all. But why should everyone else stay at home? Why are they closing the churches? I still don't get it. Well… and I have not yet spoken to the church council to ask this, but if we do get a home visit I will definitely ask. And just like with school, you will receive an email, then I think hey; I can't believe what you're saying now...*
> *Bart-Jan: Total fear, total fear…*
> *Tineke: This all doesn't get to me as believable...*
> *Bart-Jan: A little trust in God.*
> *Tineke: You know, then you have to email about it. I think; You don't discuss something like that over an email. And we're not allowed to enter school; so I can't ask anymore.*

Here, Bart-Jan and Tineke both describe the discrepancy they experienced concerning the covid-19 policy in their church and their children's school. As a couple they show to agree on this. As Tineke finally notes, in her experience these topics cannot be discussed by email. This hesitation to discuss these topics via email seems to point to the sensitive nature of such religious identity-related topics for these parents. In their thinking, they have diverged from their church and religious community. This again links back to the 'person identity' of a religious identity (chapter 5). In addition, it points to the importance of faith-based schools

[20] Heidelberger Catechism, Sunday 10; 27th and 28th questions and answers:

27. Question. What do you understand by the providence of God? Answer. The almighty and ever present power of God by which God upholds, as with His hand, heaven and earth and all creatures, and so rules them that leaf and blade, rain and drought, fruitful and lean years, food and drink, health and sickness, prosperity and poverty— all things, in fact, come to us not by chance but by His fatherly hand.

28. Question. How does the knowledge of God's creation and providence help us? Answer. We can be patient when things go against us, thankful when things go well, and for the future we can have good confidence in our faithful God and Father that nothing in creation will separate us from His love. For all creatures are so completely in God's hand that without His will they can neither move nor be moved.

dealing with religious diversity within their schools (Martínez-Ariño and Teinturier, 2019), which is further elaborated in the following section of this chapter.

Discrepancies within the micro context

As set out in the introduction of this chapter, all the participating parents from the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands had chosen an orthodox reformed school for their children. Only in some exceptional cases do their children attend a state school or a Protestant-Christian school. Generally, the ideological modes of religious schools can be distinguished from the 'macro-sociological processes' (Schachter and Ventura, 2008) in broader society (Rietveld-van Wingerden, Westerman and Ter Avest, 2009; Bertram-Troost and Exalto, 2019). Therefore, the contexts of the religious schools are categorised as being part of the micro context in this study (see this chapter, under 'Theories applied and adjusted'). The second part of this chapter continues with the parents' experiences of discrepancies within this particular micro context.

In this study, the micro context is defined as specifically focused on the parents' personal convictions, expressed through 'social processes in families', such as the parent-child relationship, and in interactions within the religious communities, including religious schools. Interestingly, the Christian parents in particular note a range of situations of identity non-verification within these micro contexts of the religious schools. Almost all of these situations arise from religious diversity — within a particular religion — within the religious schools. Although it is the Christian parents who note experiences of discrepancies within the micro context of the religious schools, both Christian and Muslim parents describe this diversity within their religion during the interviews.

Most Christian parents describe the context within the religious school as consisting of several different church denominations which, according to Dianne, 'affects' their children's education. In this respect Dianne emphasises the numbers of different church denominations in her children's school, indicating the minority they themselves are part of, 'our small church':

> *Dianne: Anyway, those who attend the school, (...) our small church here, has only about 100 members. So then I can understand - what we bring in - is also very, very small. The [amount of the] Old Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands is also very small, the Reformed Congregations is a lot bigger. And then there are also a lot from the Protestant Church in the Netherlands at our school. So yeah, that affects it right?*

As Dianne notes, their church is attended by a relatively smaller group of members than other church denominations. However, Peter, a Christian parent, stresses that such diversity exists even within one specific church denomination, which in education is also expressed by individual teachers:

Peter: But that diversity, you have it in every school, of course. Regardless of which denomination you belong to. Because even if they belong to the Reformed Congregation, or the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands, then you still have that diversity, even though they are all from the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands, one [teacher] as you say, formulates a different understanding. She only tells the story, another says: well, we also somehow apply it, we conclude something or so. … there's just a difference.

Peter maintains that religious diversity is not determined by specific groups, but that it emerges within religious groups regardless of church denomination. He illustrates this by describing how individual teachers differ in how they tell Bible stories, as they do that in different ways, highlighting different aspects. Such diversity 'within' the religious group is also seen amongst the Muslim parents, who are committed to their mosque and are cautious of the 'the many groups within Islam', for instance in Islamic schools. Derya, a Muslim mother, argues she would not send her children to an Islamic school as she would be afraid of things said that would be 'incorrect'. In contrast, she is glad with the Diyanet mosque being associated with the Turkish government, as she would otherwise be afraid that 'incorrect' things may be said:

Derya: … but in an Islamic school... There are so many groups within Islam that I think, yes. (…) What he just said at the beginning of the conversation, the Turkish government is sending this imam; you have some control. If you think of; he now says something that is incorrect, then you can still file a complaint somewhere. Do you understand? We were raised that way and we want to keep it that way.

As Derya describes, the association of the Turkish government with the Diyanet mosques seems to offer Derya a feeling of 'control'. It seems to secure Derya's notions of being 'raised that way', and wanting to 'keep it that way'. She associates this with how it impacts diversity within Islam, fearing this Islamic diversity in the education of her children.

Interestingly, Derya highlights her personal agency in thinking about this diversity: 'If you think of; he now says something that is incorrect'. This is similarly seen amongst the Christian parents. Regardless of the religious diversity of, for instance, denominations, Dianne describes how her personal convictions in particular foster her divergent thinking, as she says, 'it wasn't a matter of what kind of church I came from'. Instead, Dianne describes 'that is really my conscience, my feeling':

Dianne: I think at that time it wasn't a matter of what kind of church I came from, but I just thought that song was irreverent. Had I been in the Reformed Congregations [church denomination which majority of children of that school attend], I would still have found that song

irreverent. That is really my conscience, my feeling, this is not possible. This doesn't fit my way of believing, I'm just mentioning, so to speak.

Thus, this diversity within religious communities seems to arise from, again, an individualised religiosity of the parents, again connected to the discussion in chapter 5. This seems to constitute a fundamental aspect of parents' stance within the micro context of religious schools.

The Christian parents' experiences that can be found in discrepancies within the micro contexts include a diversity of situations, which are described below. The parents point to differences in theological understandings, which are presented first. Secondly, several parents note that these theological understandings differ per teacher. Due to this relatedness to particular teachers, the parents often mention the school policy they had signed. The parents mention that they experience tension between what they signed for and what they encounter in daily educational situations. Thirdly, as school policies can be related to issues in daily life, some of the parents also point to private ways of living in other families which, they argue are not in alignment with the school's policies. According to some parents, such tensions bring their children in conflict with their peers.

Disagreements on theological understandings

Situations concerning discrepancies 'within the micro context' are shown to be most often related to differences in theological understandings and to parents' related personal religious convictions. In relation to a Bible story, Evert and Dianne discuss a certain theological interpretation which diverges from the interpretations as taught at the religious school. Evert explains how he disagreed with one of the Bible stories in his child's class:

Evert: But inherent is of course the proclamation of the gospel as well, the Bible story. How do you interpret that? The Lord Jesus is the good Shepherd, well, we say that as well, but we confess that the forgiveness of sins must come before that.
Dianne: Yes, that you are a sheep.
Evert: Just like you're taking a school test, and now I'm a good Shepherd's sheep, but it doesn't work that way. That's not how we read it in the Bible.

These personal convictions also come to the fore when parents recount similar situations concerning educational activities, while describing different stances. As Dianne states in the paragraphs above, she strongly disagreed with the content of certain songs taught, as she felt them to be 'irreverent'. Interestingly, Maria discusses the opposite of what Dianne argues, pointing to situations in which she experienced the 'very legalism' due to which certain songs were not allowed to be sung in her children's school:

Maria: So then... yes, that has more of the... for me at least the legalism, the very legalism. Not [being allowed] to sing hymns. Or songs.

Both of these parents come from different places and their children visit different schools. Thus, their situations cannot be compared. Instead, both show how parents, in practical situations such as singing songs, reflect on the songs and arrive at very personal convictions on the activity and content of the songs. As a result, the actual singing of songs and their reflections on the content of the songs seem to somehow trigger the parents' thoughts about the educational context in which their children grow up.

When they describe these personal convictions surrounding discrepancies within the micro contexts of the religious schools, parents often support their viewpoints with phrases, for instance Evert in the previous extract when he notes it's about 'how we read the Bible'. Another example occurs when Sara describes a situation, in which a teacher taught about magic, as 'totally unbiblical' and argues, 'I take the Bible seriously':

Sara: Yes... then the teacher had explained about magic. Yes, I say: hey, that is totally unbiblical. I say, it says [as stated in the Bible]: 'wizards have their share in the lake of fire and brimstone'. And then... the boy said, it was an intern... And then our boys said something about it, and they were very angry about that. Yes, they thought that was childish. I say yes, I take the Bible seriously, sorry. So yeah, something like that.

Interestingly, despite this situation in which even 'they were very angry', Sara is eager to directly continue by expressing her positive opinions about the religious school, especially as 'the Bible is opened every day':

Sara: But I'm also very happy that the Bible is opened every day. So that eh... Now during covid as well, the teachers would tell a story, and then I listened too. And then I'm amazed that we can still have that. Yes. That they still start [with that] every day. Yes, really just in-depth Bible stories.

Maria argues from a similar perspective. At first she is critical about a situation in which leggings were not allowed in her children's school and she explicitly expresses to hold a different view on that, but then continues to say that she's 'very happy that they are in that school'. It is important to clarify that, historically, the wearing of trousers by women is seen as a 'symbol of emancipation', as it indicates masculinity (see e.g. Bill, 1993). In orthodox reformed communities, generally, women wearing trousers are therefore not appreciated. In the same vein, the wearing of a legging combined with a skirt is sometimes associated with

wearing trousers. As such, the wearing of leggings combined with a skirt is not allowed in some orthodox reformed schools, such as the school Maria's children attend:

> *Maria: Or ehm... for example ehm... the whole legging-happening in that time. That I thought: should we be so concerned about that… should we really be working on that? Yeah, you know we allow our girls to wear them [leggings]. But it's just not allowed at school. Although I now think of, I think they turn a blind eye. But, um, then we just pass on to our girls: you know, we have no problem with it ourselves, but it's not allowed at school. So in school we follow the rules, we just don't [wear leggings]. At home, fine, but it's not allowed at school, so we don't do it [at school]. Yes, and I think you also teach them that you can think differently about things and that that is also possible. It's not that one is right and the other is wrong, but that's how you think about things differently.*
> *Interviewer: Yes yes.*
> *Maria: But other than that, I have to say that um… yes, that we are, yes, actually very happy that they are in that school.*
> *Patrick: Yes. Certainly.*

As Maria notes, she has found a way to live with the rules surrounding the wearing of leggings. As she says, she disagreed but still let her children follow the school's rules when going to school. Such negotiations are explored more in detail in the next chapters. Important to note here is that, while they describe experiences of discrepancies within the micro contexts of religious schools, all parents whose children attend an orthodox reformed school mention that they still prefer a religious school above a public or Protestant-Christian school, and that they experience religious schools as mainly positive.

Relations with specific teachers and concerns about school policies

Most Christian parents mention that discrepancies in theological interpretations differ per teacher, and some then associate these discrepancies with the school policies they had signed for. A Christian couple who explicitly mentions the role played by specific teachers are Dianne and Evert. They associate the differences in theological interpretations to the teachers personally, as Dianne notes: 'not every teacher is like that'. This seems to point to a distinction made by these parents, between an understanding of theological content and the teacher as a person:

> *Dianne: Not every teacher is like that, I have to make that comment.*
> *Evert: Of course. In that respect there is… big difference. There are teachers who are really conservative - that's what I want to call it. But also teachers who really are on the other side. Yes.*

Evert describes some differences between teachers and, in this regard, he seems to define teachers by their theological ideas, even if religious differences are relatively small. Such differing experiences per teacher are also mentioned by Lea, a Christian mother:

> *Lea: … our school consists of many different churches and that is very broad, I would say. So it sometimes stands or falls with a teacher who then stands in front of the class, I would say.*

Here Lea additionally emphasises the importance of different theological views, stating that 'it stands or falls with a teacher'. In light of this relatedness to particular teachers, the parents often mention the school policy they signed. Parents signed these school policies in the admission process when registering their children at a particular school. The parents state that they experience tensions between what they signed for and what they encounter in daily educational situations. For instance, parents note that some teachers deviate from school policies when it comes to certain religious activities, such as singing a religious song at school:

> *Lea: And really, I know that certain songs are allowed at school, but that's always the difficult thing: some teachers just pick another song. And then you can say yes: 'The principal should watch if they really only sing from that hymnal, so to speak.' But it will be done nevertheless, so to speak. (...) And I believe, I do believe that it really isn't, that he [the teacher] isn't really consciously hurting people. That it really is someone's [the teacher's] belief. But if I then consider that we actually, if you register your child at such a school and that you then have to sign for the foundation [school policy] and that it is also based on the Three Forms of Unity[21] and on the Statenvertaling [Bible translation], and so on. Then you find some things contrary to what you are actually signing up for. But as a parent I have to sign for that, but also the teacher who is hired for this. And I think you can point this out to each other.*

Here Lea addresses 'the difficult thing', that 'some teachers' still select certain songs which, according to the parents, are not in line with the school policy. Lea then concludes 'but as a parent I have to sign for that, but also the teacher who is hired for this'. It seems Lea seeks common ground in the school policy on which both parents and teacher can rely, as she notes 'you can point this out to each other'. She seems disappointed about the way teachers do not act in line with this school policy, despite signing this when they were hired. Dianne also explicitly describes the discrepancy between the school policy and the chosen songs:

[21] The Three Forms of Unity is a collective name for the Belgic Confession, the Canons of Dordrecht, and the Heidelberg Catechism, reflecting the central doctrine of Calvinist churches.

Dianne: In the end, the school also prescribes that it is not allowed. Hey; we must endorse the Three Forms of Unity as an orthodox reformed school. Then such songs should not actually be sung, but hey, it does happen.

Parents often argue based on 'what we read in the Bible' and the Three Forms of Unity, as fundamental aspects of the school's policy. In light of these policies, several parents also mention issues in the private lives of other families. This is further outlined in the next section.

Discrepancies observed in private lives

As the parents experience tensions between what they signed for and what they encounter in daily educational situations, some parents also point to the ways other families live their lives which, they argue, are not in alignment with their religious convictions or 'with how we use the Bible'. For instance, they disagree with the appearance of other parents with children attending the religious school:

Dianne: And eh… actually also the part of the outside story I think: just say the whole school, how the parents are, let's say. How they look. Yes, in principle that is also um, that is not entirely consistent with how we use the Bible um...
Evert:… how we live. "Do not conform to this world", you see it literally in the Bible, but you don't see it like that at school; no…

Not all parents explicitly associate these private issues with how 'you see it literally in the Bible'. For instance, Tineke discusses the ways other families spend their weekends:

Tineke: (…) Well, that's just one of those things of course; Sunday, what are you going to do on Sunday? I mean, are you going to the beach, beach walk? Or are you going for a walk in the woods? Such things? Yes, you can have all kinds of nice stories about that, but we don't do that. That doesn't mean we're doing better, but then I guess that wasn't done 10 or 20 years ago either.
Bart-Jan: Yes, that was not done, yes.

According to the Bart-Jan and Tineke, such differences between ways of living can lead to 'hostility' from peers. According to Bart-Jan, although a religious school provides children with a 'protected environment', the differences can lead to experiencing 'hostility' from other children who attend the same religious school:

Bart-Jan: Look, it gives you a lot, when you are an adolescent and you are in a protected environment... to that extent, although, in the school you also have that with friends, some who

are very much kicking against it. Then of course you must be held back/saved from, to not get into hostility eh, that you say like… yes...

Tineke more explicitly describes such situations of 'hostility', when asked how they experience their children's attendance of the school:

Tineke: Well… we are of course the stricter side; the black side [more conservative]. For [name son], that's less difficult. But [name daughter], the girl, has had a hard time with it. She was with one more girl – no, with [name friend] and [name friend] [Bart-Jan adds] – three girls who were not allowed to wear trousers. Well and that was regularly… they [peers] had to make them [daughter and frends] feel…
Interviewer: Children amongst each other?
Bart-Jan: Yes yes, amongst each other. What especially, [name daughter], her [previous] class, she was in kindergarten for three years [instead of two years], she was unlucky, the [previous] class was very nice. The [actual] class was a lot less fun; yes children's characters and such. Then you could just be unlucky.
Tineke: But I hear it from more; from other classes – where parents, where children are not allowed [to wear trousers], that that really is a thing. And that they really do talk to them about that, that then: 'you are not allowed to do that' – or other things that are not allowed.

As Tineke and Bart-Jan relate, these issues are discussed amongst the children, and one of their children in particular experienced difficulties due to these issues. Tineke explains how such discrepancies fuel her frustration, adding to feelings of alienation within the orthodox reformed school. For instance, she notes that her children became 'a bit left out' due to these discrepancies in the private lives. Tineke mentions 'differences' between her children and their peers, such as having 'a television at home', doing 'homework on Sunday', or actively texting the Whatsapp-group of her children's class on Sunday's:

Tineke: Yes, those are differences and then your children are a bit left out. But yes, there are of course also plenty who do have a television at home, and on Sundays they are watching I don't know what; that is quite a difference; or doing homework on Sunday, or texting [via Whatsapp], [with us] the mobile had to be turned off. We don't want to text on Sundays. Well then it sometimes stayed on in the evening, then that thing kept going, then he had missed 300 [WhatsApp] messages on Sunday, yes. These are those things. That you then… that I think like, you can turn that off yourself. So… yes, you just think it's a pity that it has to be this way.
Interviewer: Yes, yes.
Tineke: While you hope yourself – but yes maybe your expectations are too high; that everyone is the same in that respect [parents' rules on mobile phones etc.].
Interviewer: Yes yes..

Tineke: But those differences are quite big sometimes.
Interviewer: Yes. And how does it feel, such a position for your children? You say; then my children are a bit left out…
Tineke: Yes, of course I don't like that. That just hurts sometimes. Because you want the best for your child, because you really just want to give them what they want, but of course that can't be. While you want them to be happy and have fun at school and all that. But yeah, you don't always have something to say about that.

When it comes to discrepancies observed in others' private lives, one Christian mother[22] describes conversations with a teacher related to her personal situation of being married to 'someone who doesn't go to church'. She describes having the feeling that others think she has 'poor faith'. As this mother emphasises, such perceptions are not caused by direct forms of communication, but rather originate from indirect forms of communication, 'but you feel that':

Interviewer: Do you have the idea that there is actually respect from the school for, um, you as a mother who sometimes thinks differently from the teachers? Or respect; how would you describe that?
Christian mother: Well, I don't think I'm sitting here like a nagging parent. No, I don't have that feeling. But more what I just said: that they think you have poor faith, I'll just say. That um… Not that they say that outright. But you feel that… I can give you an example. I'm married to someone who doesn't go to church, and for example at school there is also a teacher my age; a very nice woman. Well, she can really sometimes act like: uhm, that she says, for example; then she can inquire about it; I don't mind that at all, I think she's quite interested in that, I think. But she does say, for example; 'hey, wouldn't your husband just want to go to church with us? Because then…' Yes, in other words, [then, in that church] he might believe. So she is from the Protestant Church in the Netherlands [different church than the mother attends]. Look and at that moment I think of... yes, then you actually just feel… such a question, that they think that it is then up to your church that someone does not come along. Yes, and on the other hand; um… I think there are a lot of parents, and maybe even teachers at school who think yes, um… I don't think I would have done it, in such a situation. That you marry someone who doesn't go to church. Yes um. Some things you feel more when someone makes a statement like that, than when it's really just said directly to you, I think.

This mother notes that most teachers and pupils at her children's school attend a slightly less orthodox or conservative church than the mother herself attends. Interestingly, it seems that she describes a situation of identity non-verification: she mentions how she feels that her religious identity is perceived as 'poor' by the teacher. She expresses this in a conversation

[22] To guarantee the anonymity of this mother, her fictional name is not given.

on her very personal situation of being married to a non-Christian person. This suggests how a situation of identity non-verification can occur as part of parents' private lives, and yet within the micro context of the orthodox reformed school.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to answer research question 2:

Research question 2. What are the personal experiences of religious parents (Christian, Muslim) in educational situations in which parents perceive a lack of self-verification of their religious identities?

Making use of existing formulations of micro and macro context distinctions (Adams and Marshall 1996; Schachter and Ventura, 2008), the personal experiences of the religious parents are structured under two categories: discrepancies between the macro and micro context, and discrepancies within the micro context. These two basic categories prove to be particularly helpful in locating the tensions observed in the diversity of parents' experiences in the Dutch educational context.

The experiences in the first category, discrepancies between the macro and micro context, show how religious parents often experience discrepancies with ideologies in broader society. In the majority of these cases, these discrepancies are related to ideologies on gender and sexual diversity. In other cases, it has to do with covid-19 policies in school or, more generally, ideas surrounding individualism. Interestingly, these results show that parents' personal experiences, of a non-verification of their religious identities in the context of education, do not only occur in interaction with intimate (Adamsons, 2010) or significant (Taylor, 1994) others. Instead, the described personal experiences are shown to reside in broader societal situations in which parents are not directly personally involved. For instance, societal occurrences or youth programmes on national television can construct or contribute to situations of identity non-verification. In these situations, parents experience identity non-verification while not being involved in a process of person-to-person interaction. Basically, these experiences reflect how the parents' religious identity standards (chapter 5), constituting their 'frame or horizon' (Taylor, 1989, p. 27) as lived out in their micro context, conflict with ideological tenets in the macro context.

The experiences in the second category, discrepancies within the micro context, show how parents experience discrepancies within their religious communities, including religious schools — and sometimes even within denominations. These are again related to the very personal nature of the parents' religious convictions, and reside in differences in theological interpretations. Parents mention to relate these discrepancies to individual teachers and the

school policy they have signed. These discrepancies are also shown to be related to differences observed in the private lives of other families in the school.

Interestingly, the Christian parents in particular describe experiences of discrepancies within the micro contexts of the orthodox reformed schools. In contrast, in the interviews with the Muslim parents who bring their children to Islamic schools, experiences of discrepancies emerging within the micro context of the Islamic schools are not discussed. This does not directly imply that experiences of identity non-verification do not occur in Islamic schools. In fact, Rietveld-van Wingerden et al. (2009) describe how an Islamic school board discussed 'topics that might be touchy for the parents, for example when it comes to Islamic values' with parents (p. 88). Additionally, among the participants in this study, one Muslim couple of parents had decided not to have their children attend an Islamic school, due to the 'many groups within Islam', and the parents' consequent lack of 'control'. The lack of discrepancies mentioned by Muslim parents could be explained by a variety of factors, such as parents' tendency to not open up about diversity in Islam towards a non-Islamic researcher, or to the low number of interviews (two) with parents who have children attending Islamic schools.

When it comes to experiences that fall under both categories, parents clearly have strong personal convictions, regardless of opinions within their religious communities. This resonates with the findings in chapter 5, relating to the parents' religious identities as a 'person identity' and individualised religiosity. It shows how parents are *personally* involved in tensions in educational contexts, rather than showing 'herd behaviour' by strongly relating to a group identity (Ysseldyk et al., 2010).

Importantly, with regard to both categories, the parents' experiences show that a discrepancy in itself is not problematic. For example, Sara mentions to experience it in a positive way, as she encountered an appreciation of and curiosity towards her religious identity during a parent evening. Instead, parents specifically experience a discrepancy negatively in cases of strong disagreements, apparently resulting in identity non-verification. This identity non-verification seems to become even more problematic when it is in conflict with parents' identity concern towards their children's religious identity development, impacting the generativity (chapter 5) of the parents' religious identities. Drawing on the findings in this chapter and the previous chapter, this seems to be the core of discrepancies between ideological modes of the micro and macro contexts and within the micro context. Especially when the generativity of the parents' religious identities is involved the situation of identity non-verification seems experienced as worse. This illustrates how and explains why religious parents can suffer from 'majority coercion' (Inspectorate of Education, 2020, p. 11; see chapter 1) in a multidimensional way, and adds to previous research on majority versus minority interactions (Kuusisto, 2009; Metso, 2018).

The parents' experiences also lead to the suggestion that the very personal religious convictions of parents, which often even (slightly) diverge from their own religious institutions, can lead to identity non-verification in both public and religious schools. In other words, this implies that whether a child attends a state school or a religious school, personal experiences of religious identity non-verification occur regardless. However, despite these 'discrepancies within', all parents whose children attend an orthodox reformed school mention that they still prefer an orthodox reformed school to a public or Protestant-Christian school, and indicated that they experienced the orthodox reformed schools as mostly positive.

Finally, the broad range of parents' personal experiences shows the need for a contextualised approach in identity research, rather than a mere 'individualistic perspective that ignores social and cultural influences' (Schachter and Ventura, 2008, p. 453). This is especially the case when studying processes of identity negotiation in educational contexts, in which micro and macro contextual factors have been shown to be interrelated. Thus, the contextualised understanding of religious identity negotiation processes of parents in educational settings offers a more nuanced understanding of the 'nature and dynamics of recognition and non-recognition' (Hopkins and Blackwood, 2011, p. 216). Such a nuanced understanding supports a broadening of identity research to include more political concepts, such as citizenship (Hopkins and Blackwood, 2011). The relevance of broader societal concepts, such as 'inclusive citizenship' (Rissanen, 2020, p. 136) or 'everyday citizenship' (Hopkins and Blackwood, 2011, p. 217) in identity research thus deserves special attention.

To conclude, the range of parents' experiences shows how education-related processes of religious identity negotiation are interrelated and reside in diverse life domains. The described experiences in this chapter call for deepening the knowledge and understanding into parents' responses in these specific situations. Such responses in the parents' identity processes are analysed further in the next chapter, looking beyond the micro and macro contexts.

Chapter 7. Parents' religious identity negotiations: beyond verification and disclosure in unseen dynamics

Introduction

In this chapter, the parents' religious identity negotiations are explored, in order to address research question 3:

Research question 3. How do parents negotiate their religious identities in situations as explored under research question 2, and what is the influence on the social interaction in the educational environment?

This research has found (chapter 5) that the religious parents argue from a perspective of relating to a divine Person, to Whom their religious identities are directed, rather than 'being true to oneself' (Taylor, 1994, p. 30, 31). This dynamic relationship is relevant throughout all domains of their lives in the parents' expressions of their religious identities, and constitutes unique person identities, rather than group identities (as conceptualised by Burke and Stets, 2009; Stets and Serpe, 2013; Savage et al., 2017). These findings on the identity standards of the parents provide insight into the basis from which parents act, in broader contexts related to educational settings, as presented in chapter 6.

This chapter continues by presenting aspects of the parents' processes of religious identity negotiation. According to Taylor, one's 'frame or horizon' (1989, p. 27) is defined by the answers to the question, 'who am I?', and it develops in dialogue with 'significant others' (1994, p. 32). It has been argued that it is precisely this 'dialogical character' of an identity, in which recognition can find a place (Taylor, 1994, p. 32). Based on this line of thinking, the importance of dialogue with others, and the expression and recognition of one's identity within this dialogue (Mead, 1934; Taylor, 1994), is seen as a 'vital human need' (Taylor, 1994, p. 26). These processes in the parents' religious identity negotiation, non-verification, and recognition are in-depth explored in this chapter. It is important to note that the findings presented in chapter 6 show that situations of identity non-verification do not only occur in interaction with intimate (Adamsons, 2010) or significant (Taylor, 1994) others, but also reside in situations in which parents are not directly personally involved. Therefore, in this chapter these processes of identity negotiation will also be interpreted as residing in a broader context, rather than only within person-to-person-interaction.

The findings in this chapter are structured into three parts. The first section will show that, surprisingly, the religious parents do not primarily focus on the recognition or verification

of their religious identities. Instead, the parents prioritise a relationship with God, the physical and eternal good for others and group belonging. In the second section, the psychological-sociological aspects of the parents' disclosure of their identities and the antecedents of this identity disclosure (Ragins, 2008) are explored. It will become clear that the parents often do not fully disclose their religious identities in educational settings, despite the presence of theoretical antecedents of identity disclosure. Based on this finding, six categories of 'unseen dynamics' in parents' identity negotiations will be discussed in the third section. The next chapter will continue with exploring parents' identity negotiations, explaining these comprehensive dynamics as so-called reciprocal identity processes (Kerpelman, Pitmann and Lamke, 1997) in parent-child relationships.

Identity verification and non-verification: negotiations reaching beyond

As discussed in chapter 6, the religious parents experience a range of situations related to their religious identities. This section continues from the experiences described by the parents, and focuses on deeper, underlying motivational aspects of identity non-verification that emerge from the interview data, in these experiences.

According to theoretical conceptualisations of the process of identity verification (Burke and Stets, 2009; Stets and Serpe, 2013), people are motivated to seek the verification of their identities by others. Interestingly, with regard to the religious identities of the parents, identity verification by significant others often plays only a minor role in the verification of the religious identities of the parents in this study. Instead, it is found that specific aspects are important in the parents' maintenance of their religious identities. First, I will discuss how obeying and honouring a divine Person in their religion is central to parents, reaching beyond the need for recognition by others. Second, I will analyse how parents seem to prioritise their search for the common eternal good for their children and others, which again seems to go beyond the verification of their identities. And third, although parents' motivations seem to be directed towards these latter two aims, some also reveal feelings of unequal treatment due to their inclusion in a group. In the following sections, these three aspects will be explored in-depth.

Unimportance of recognition by significant others: 'in the end, God is going to see'

During one of the interviews, a central theme concerns social pressure in the mosque and the relation between social pressure and the upbringing of children. In this case, Selim, a Muslim father, explains an internal conflict in his faith, between the recognition of their Muslim identities by religious significant others in his religious community, and recognition by the significant Other, God. Selim argues how unimportant the reward of other people is, that is, being viewed as a good Muslim by other Muslims. Instead, he says, 'in the end, God is going to see':

Selim: In the end, God is going to see if you were sincere in your actions. A little good deed could bring you into heaven. But if you pray for 80 years long, just so that people say, what a good Muslim that is. Yes, then you have had your reward on earth. Because you seek only the reward of other people.

Selim explains this as an 'internal conflict':

Selim: A man always prayed in the front row. And once he was late. And he was a bit of an older man. And he saw that he was too late, that the prayer had already begun. When the prayer has already begun, you cannot go forward. Then he decided to not enter [the mosque]. Because other people would see him praying [at the back]. Then he thought, Have I been praying for other people all the time for twenty years? Is he 20 years old… so that is an internal conflict, let's say: he is going to think about it. So that's your [says Arabic word for 'ego'], your ego. So you actually have all this time, you thought you were praying for God, but you were praying all this time for those closer people. That dividing line is so thin. It always is.

Although it seems this is not related to the educational context of this study, later in this interview, Emine, the mother of this family, develops this thinking of 'internal conflict'. She further explains this in relation to the upbringing of her children:

Emine: In our faith, um, your child is a test for you. Because your child is one of you, you see. So if he does something bad to you, it really hurts. Or if he gets sick, it hurts a lot. But look, that internal, that internal conflict… (…) Because if your child is sick and cries at night, then you don't think... then you get up, right away. And then you don't think about your... [but] if you then get up for prayer, it is hard, then you are actually um, (…) I also often say to him [father], for example: you don't get up like that [as for the sick child], for prayer. Like, it's time again, come on, let's pray. Because you postpone it a bit.
Selim: That's the human.
Emine: Do the dishes first, but that shows how you feel about your Lord. Do you understand. Why have we come here, not for our children, but for our Lord. And you have to educate your children like that for your Lord. Everything is for him. You are actually: you are born, and you are actually looking for Him. You are actually looking for the Lord and the reason why you were created.

This perception, that 'in the end' God's will is the most important, is also reflected by Christian parents, especially concerning their parenting. For instance, when Dianne explains the importance of God's will:

Dianne: You can of course feel something inside as a parent, hey: you can set a certain rule like, well, 'I don't want that', but we try to prove that from the Bible, or at least to teach: that's where it comes from. We may not want something, but if God does not want it, that is ultimately what is… what is important.

The idea that 'recognition' of a religious identity by significant others is the highest ideal and a vital human need (Taylor 1994), does not seem applicable to their religious identities for either the Christian or Muslim parents. How they are 'seen by others' does not appear to be their ultimate aim. To the contrary, these parents even see this idea, of being 'seen by others', as God's test for the sincerity of their religious identity. In the parents' views, the ultimate goal lies beyond human beings themselves, as Selim maintains. Seeking rewards and recognition of one's self-definition (a good Muslim) by other people is almost viewed negatively.

Beyond self-verification: focus on seeking the physical and eternal common good

Apart from being primarily focused on recognition by God, as illustrated above, several parents primarily point to the 'common good' of their religion for others, for teachers, or for their children in particular. In this respect the parents again seem to move beyond the verification of their religious identities, and instead prioritise the common good for others. Zamira, a Muslim mother, very explicitly addresses this by stating that 'all schools' would be made Islamic schools, 'if everyone knew Islam':

Zamira: Because Islamic faith is not only good for Muslims, but also for everyone, for the whole world. If everyone knew Islam, I think they would make all schools Islamic. Really, because what is bad for people, and for society and for the world, is forbidden in Islam. The Islam is portrayed very negatively, but it is not like that.

Just as Zamira notes that the Islam is 'portrayed very negatively' in the media, in some situations parents mention that they realise that their religious convictions are negatively valued in the school context or in broader society. Nevertheless, these parents are motivated to express these convictions, feeling concern for the other in the school context or the broader society. For instance, Lea, a Christian mother, describes two sorts of motivations from which she would initiate an interaction. She perceives the first motivation as negative, being 'just kind of annoyed', while she seeks to prioritise the second motivation, 'really from your compassion', 'that you really have the salvation of people in mind'. Lea searches the words that will explain the difference:

Lea: Yeah well, then you say eh, um. Then I think your aim is at least better… I mean; you can address someone that you think, well: I just really don't think this is possible, that this just

continues all the time, just goes on, but... Then you're finally, you're also just kind of annoyed, that certain people just do, [it] just kind of push through, I'll just say. And I think, if you can do it from, really from your compassion, from your heart: then I think that your intention is also real, like: that you really have the salvation of people in mind, I think.

Lea views this 'salvation of people' as the most important, and seems to reach for this aim in her conversations in the educational context. Similarly, Marianne also argues that her religious vision on a sensitive topic, such as that marriage is exclusively meant to be between one man and one woman, 'is best for a child', 'regardless of the fact that you didn't grow up with the Bible':

Marianne: But I'd almost say, regardless of the fact that you didn't grow up with the Bible, I think: guys, uh... take your eyes off it: look around what - at least in most cases - is best for a child. What we say: in an ordinary family, as marriage is intended between a man and a woman. That children grow up there. Yeah, I don't see any other shape that would be better for kids.

Here, Marianne seeks to emphasise that her religious convictions in the tense field of gender ideologies, in her view, serve the common good of (non-)religious others. She states that the best place for children to grow up is in an 'ordinary family', where there is a marriage 'between a man and a woman'. According to Marianne, no other 'shape', 'would be better for kids'. Besides specifically seeking the common good for (non-)religious others in light of the parents personal religious convictions, Lea points to pursuing a 'fair treatment' for her own child:

Lea: And I think if you talk about it with your kid and you point it out… then, I don't know. Maybe it's just because it's your child. That you think, yes, it still is. She is still young, and, in the end, it is my duty to live for her, but also to treat her fairly. I think you feel that more towards your child – more – than towards the teacher – so to speak.

What Lea means exactly when she says 'treat her fairly' is unclear. As she points to her duty towards her child, the notion of a fair treatment seems related to a phrase in an earlier stage of the interview. Here, Lea mentions how she wants to deal with her child 'honestly', by passing on to her child how Lea thinks about the religious contents of a song:

Lea: Then you eventually try to explain to your child: do you know what you are singing now, that would actually be nice if you can sing it with your heart and not, if you sing it, that it is for everyone, I'll just say [Lea believes only converted persons can sing the song with their heart]. In the end, you try to pass that on to your child. And that, I think that is quite a bit of a dilemma. (…) Yes, in the end you also want to deal with it honestly, I think.

Lea describes how she experiences a dilemma in the interpretation of a song her child was singing. She mentions that she seeks to pass on what she really believes, compared to what is stated in the particular song. So, it seems Lea especially wishes to transmit the actual, true content of her religious convictions, compared to what is stated by a teacher or what is stated in a song. In particular, it seems Lea views this transmission of the 'true meaning' as treating her child 'fairly' and dealing 'with it honestly', reflecting the 'truth' that Lea views in her religious convictions. It seems that she can only be 'honest' and 'fair' towards her child if she passes on the true meaning of her religious convictions. Thus, though from a different perspective than Marianne, Lea seems to aim for what is good for her child according to her own personal views. Although parents seem to prioritise the common good in their identity negotiations, feelings related to unequal treatment are sometimes present in their accounts. This will be explored further in the next paragraph, based on extracts from the interview with Bart-Jan and Tineke, a couple of Christian parents, who discussed precisely this theme.

Belonging to a group: a minority in an already minority religious group

Amongst the Christian parents, feelings are expressed of being different from the majority in an orthodox reformed school. This resonates with the findings outlined in chapter 6, where personal experiences of the parents are categorised within the micro context, that is, within the religious schools and communities. Bart-Jan and Tineke, for example, sent their children to an orthodox reformed school. Tineke describes feelings of unequal treatment at this school, from within the religious community. She argues that she feels they 'are giving in again and again', compared to 'everyone else' in the school, from whom ideas or other forms of input are accepted:

> *Tineke: And now you often have the idea that [ideas and input] from everyone else is accepted, and [/but] that you are giving in again and again. I can see it happening that in ten years' time we will just be wearing trousers at school.*

Here, Tineke expresses her thoughts on the wearing of trousers at school. As mentioned earlier (chapter 6, under 'Disagreements on theological understandings'), historically, the wearing of trousers by women is seen as a 'symbol of emancipation', equalling men (see e.g. Bill, 1993). In orthodox reformed communities, generally, the wearing of trousers by women is therefore not appreciated. However, although the wearing of trousers is not allowed at the moment of the interview at the school Tineke mentions, trousers are worn at home by women and girls who attend to or are connected to the school. Thus, Tineke expresses expectations

that trousers will be allowed in the school in ten years' time, as the ideas of these parents are often 'accepted', in contrast to the views of Tineke and Bart-Jan.

Tineke's perceptions of unequal treatment and perceptions on group belonging come to the fore even more when she describes how she feels to be perceived negatively by others (the so-called 'reflected appraisals'), formulating it even as being seen as 'a bit retarded':

> *Tineke: Yes, well, there are those who respect you, but there is also a group who just think it's weird; [who think] that you're a bit retarded.*

It is important to emphasise that Tineke experiences these negative perceptions within the religious school, in which they are part of a minority religious group, due to their smaller church denomination. In addition to that, Tineke experiences negative perceptions towards her religious identity from the macro context in the media:

> *Tineke: All sorts of things are being shouted by all of the media; that you think, hey, that makes no sense at all. But that is also the other way around. (…) we are of course of the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands, well, that is sometimes also kicked by refo's [shortened name for persons in the orthodox reformed community, the Bible Belt], because, yes [illustrating thoughts of members Bible Belt:] 'you are the more conservative side [conservative, orthodox part of the already conservative religious community of the Bible Belt] and you are not allowed to do anything; and you can't wear trousers, and you can't do this and you can't do that'.*

In addition to the 'things', 'shouted by all of the media', in the final sentences, Tineke also describes the negative reflected appraisals towards their religious identity from within the religious school context, 'and that you are not allowed to do anything'. Thus, while being a member of a small religious minority group in society, Tineke experiences negative reflected appraisals from both the micro- and the macro context. This shows the 'strenuous' (Kuusisto, 2010) negotiations for minority group members, such as this strongly religious parent, in moving between the different levels within and between the micro and macro contexts.

Interestingly, Tineke also notes positive experiences in the macro context, compared to the experiences in the micro context. For instance, Tineke mentions how her daughter encountered difficulties in both her primary and secondary school due to these negative in-group perceptions. As a result of these negative experiences, attending a secular university is surprisingly different and led to dialogues, crossing boundaries:

> *Tineke: … both [at] primary and secondary education [she] had a lot of trouble with them; and she comes to secular education last year and, um, we've been in school for a few weeks and they're in the toilets and a girl comes up to her; "Hey, you always wear nice skirts, you always*

look nice!". And another girl was Roman Catholic, "how is that with you? With us it is like this...". She [daughter] says; "I've never had such pleasant conversations as now [attending the secular university]".

In Tineke's perception, her daughter experiences more self-verification of her religious identity at the secular university than she did within the schools with an institutional Christian identity. This does not imply, however, that children from conservative religious groups would have more affinity with children from secular groups than with children from other conservative religious groups. For instance, Simsek, Tubergen and Fleischmann (2021) found that, in religiously diverse classrooms, Muslim children in particular prioritise friendships with 'classmates with similar religious affiliations'. In addition, the data in this study do not allow for a comparison between these two situations, that is, attending a religious secondary school versus attending a public university, due to the age-specific aspects in each situation. However, this example illuminates how parents view the difficulties their children have within a religious educational institution compared to a non-religious educational institution. Interactions with persons outside of the religious community are seen as a relief; Tineke and Bart-Jan's daughter feels accepted and her religious identity seems to be verified in the interactions.

Later in the interview, Bart-Jan further elaborates on both the experiences in the macro- and in the micro context, stating he actually would expect more understanding from within the micro context:

Bart-Jan: … you would actually expect more understanding of your own kind of people, and then it's all the more disappointing. While with non-Christians, you actually expect that they might be rude, and that it isn't at all. [laughter] I think that's it anyway…. For, in general, fellow Christians are; they understand much more about your environment than non-Christians. But I think it's mainly that you feel disappointed that you think [towards fellow Christians]: 'yes, you know how we basically know [think about] a lot of things'. But yes, one emphasises this and the other that. We set each other free in that.

Based on Bart-Jan's account, a possible explanation for the non-verification of religious identity within religious schools can be found in the reciprocal expectations within the religious minority group. Though someone is part of a minority in an already religious minority group, reciprocal expectations can exist within religious schools, as Bart-Jan notes: 'that you think [towards fellow Christians]: 'yes, you know how we basically know [think about] a lot of things''. In this respect, Bart-Jan expects members of the religious community to have opinions about certain religious behaviours. Clashing opinions then lead to dissatisfaction with others' religious identity behaviours.

This becomes more visible when Tineke formulates how she thinks she (and her family and religious community) is perceived (in terms of identity theory, the so-called reflected appraisals) by people in the educational context: ‘you are not allowed to do anything; and you can't wear trousers, and you can't do this and you can't do that’. Such dissatisfactions with someone else’s behaviour, due to specifically religious reciprocal expectations, are simply not present in interactions with non-religious persons. In these situations, religious persons cannot expect others to have certain religious opinions and show related religious behaviour. As the experience of Tineke’s daughter shows, this seems to make room for open interactions including curiosity towards different identities. Tineke notes her daughter has now ‘pleasant conversations’ at the non-religious university.

Still, it is important to note that research in the field of adolescent identities (Kuusisto, 2010) shows that these results should be interpreted carefully. Kuusisto found that youngsters from religious minority groups differ in their negotiations within majority contexts. Kuusisto argues this should be understood both in light of different ways of belonging to the minority group versus the majority group, and in light of the ‘multiplicity’ of the values in the majority context (2010, p. 792). Central to the interpretation of the findings in this study is that parents’ reciprocal expectations within the micro context of religious schools could foster the multiplicity in the ways they negotiate their religious identities. In addition, it illustrates the impact this has on their children’s interactions, both within the micro and macro context.

Concluding this section on identity verification and non-verification, a central finding is that the religious parents do not primarily focus on the recognition or verification of their religious identities. Whether parents are concerned with ‘God as the significant Other’, with the common good for the (non-)religious other, or with being a minority within a minority group, they surprisingly do not seem to be primarily focused on having their self-definition recognised. If the religious identity is central in a situation, the parents in this study are focused on aspects going beyond the verification and disclosure of their personal religious identities.

This further supports the view that these religious identities deviate from modern identities (Taylor, 1994), and it offers insight into the unique thinking and decision processes of religious parents in educational contexts. In addition, the conclusion that these religious parents are focused on aspects that go beyond the verification of their religious identities, implies that it is possible that they only partially disclose their religious identities in these situations. In the next section, these processes of disclosure of the parents’ religious identities are analysed further.

Disclosure of religious identities

The second part of this chapter focuses on the parents' processes of religious identity disclosure. It will be shown that the parents often do not fully disclose their religious identities in educational settings, despite the presence of theoretical antecedents of identity disclosure. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, the model developed by Ragins (2008) is used in the analysis of the parents' disclosure of their religious identities in the educational context.

The disclosure of religious identities itself is important to take into account, particularly as both the disclosure and the hiding of a stigmatised identity is related to a negative emotional impact (Ragins, 2008; Berkley et al., 2019). Several authors mention a religious identity as a possible stigmatized identity (Ragins, 2008; Brenner, 2019). Ragins (2008) theorises that disclosing such a stigmatised identity is determined by three antecedents: 1) the process of self-verification (individuals want others to see them as they see themselves), and the centrality of an identity (the more central or prominent an identity is to someone, the more willing that person is to self-verify the own identity), 2) the related consequences of disclosing an identity, and 3) the consequences related to the environmental support for disclosure of that particular identity.

According to Ragins (2008), the processes of identity disclosure and identity integration are on a continuum, with identity integration on one side and a lack of identity integration on the other side. Somewhere in this grey area in-between, the individual chooses to either stop integrating the identity or to continue integrating the identity. The antecedents defined above serve to foster this integration. In the analysis of the interview data, these theoretical concepts are seen to be helpful in explaining the parents' processes of disclosing their religious identities in educational situations.

Antecedent 1: internal processes of self-verification and identity centrality

An antecedent of identity disclosure is the identity centrality of an identity, as theorised by Ragins (2008). Many parents explicitly mention the prominence of their religious identities to their self-concepts (see above and chapter 3). This becomes especially apparent when both Muslim and Christian parents point to the relevance of their religious identities 'across situations' (see chapter 5). For instance, regarding the meaning of his faith to him personally, Selim describes the relevance of his faith throughout the day:

> *Selim: It is what we wake up with and what we go to sleep with. So you get up with prayer, that's what it's for. And you go to sleep after prayer. (…) You get up with God and you go to sleep with God. (…) that you are reminded of God five times a day (…)*

Although the parents express their religious identities to be this central to their self-concepts, they nevertheless indicate that they often only partly disclose their religious identities in the school context. In several cases, parents explicitly mention that they hesitate to open up about their personal religious convictions in the educational environment. For instance, when Sara, a Christian mother, is asked if she had gone to school to have a conversation about an issue she disagreed with, she responds:

> *Interviewer: And if you say, if there's that legalism [which Sara disagrees with] in the school, and your daughter comes home with that. About those rules. Does she say something about it, or do you also start a conversation about it?*
> *Sara: No, I didn't… have a conversation about it. No. No.*
> *Interviewer: And why not?*
> *Sara: Yes, that also comes across as arrogant, like: I know better. Yes, I adapt easily in that regard. Then I say: well you should do that, if that teacher likes it. Yes.*
> *(…)*
> *Interviewer: [but] it could also be good at a school to start a conversation about it?*
> *Sara: Yes. I think so. But then you also make a big thing out of a small thing, while I don't think that's the most important. If they're going to teach the kids wrong things now, that would be worse for me.*
> *(…)*
> *Interviewer: Yes, exactly, but if things are said in a Bible story, for example, specifically about Jesus [Sara had mentioned this was the most important for her], or about those most important things. How do you handle that?*
> *Sara: Yeah, in that respect, I'm uh… I never really say anything about it.*

Many aspects are relevant in this extract, but most importantly, and similar to the other parents, Sara tells she does not open up about her thoughts in the school context. Instead, she states that she is afraid to come across as arrogant. However, even when asked how she would act in a situation concerning 'the most important' issues, reflecting the parents' identity centrality of their religious identities, Sara says she would remain silent.

This suggests that there is a non-disclosure (see, for example, amongst the Muslim parents in the next paragraph) of religious identities amongst religious parents in educational settings, even when the antecedent of identity centrality is present. As in Sara's case of identity centrality, identity disclosure would be expected; nevertheless, she does not open up about her religious thoughts in the school environment. This will be explored in more depth in this study as, according to Ragins (2008), the decision to disclose an identity is essentially a reflection of 'a cost-benefit analysis of the consequences of disclosure' (p. 200). In that light, the identity non-disclosures of these parents could be associated with the 'anticipated

consequences', that is outweighing the costs and benefits of identity disclosure by these parents. In the following paragraph, these anticipated consequences are explored further.

Antecedent 2: anticipated consequences

Several parents describe their anticipations, based on the role of school policies. For instance, a couple of Muslim parents[23] indicate that they had a negative experience with a teacher at their child's state school. The mother mentions she only used indirect forms of communication to disclose aspects of her religious identity in this situation, such as 'I looked at that teacher like, hey, this is a 3rd grade kid' or 'Well, I looked at him weird, though'. When asked whether she explicitly disclosed her thoughts on the issue, she says: 'No… No.':

> *Muslim mother: And have you ever had conversations with school… teachers, about this [a video shown in child's classroom in which a couple was kissing] for example?*
> *Muslim father: Not me.*
> *Muslim mother: No, not substantively about this, but then, grade 3 [6 years old], a girl was wearing a shirt; grade 3 I'm talking about. Then a teacher said; "Wow, sexy!" I looked at that teacher like, hey, this is a 3rd grade kid. When my kid comes in, I don't know, yeah, grade 3, when a kid asks 'Mommy, what's sexy?', yes tell that to your child. Well, I looked at him weird, though. But after that, I no longer have eh...*
> *Interviewer: Didn't have a conversation?*
> *Muslim mother: No… No.*

When this topic is discussed during the interview, the Muslim parents mention that they did not explicitly disclose their religious convictions in the situation, because they anticipated the school's policy as guided by the Dutch government:

> *Muslim mother, father: No, we didn't have a conversation.*
> *Muslim father: We also know that state schools, actually all schools, should also discuss this from the government. But some might be really good at it… but some…*
> *Muslim mother: … do that carefully.*
> *Muslim father: Do this carefully, which is why we have also chosen to send our youngest daughter – primary school next year – to a Christian school as well. And then they treat things like this with a little more respect.*

In the understanding of this Muslim couple, the issue was a result of the school's policy due to government requirements. This relatedness of the issue to the school's policy seems to have steered the parents towards not disclosing their religious identities, as they had signed

[23] To guarantee the anonymity of these parents, their fictional names are not given.

for this policy before. The father brings up the school's policy directly, after both stated that they did not have a conversation about the issue at school. Although not explicitly mentioned, it thus seems that the Muslim father uses the school's policy as a reason for not starting a conversation and thus not disclosing his religious identity in the educational context. Anticipating on the different school policies at public versus Protestant-Christian schools, these Muslim parents changed their school choice for their youngest daughter to a Protestant-Christian school. They knew the Protestant-Christian school would handle the issue differently than the state school, as the mother notes.

Interestingly this reflects previous findings, as these Muslim parents are not primarily concerned with the verification or recognition of their Muslim identities in the particular school context. Rather than disclosing their religious identities and seeking verification of their identities by others, they instead pursue a situation in which their child can grow up in a way that is compatible with their religious convictions. Thus, they seem to anticipate potential negative consequences of a disclosure of their religious identities in the school context, by changing to a different school. These parents appear to expect more positive outcomes at the Protestant-Christian school, in contrast to the state school. It seems possible that, at this Christian school, the disclosure of their religious identities could also be more integrated into the school context.

Also several of the Christian parents seem to anticipate the consequences of a disclosure of their religious identities in the school context. As presented in the following section, Dianne, a Christian mother, discusses her expectations of support in the school context. This can be interpreted as the next antecedent of identity disclosure (Ragins, 2008), the presence of environmental support.

Antecedent 3: environmental support

In the discussion of their personal experiences, the parents mention both persons who do and who do not support or respect their religious (minority) views within the school context. This section first presents the experiences of (a possible lack of) environmental support among both Muslim and Christian parents at a state school. Then a negative experience of a Christian parent in an orthodox reformed school follows, and, finally, a theorisation and proposition of a new antecedent is presented.

One Muslim mother, Maysa, describes a situation in which she received respect from both the teacher and other parents in the state school her child attends, after openly fasting during Ramadan:

> *Maysa: … the teacher recently posted a message [about the child's fasting in Ramadan] on the platform where all parents are members. From how this looks [like]. And what the children have*

told about it, and then you see all kinds of messages from parents, like: 'oh, how good, how clever. Nice, and we did indeed hear from our children at home something about fasting'.

As Maysa notes, other parents showed support for the religious practices of her child, but these parents also had conversations in their homes with their own children about the fasting practices. Thus, the environmental support here constitutes support from both the non-religious parents and their non-religious children, in their conversations at home. In addition to this support from non-religious others, Maysa also mentions the importance of fellow-religious educational personnel within the school:

Maysa: You have to think how beautiful it is to receive and yes I have never received anything negative. Not at school, and certainly not from the teachers. There is a Moroccan teacher at that school, and recently also a Turkish teaching assistant at that school. And in her spare time she also teaches Islamic lessons, so she also teaches in the mosque.

A Christian mother, Sara, also experiences support at a state school. Sara has a handicapped child at this state school, and she feels free to fully disclose her religious identity at a parents' evening. Sara explains how she revealed the support she experiences by reading the Bible to the other parents. The other parents were curious about this:

Sara: … I say, but I would have brought a Bible. I say: 'I couldn't miss it. If I don't know what to do, if I sometimes have to give punishment, I wonder; have I been too strict? And then I read again [in the Bible]: 'Whoever loves his child chastens him'. Or if I wonder, how will that be when I am no longer there, what about [name child with disability]?'' I say, 'then I read, "Do not be anxious about anything, but let your desire be made known in all things through prayer and supplication and thanksgiving." Well, and then they just stayed with me for 45 minutes. And then, after the evening, two more women came to me.

Apart from the importance of support both Sara and Maysa experience, both experiences also suggest that parents find it easier to disclose their religious identities if situations are not full of negative tension, and thus do not reflect the discrepancies presented in chapter 6. In the extract above, Sara describes an experience of identity disclosure, in which her religious identity formed an important support in her life, and other parents acknowledged her thinking. Similarly, Maysa describes an experience of identity disclosure in which she disclosed her religious identity related to activities during Ramadan, and others were supportive of her in this.

In contrast to those positive experiences of religious identity disclosure, several parents mention an experience in the educational setting in which they seemed less sure of

environmental support, or even experienced a lack of support. For instance, Maysa tells the presence of Muslim personnel at a state school is of importance to her to check certain aspects of the school curriculum. In several instances, Maysa argues that she checked with the Turkish-Muslim teaching assistant whether the TV-programme 'Just Naked' (see chapter 6) would be shown in the classrooms:

> *Maysa: … So I also asked the teaching assistant. She said, because I had asked her, would you perhaps also want to question it, whether they [teachers] will also show that 'Just Naked'-programme at school?*
> *Interviewer: Ask the teaching assistant?*
> *Maysa: Yes, I asked her as well. Because then you don't want to be the 'thing' as a parent, constantly be the 'stick-in-the-mud' [Dutch: 'zeurpiet']. And she also asked [name son]'s teacher. And she [teaching assistant] also said: 'yes, this has no added value at all for those children. Why must they watch naked people, why must they look at me when I am naked. Isn't that unnecessary?' So she [teacher] says: 'yes I have turned on [name of other programme] for the children, they are not going to watch it [the youth programme] this time'.*

In this respect the teaching assistant seemed to fulfil a mediating role between the parent and the other educational personnel in the state school environment. Based on her contact with the teaching assistant, Maysa shares how she avoided several situations of confrontation with other educational personnel at the state school. This suggests that, despite the amount of support at the state school, Maysa still seems to expect a potential lack of support, as she did not want to be seen as the 'stick-in-the-mud' all the time. In these situations, she does not feel comfortable enough to fully disclose her religious identity.

In many cases, parents indicate that they expected a negative reception of their religious identity disclosure. For instance, a Christian mother, Dianne, explains how her child came home telling about a song, which he thought to be against the religious convictions in the family. At Dutch orthodox reformed schools, songs are part of confessional religious education. Thus, this song included religious content. Together with her son, Dianne sought for the lyrics of the song on the internet. She then 'could totally understand his feeling', and they 'agreed it was a song that had no reverence for God, for Jesus at all'. Thus, although the song was sung at the religious school, and could be seen as Christian, the song was irreverent in the view of Dianne and her child. Then, Dianne explains that she felt that she 'had to do something with that', but, she 'just didn't dare at first':

> *Dianne: But then he initially came home with me, and I say, yes, you know, I get it. Looked up the song on the internet; well, I could totally understand his feeling. We agreed that it was a song that had no reverence for God, for Jesus at all. I felt inside that I had to do something with*

that, but I just didn't dare at first. Then I said to [name son]; 'Otherwise don't sing along'. That's how I got rid of it. But then he said, but the teacher makes me sing along. So then I said, I'll go to school, then I'll talk to the teacher about it.

As Dianne explains, the child was compelled by the teacher to sing along, which further formed her negative expectations about receiving support from the teacher:

Dianne: So look and if I already hear that in advance, that that has to be done, then somehow I already know how the teacher feels about it.

In addition to this expectation during the ongoing situation, Dianne already expected to receive no understanding from the teacher before the situation actually happened. She reflects:

Dianne: … I didn't really expect anything different, I have to be honest about that.

During the situation, these anticipated consequences at first withheld Dianne from disclosing aspects of her religious identity in the interaction with the teacher. She was anxious about having a conversation with the teacher about the song taught in her child's class:

Dianne: … you have to grow up in things like that, just to go to school, to go and talk about it, you can really know that from me; I found that quite nerve-wracking. It really stressed me out.

As Dianne argues, there is a need to grow up in order to go into the educational situation and talk about these types of issues. Initially, Dianne was too stressed to disclose her religious identity to the teacher within this relatively tense situation. Thus, Dianne first sought for a solution in telling her child not to sing along with the song. However, the teacher made her child sing along, and thus the mother felt compelled to have a conversation: 'I felt inside that I had to do something with that'.

In this situation, Dianne appeared not to disclose her religious identity at first, but rather sought alternatives in order to avoid 'opening up' towards the teacher. Interestingly, for Dianne, the alternative was to address the child's action in the interaction with the teacher, which turned out negatively for Dianne and her child. Based on this experience, Dianne decided to open up and go to the school. In her conversation with the teacher, Dianne described how she did not receive understanding from her on this issue:

Dianne: I finally indicated what my objection was; a bit of irreverence, which was very clear in that song. Yes and she didn't understand… yes. In the end I found that very sad [/bad].

Interviewer: Yes, yes.

Dianne: And I couldn't convince her either, you know. That's how I felt.

Dianne sounds disappointed about not being understood by the teacher, or being able to convince the teacher. Dianne seems to be struggling to find understanding throughout, and she also points to the importance of getting used to, or 'growing up' about going to school and opening up about her personal religious convictions. In short, if parents do not expect support for their identity disclosure, reflecting a discrepancy, they appear hesitant in disclosing their religious identities in the educational setting. However, if parents do expect support, it seems that they are more likely to disclose their religious identities in the educational contexts.

Dianne's experience shows how conflicts can occur even in mono-religious, orthodox reformed schools, within a relatively small religious community. Dianne and other Christian parents whose children attend orthodox reformed schools also often discuss situations in which they appreciated such religious activities at the religious schools. Nevertheless, Dianne's experiences call for a more in-depth exploration of antecedents specifically in educational settings of parents' religious identity disclosures. In the following section some implications for such an antecedent are theorised.

New antecedent: narrow spaces to be transformed into free spaces

In addition to the antecedents theorised by Ragins (2008), in Dianne's situation an extra antecedent of the parents' identity disclosure within an educational setting appears. This antecedent resides in the child's context. Initially, Dianne hoped that the 'problem' would be solved solely between the child and the teacher. However, as Dianne describes the situation, the teacher rejected the child's request not to sing along with the song.

In this very personal and complicated situation, the complexity of offering strongly religious children a safe space (Benjamin et al., 2021) in the classroom becomes clearer. Many authors have contributed to the discussion on and concretisation of safe spaces (see for an overview of the discussion Flensner and Von der Lippe, 2019, pp. 277-279). Overall, it is stated that the classroom should reflect the 'outside world', and thus tensions about freedom of speech should, apart from basic rules, not be avoided in favour of comfortable safety for students from minority groups.

What especially emerges in the data in this study, is that both pupils and parents from the religious minority group seem to hesitate about showing the 'courage' to disclose their religious identities and subsequent thoughts. Thus, encouraging 'conflict' to enter the educational realm, in order to practise democracy in the classroom (Parra, Bakker and Van Liere, 2021) could, eventually, lead to a nondisclosure of the religious identities of both pupils and parents, as Dianne's situation demonstrates. As a result, conflicts could remain unspoken.

Additionally, the situation Dianne's child found himself in moves beyond the tension surrounding safe spaces in educational settings as described by Flensner and Von der Lippe (2019), that is, offering both room for all opinions and at the same time a safe space for everyone. In contrast, here the complicated source of conflict is the *participation* in a religious activity. Within the classroom dynamics, arising from an educational activity, the child on its own is exposed to the explicit religious boundaries of the home versus the school context.

In this seemingly narrow space, compared to a 'safe' or a 'brave space' (Arao and Clemens, 2013), the child at first does not open up about the issue at school. Instead, he goes through the situation on his own, goes home and has a discussion with his parent. Then, as parent and child together agree on the issue, Dianne surprisingly seems to join her child in the narrow position of not disclosing thoughts on the issue in the educational setting, and advises her child to just 'not sing along'. Dianne herself mentions that she was 'stressed out' about initiating a conversation on the issue in the educational setting.

Thus, the 'narrow space' in the classroom seems to be an antecedent for Dianne not to disclose her religious identity. Instead of an open exchange of ideas and opinions, then, this situation seems to involve a narrow, or closed, space for the child, which arises from participation in a religious activity. The child, together with his parent, seeks a solution for such narrow positions, but disclosing aspects of the religious identities in the school is only a minor option (see the following section, under 'Unseen dynamics'). This implies that there is a need to include the understanding of religious boundaries in (inter)religious activities. In short, instead of transforming such a narrow space into a brave space, in which conflicts are encouraged to reflect society, the question can be raised whether dealing with diversity always implies *participating* in any (religious) activity. For Dianne and her child, there seems to be a need not to participate, which could have helped Dianne to disclose her religious identity with more ease.

Additionally, Dianne's situation illustrates the detailed impact of experiencing 'irreverence' for sacral Persons in educational settings. It is this 'irreverence' in the educational activity in particular that led Dianne and her child to struggle with the situation. Although different in many ways, this also shows some similarities to well-known situations, such as when cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed were shown in classrooms (see also in the broader European context: Raggazzi, 2017, pp. 55-63). This points to the complex tensions between respecting religious reverence on the one side and the right of freedom of expression on the other side (Westerman, 2007, in Rietveld-van Wingerden, Westerman and Ter Avest, 2009).

In line with religious literacy and a mutual understanding of the nature of religion, this nevertheless calls attention to the inclusion of notions of reverence for sacral Persons, as a concrete aspect of a safe space for strongly religious children and, with that, the encouragement of religious parents' disclosure of their religious identities in educational

settings. It is important to emphasise that this is not to argue that sensitive topics and discussions should be avoided in the classroom, in favour of the comfort of pupils (Flensner and Von der Lippe, 2019). Rather, this is about participation in (religious) activities, where the religious identity standards of the involved persons move beyond the recognition by significant others (chapter 5), being primarily concerned with a divine Person.

Respecting such religious boundaries could provide the child with the freedom to choose whether or not to participate in (religious) activities. This freedom would reflect the democratic freedom from the 'outside' western world in the classroom even more strongly (Rom, 1998). Finally, and importantly, this points to the essential role of teachers to assess if a comparable situation circles around such a crucial part of a religious identity standard, and to decide whether a child can thus be free to choose whether to participate or not.

Disclosure continuum: parents' identity disconnects through partial disclosure

In many cases parents mention they did not disclose all aspects of their religious identities within the school context. Often, only some aspects of their religious identities were disclosed, while other aspects were only discussed with their children privately. This resonates with so-called identity disconnects (Ragins, 2008, p. 209). When there are identity disconnects, persons disclose stigmatised identities 'to varying degrees across life domains' (p. 194). For instance, in most cases, Muslim parents express having difficulties with their child celebrating Christmas at a state school (see also Niemi, Kuusisto and Kallioniemi, 2014). In this, one Muslim mother, Maysa, explains she combined her children's Muslim and cultural Dutch identities. As a result, she compromised for the Christmas celebration by integrating it into their children's lives, but added a reformulation of the Christian religious activities:

> *Maysa: For example, celebrating Christmas at school. There are many Muslim families who do not bring their child to such an evening. That also goes against their faith. But, I have, I actually combine it.*

Maysa then outlines and emphasises important Muslim celebrations that form a part of her own Muslim identity. Subsequently, she describes how her children attend a Dutch state school and as a result have celebrated traditional Christian feasts:

> *Maysa: For I say, we have two holy celebrations in our faith. And that is the Sugar feast and the Sacrifice feast. Those two are ours. And we can celebrate it in a big wat. But, I say [to the children]: you attend a Dutch primary school. They get it all week. Decorating the Christmas tree, things like that. I used to like doing that too. We didn't have a Christmas tree in the house in the past, they know that too. And we're not going to decorate in the month of December, we*

deliberately do not. Because that will then normalise it for my children. I'm not saying that out loud, but that's what I and my husband do: consciously.

Maysa emphasises how she and her husband 'deliberately' and 'consciously' handle Dutch celebrations in their homes. She then concludes by reformulating the traditional religious activities in the school, calling these a 'cultural activity':

Maysa: And ehm, I say, for example, at school you do participate in Easter. You guys do participate in Christmas. But it is neither part of our home nor part of our faith. But: you are at that school, you also have to learn [for] tests, you also have to do assignments. And then you can also celebrate [Christmas]. So they don't really see that as a religious, but more as a cultural activity.

Maysa describes how her children participate, although 'it is neither part of our home nor part of our faith'. Here, it seems that Maysa is not 'compartmentalising' (Manning, 1999; Ecklund, 2005) the religious identity of the children from their identity as Dutch pupils at a Dutch state school, where religious (Christian) activities are celebrated. In other words, Maysa does not seem to separate their own religious identity from the life domain of education. Rather, she explains how she reformulated religious activities at the school as 'cultural activities'. She thus integrates Christian religious activities within her child's identity, attending a Dutch state school. At the same time, she makes it clear that these activities are 'neither part of our home nor part of our faith'.

This explicit reformulation and integration of other religious activities implies the preservation and protection of the religious Muslim identity of Maysa's child. The preservation of the child's Muslim identity seems to occur as Maysa 'consciously' avoids Christmas celebration activities in the home, and so avoids that these celebrations become 'normalised' in the family. In doing so, Maysa does not separate their Muslim religious identity from the life domain of education, but rather 'reformulates' the activities and seems to 'correct' any left-over influences in the home by consciously not paying attention to Christmas at home. At home, the children's Muslim religious identities are centralised, and the traditional Dutch identity is reformulated, including aspects of Christianity such as celebrating Christmas at school.

This example provides insight into how religious parents can disclose their religious identities on a continuum, by integrating and reformulating their own religious and other identities. In light of such a partial disclosure of their religious identities, parents often express their negative emotions during the interviews. These are analysed in the following paragraph.

The role of emotion: from disappointment to powerlessness

As described in the paragraphs above, parents often only partially disclose their identities in tense situations (chapter 6) within educational contexts. Several parents express having negative emotions in these situations. For instance, both Emine and Maysa, Muslim mothers, express negative feelings about the TV-programme 'Just Naked':

> *Emine: I find that really shocking, I don't even want to see that. Then I find it very sad [/ bad] that my son sees that. I think that is very sad [/ bad].*
>
> *Maysa: Yes, sometimes. But if you watch that with your children, then you'll be shocked. Yes, then you're really scared.*

However, Muslim parents especially reveal negative emotions on issues broader than the educational context alone, related to a negative perception of Muslims and Islam in broader society. Emine notes that she is often 'so afraid' of being negatively labelled or treated. She describes how she prohibited her child to play with a play-gun, fearing that 'people will label you that way':

> *Emine: They already think so much about us, I tell him that too. Look, I do feel bad for him. But I'm so afraid that people will label you that way. (…) I am also very afraid of making a mistake in traffic. Because I know, if you're standing at the cash register, for example, and you're doing something that's irritating; some people react very strongly to you because you have a headscarf.*

Emine says that she is afraid of the consequences of 'doing something that's irritating' to people. She even describes a period when she no longer wanted to live in the Netherlands due to these fears:

> *Emine: I didn't want to live in the Netherlands anymore, all those events [globally: terrorism]. If there was an attack I thought, as long as it's not a Muslim. I was so afraid of that.*

In brief, Muslim parents in particular mention negative emotions in a broader context during the interviews, while Christian parents are more likely to mention negative emotions in specific educational contexts. For instance, Lea is a member of the participation council at the school and, resonating with the meanings in her religious identity standard, she seeks to bring about the change that she feels is needed. Despite her membership of the participation council, she describes 'a kind of powerless feeling' as she feels there are no ways to bring about this change:

Lea: That actually feels ehm… Yes, you actually have that kind of uh, kind of powerless feeling. And I often try to think that actually… the one standing in front of the class who – to put it with an [unintelligible] word – is who, maybe he also grew up with this belief, so to speak. Only I think that there is actually a task for the principal, to say: 'yes, but listen, we have this hymnal; we sing from this'.

Lea explains how she seeks to understand other people around her: 'I often try to think (…) maybe he also grew up with this belief'. In light of this, she addressed the responsibility of the school's principal. However, as Lea mentions, she had not experienced any impact of this interaction on the situation. When Lea describes this, her feelings of powerlessness seem to be reflected again, as she acknowledges that she nevertheless knew the situation would not change:

Lea: No, you can say it, but actually you just know that it doesn't change, I'll just say.

Lea later adds that this differs per teacher, stating that 'there are also teachers who say; 'If you have a problem with that, then we won't do that anymore. Nevertheless, this 'kind of powerless feeling' as described by Lea resonates with the findings of Lammers, Gordijn and Otten (2008). These authors noted feelings of powerlessness among minority group members, when they thought they were viewed negatively by majority group members. These negative perceptions by a majority group were found to be related to feelings of anxiety about future interactions (Shelton and Richeson, 2006) and avoidance of contact (Mendoza-Denton et al., 2002), as Emine likewise describes. This also resonates with the lack of disclosure amongst the religious parents when, in their perceptions, they encounter a negative treatment by the majority group in the educational context.

Other parents also express feelings of disappointment or disbelief. For instance, Tineke explicitly describes feelings of disappointment and disbelief about the religious' school policy during the COVID-19 crisis, when the schools closed. As mentioned earlier (chapter 6), in terms of identity theory dependency on God is most central to the religious identity standard of Tineke: a central identity meaning in her religious identity standard. As a result, she points to a lack of dependency on God in the school, as she beliefs that both in sickness and health, she is dependent on God:

Interviewer: But how do you feel, if this is the most important thing for you as a Christian, so to speak, and then you go… and then there is such a school that goes against that. What does that do to your faith?

Tineke: Well, that's just really disappointing. Yes, disbelief; or how should I say, you just can't believe it's happening. Then I think, when a child is born, they always write a piece in the newsletter about dependence… and this and this and this… Well, and if you then read what the measures are that you think; I can't reach it in my mind. (…) I mean, if… as a school you can also draw your own line. And as a church too. And that just isn't done.

As also described in chapter 6, Tineke nevertheless did not have a conversation about this issue and did not openly express these feelings.

Beyond identity disclosure: a perspective of unseen dynamics

The second part of this chapter presented the surprising partial disclosures of the parents' religious identities. This finding is especially surprising when compared with the findings discussed in chapter 5, where parents' expressions suggest the relevance of their religious identities across situations, which would theoretically foster identity disclosure (Ragins, 2008). However, it seems that a lack of disclosure is especially apparent in tense situations, theorised in this paragraph as 'narrow spaces', in which parents explicitly disagree with teachers. In other words, in moments when it would be useful for a teacher to know the reasons behind parents' different opinions, parents do not fully disclose. In the interview data, religious parents nevertheless do mention disclosing (aspects of) their religious identities, but mostly outside of such tense situations.

Notably, neither the partial identity disclosures, nor the subsequent negative emotions, both explored above, seem to be directly perceptible by the people involved in the educational contexts. Often, parents seem hesitant about interactions, or even explicitly avoid them. Nevertheless, albeit invisible in educational contexts, parents note that they negotiate their religious identities. For instance, in terms of identity theory – in case of a non-verification of their identity in a particular situation, they can either change their behaviour, or change their identity standard (Burke and Stets, 2009). These 'unseen dynamics' will be explored further in the next section.

Unseen dynamics: parents' identity accommodation or assimilation

The third and final part of this chapter will present the 'unseen dynamics', which follow from the parents' religious identity nondisclosures in educational settings, as expressed by the parents during the interviews. As set out in chapter 6, parents experience conflicts in a wide range of situations due to the differences they encounter between the meanings in their own identity standards and the meanings in specific situations, both within the micro and the macro contexts. As shown in chapter 5 and in the first section of this chapter, parents do not seem to primarily seek the recognition of their identities in these situations. Instead, they focus on their relationship with God and their intergenerational responsibility, pursuing the common

good for others, or they focus on equal treatment. In attempting to achieve these aims, parents appear to be thinking beyond the recognition of their identities by 'significant others' (Mead, 1934; Taylor, 1994) in educational situations.

In light of the so-called partial identity disclosures, this thinking 'beyond the recognition by signification others', in the data, often appears to occur outside the educational context. In other words, it is 'unseen' by educational personnel. This invisibility due to partial identity disclosures and identity disconnects suggests that there is a chance that teachers do not know parents disagree with faith-related issues at school. In addition, parents openly discuss how they seek ways to counter faith-related issues towards their children, without any education-related person knowing about it. Following this, the data in this study suggest there are 'unseen dynamics', which seem to play an unseen role in the educational context and, as a result, in children's lives. In this third section of this chapter these 'unseen dynamics' will be explored further. It should be noted that, in the term 'unseen dynamics', 'unseen' is used to explain the invisibility of parents' identity negotiations in the educational contexts.

As already mentioned, in this study identity theory is used as a framework to facilitate deeper analysis, in order to better explain events (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). To facilitate the analysis of these unseen dynamics, the theoretical aspects of identity theory are used once more. It is important to remember that, in terms of identity theory, people always strive to reach accordance between their identity meanings and the way these are perceived in the situation (Burke and Stets, 2009; Stets and Serpe, 2013). Persons will alter their behaviour, only 'in an attempt to change input meanings [that is, how the persons perceive they are perceived in the situation, RA] to match identity standard meanings' (Stets and Serpe, 2013, p. 35). Or, as Burke and Stets (2009) put it, 'people control their perceptions of self-relevant meanings in the situation to make it match their identity standard' (p. 88). In other words, the verification of someone's identity standard meanings is generally prioritised, and this prioritisation forms the main aim of the behaviour.

In the case of identity conflict in educational situations, theoretically and based on the interview data, three options emerge. Firstly, persons continue to alter their behaviour in order to influence the identity input received in the situation from perceivers, to maintain their identity standard meanings. If the incongruence continues and the experienced distress is high enough, people will seek to 'selectively get out of the nonverifying situation' (Burke and Stets, 2009, p. 85, citing a study of Burke and Harrod, 2005). Bosma and Kunnen (2001) define this as identity assimilation, in which a person changes the situation to maintain the identity standard. Bosma and Kunnen (2001) also describe identity assimilation as when people change their interpretation of the situation, in order to maintain the identity standards. Secondly, and only rarely and over considerable time (Stets and Serpe, 2013, p. 47), people will change their identity standard. Bosma and Kunnen (2001) define this as identity

accommodation. Both identity assimilation and identity accommodation are used as sensitizing concepts in analysing the data, presented below. Thirdly, based on the interview data, I argue that reciprocal identity processes play a pivotal role in situations of identity non-verification in educational settings. In these processes, parents turn to their children to compromise for educational influences. These particular processes are explored in more detail in chapter 8.

In the following discussion of 'unseen dynamics', which parents adapt in situations of friction and identity nondisclosures, these theoretical aspects are used as analytical explanations (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012) for practical situations that emerge from the interview data. These include, firstly, the reliance on religious activities (e.g. baptism, prayer) in seeking to deal with or change the situation. Second, parents change the situation, for instance through their choice of school. Third, parents turn the situation into a 'lesson of acceptance', interpreting the situation as a lesson for their children to deal with, for example, diversity. Fourth, parents accept a situation as it is. And finally, parents seek to influence their children at home, to counteract the particular situation of friction, which I will also elaborate on further in the next chapter. Finally, the Muslim parents in particular seek to build connections with (conservative wings of) Christian religious groups.

Religious identity negotiation in religious activities

The first 'unseen dynamic' that emerges from the data is related to religious activities. In situations of religious identity negotiation, many parents state that they rely on religious activities, such as baptism and prayer. For instance, Evert and Dianne explain how a religious experience, the baptism of one of their children in their church, guided them in reflecting on their decision to send their child to a Protestant-Christian school instead of an orthodox reformed school. During the interview, they mention that they experienced this decision as a struggle. They relate their school choice to their promises at their child's baptism, and wonder if bringing their child to a Protestant-Christian school would be 'allowed':

> *Evert: At that moment we had our youngest baptised in the church, at that moment you think clearly again about everything. Why are you getting your child baptised?*
> *Dianne: What is your promise about…?*
> *Evert: What do you promise… You promise to educate your child in a Christian, reformed way. Yes, that was really difficult for us. Is that allowed: can you bring your child to a Christian school [instead of a orthodox reformed school]?*

In the end, the parents decided to send their son to a Protestant-Christian school, instead of an orthodox-reformed school. They discuss their struggles to keep their promises they made

at their child's baptism in the church, regarding the upbringing of their children. Compared to the orthodox-reformed school, what is lacking in the Protestant-Christian school is a religious practice, such as praying before lunch. The parents explain they felt the need to talk with their son about this and, as a result, he does pray 'faithfully':

> *Evert: Yes. In the end we did. We talked a lot with [name son] too, yes. (…) We discussed it all in advance, he does that [publicly praying for food] very faithfully.*

Evert and Dianne's personal experience shows the importance of religious activities in religious places of worship to them. Evert and Dianne were drawn back to the religious act of baptism, and reflected on this when confronted with a tense situation in the educational context of their child.

Another often mentioned religious activity is prayer. When Sara is asked how she deals with situations in which she disagrees with something in her children's school, she explains how she is not likely to disclose her religious identity within the school context. Over time, she says, she became more used to bringing up such issues 'through prayer':

> *Interviewer: … how did you deal with that?*
> *Sara: Well I used to go [into confrontation] sooner, but now I bring it up through prayer. Yes... that's for the best, yes... that eh...*
> *Interviewer: And what do you mean 'the best'... does that have the most effect or?*
> *Sara: Yes, that has the most effect yes... Yes. And to convince someone is usually not so easy. But then the Lord can... And situations can just happen that the Lord also wants to hear it. Yes... That's um...*

Sara emphasises the usefulness of prayer as it is 'usually not so easy', 'to convince someone'. Instead, she says, 'but then the Lord can…', and she remembers experiences she had in which her prayers were answered. Sara especially mentions examples in which she, together with her children, prayed about practical situations at the school, which changed after their prayers. Related to this, Sara mentions several times that she prays for education, such as for teachers and pupils:

> *Sara: Um, I pray for teachers to be devoted to God. I pray for pupils to be devoted to God.*

In many instances, both Muslim and Christian parents point to the use of prayer in everyday situations. Such prayers usually aim for a difference of the situation, maintaining the parents' religious identity standards. However, it is remarkable to see how these findings resonate with the parents' religious identity standards, aimed at relating to a divine Person. Rather than being concerned only with the situation itself, this reliance on prayer suggests that parents

depend on ‘something’ beyond the situation. This is also demonstrated when both Dianne and Emine give an account of how they seek to relate to ‘God as a Being’, when they experience concerns or feel sad:

> *Dianne: “Well, we sometimes have some concerns about [our] children, and you sometimes experience rebellion [against God]. But indeed, when you read from the Bible, in the morning or in the evening, you will hear things that actually kind of call you back, I think. That you think, yes; my thoughts are not good in this.”*

Emine mentions a moment in which she was reading the Quran and thought, ‘here Allah is just talking to me’:

> *Emine: I was so deeply sad. I had been through something, I was so sad. And I didn't want to talk to anyone about it for a while. I thought; I open the Quran and I will see what Allah is going to say to me. And I mean it; first verse I read, it said: [speaks Arabic, discusses about a right translation with husband] ‘You will be tempted with your property, your children, with sickness...’*
> *Selim: [Cites Quran:] ‘Did you think that you would not be tested, with your property, with your children, with your... That I would bring you to the earth, that I would not test you.’*
> *Emine: That's what He* [Allah] *said. And then I thought, ooh, and then I thought; here Allah is just talking to me.*

Instead of seeking to have their religious identities verified in the situation, it becomes clear once again that parents appear to primarily relate to a divine Person. Additionally, in prayer, a change in the situation is expected through the intervention of the divine Person. This links back to the parents’ religious identity standards focused on a divine Person (chapter 5), and identity negotiation reaching beyond recognition (see this chapter, under ‘Identity verification and non-verification: negotiations reaching beyond’). In terms of identity theory, parents seek to alter the situation, and to achieve this they pray to a divine Person.

Identity assimilation: ‘changing’ the situation

As a response to situations of identity non-verification, some parents note they sought to change a situation in their children’s education. Again, the parents did not intend to find their religious identity verified but, rather, temporarily accepted the situation and later changed the situation by altering their school choice. For instance, one Muslim couple of parents[24] changed

[24] To guarantee the anonymity of these parents, their fictional names are not given.

their school choice and, in light of the school's policy, they did not seek interaction in the educational context:

> *Muslim father: No, we didn't really say to the old school [i.e. the old school is the state school; parents changed to a 'new' school, which is a Protestant-Christian school]: 'hey, why are you saying that?' (…)*
> *Muslim mother: No, we didn't.*
> *Interviewer: And why not?*
> *Muslim mother: Erm… yes. I have to...*
> *Muslim father: Yes, we made that choice [for that particular state school] at the time that she would go to a state school; and uh, I don't think the teacher is making anything up herself.*
> *Muslim mother: Yes, [it is] the school's policy.*
> *Muslim father: School policy; if you're against that. Then you shouldn't send your child there either. So we accept it as it is.*

In the accounts of these Muslim parents, their acceptance of the incongruence is related to the school's policies (see also in this chapter under 'Antecedents of disclosure: environmental support'). These policies played an important role in the nondisclosure of their religious identities in the educational context, and instead led them to select a different school for their younger child. The parents argue that they had accepted the school's policies when they registered their child at the state school. In addition, due to having signed these school's policies, they felt that there was no space to confront educational staff with their concerns arising from their religious identities. Rather, the Muslim father argues, they felt they had to just 'accept it as it is'.

Interestingly, in contrast to the Muslim parents described above, no Christian parents express a desire to choose different schools as a consequence of experiences in the orthodox reformed schools. This could probably best be understood by the lack of alternative, more orthodox schools than the orthodox reformed schools their children were already attending. Instead, like the Muslim father above, they express ways of seeking to 'accept' the situations in many cases, while maintaining their religious identity standards.

Lessons in acceptance: 'that's how you think about things differently'

Several Christian parents who note they sought to accept a situation also note a particular advantage to this acceptance. The experienced frictions due to diversity within a religion are less prominent amongst Muslim parents in contrast to Christian parents (see chapter 6). For instance, both Maria and Sara view these advantages as lessons in themselves for their children and, therefore, give a more positive interpretation to the situation. In this context Maria discusses the situation in which leggings are not allowed at schools.

As mentioned earlier, the wearing of trousers by women is historically seen as a 'symbol of emancipation' (see e.g. Bill, 1993). In orthodox reformed communities, generally, the wearing of trousers by women is therefore not accepted. In the same vein, the wearing of a legging combined with a skirt is sometimes associated with wearing trousers. As such, the wearing of leggings combined with a skirt, is not allowed at some orthodox reformed schools. Maria disagrees about this in her children's schools:

> *Maria: Or ehm... for example ehm... the whole legging-happening in that time. That I thought: should we be so concerned about that… should we really be working on that? Yeah, you know we allow our girls to wear them [leggings]. But it's just not allowed at school. Although I now think of, I think they turn a blind eye or something. But, um, then we just pass on to our girls: you know, we have no problem with it ourselves, but it's not allowed at school. So in school we follow the rules, we just don't [wear leggings]. At home, fine, but it's not allowed at school, so we don't do it [at school]. Yes, and I think you also teach them that you can think differently about things and that that is also possible. It's not that one is right and the other is wrong, but that's how you think about things differently.*

Here, Maria points to teaching children to deal with differences, as a way of coping with a situation they do not agree with. Sara also points to the educational value of accepting situations in which her children would think differently. Sara adds that such differences are part of life:

> *Interviewer: But actually you, and your child, think differently about it.*
> *Sara: Yes. Yes. But hey, that's your whole life isn't it. You have to adapt where you... when you go to work... where you... yes. I think it's important that you can do that too. Otherwise you will only have a hard time yourself.*

When asked how Sara feels about initiating a conversation in the school on these issues, she responds:

> *Sara: Yes. I think so. But then you also make a big thing out of a small thing, while I don't think that's the most important. If they're going to teach the kids wrong things now, that would be worse for me. Yes. The important thing is eh… The Lord Jesus is very simple about that, if they don't believe that the Lord Jesus has risen, eh then eh… how does he [Sara cites an apostle, Paul, who wrote several books of the Bible] say that? How can you know that someone is a Christian? If they do not believe that the Lord Jesus has risen [… then they are not Christians]. Well that's a lot broader than we make it out to be. Hey. Yes. So... if those differ in people. Well, I don't want to get into those details. It's just a small point. What does it matter if you have to put on socks in the morning?*

As Sara notes, situations can differ, and as long as these are not related to the 'most important' issues, accepting a situation can be viewed as educationally valuable in her opinion. At another moment, however, Sara mentions that even when the 'most important' issues are concerned, she would not initiate interaction with the school (see this chapter, under 'Antecedent: internal processes of self-verification and identity centrality').

Regarding this 'most important' issue of confessing 'that the Lord Jesus has risen', the importance of relating to a divine Person emerges again. In addition, these lessons in acceptance reflect identity assimilation (Bosma and Kunnen, 2001): the alternative interpretation of seeing the situation as a *lesson* in acceptance.

Acceptance alongside feelings of ineffectual interactions

In contrast to accepting a situation while seeing it as being of educational value to children, acceptance also seems to occur alongside feelings of ineffectual interactions in the parents' accounts, defined by Bart-Jan as 'dead-end-discussions'. Bart-Jan thinks asking respect from one another can become a 'dead-end-discussion'.

> *Bart-Jan: And especially the doggedness. If you say; put on a hat [during a church service organised by school; the responses will be:] 'Yeah, but then I won't go'. That you then say [think by yourself] like; 'yes come on. Be a little eh…' But yes, because you can also say that the other way around. Because then eh, you have to respect me anyway. Yeah, well that's a dead-end-discussion, you know. Giving and taking, with each other, you can't say that.*
>
> *Tineke: And now you often have the idea that [ideas and input] from everyone else are accepted, and [/but] that you are giving in again and again. I can see it happening that in ten years' time we will just be wearing trousers[25] at school.*

Here, Bart-Jan seems to express feelings similar to the ones Lea expresses, who felt 'powerless' (see this chapter under 'The role of emotion: from disappointment to powerlessness'). During the interviews, both parents explicitly maintain that, in their view, their opinion was in line with the school policy. However, they seem to feel that there was no possibility to align their opinions and the school policy.

Although it does not become fully clear, it seems that, in these situations, the parents and the school have different interpretations of the school policies, or even that these policies are valued differently by the different persons involved in the school context. Interestingly, whereas Bertram-Troost et al. (2018) has found that teachers in Protestant-Christian schools

[25] For background information on wearing trousers, see chapter 6, under 'Disagreements on theological understandings'.

personally deviate from the institutional identities, the orthodox reformed schools in this study are especially known for the 'homogeneity in religious convictions' among teachers, churches and the families (Wardekker and Miedema, 2001, p. 43; Bertram-Troost et al., 2015). The data in this study do not allow for generalised conclusions, but it appears that this supposed homogeneity in these 'strongly religious schools' (Exalto and Bertram-Troost, 2019) could be less homogeneous than initially expected, and at least reflect the individualised, heterogeneous, and dynamic nature of the religious identities involved.

Acceptance due to 'dead-end-discussions' is also reflected upon by Lea. Lea is a member of the participation council at school. This is a committee in which a small group of parents can represent all parents at the school. Lea mentions one of the discussions in the council. In one instance, the programme for Christmas and Easter celebrations included songs that were against Lea's religious convictions. She discussed her thoughts with the school's principal, who argued that a teacher's intention to choose a song, should be considered first. Lea argues:

> *Lea: And then, you actually come to stand opposite each other. That one does it this way and the other does it that way. And I actually think that is a bit: then the conversation actually ends, I think. Because yes, sometimes you get into an endless discussion. I sometimes feel it is my duty to call it that. I really consciously chose that school.*

Here, Lea stresses the interconnectedness of her conscious choice for an orthodox reformed school and the 'duty' she feels to initiate discussions about songs from the celebration programmes. However, despite her membership of the participation council and her conscious choice for an orthodox reformed school, she felt that further dialogue could not add to a better understanding. To the contrary, it would become an 'endless discussion'. Therefore, Lea argues she personally needed to accept the situation, and thus sought ways to cope with a situation of discrepancy. Here, in a situation of full identity disclosure, neither identity accommodation nor identity assimilation appeared to have a place. Lea is clear that she still is not going to change her opinion:

> *Lea: First of all, not that I think like, then I'll go with that. Finally; it sounds for a moment… very arrogant – but then in the end… then you just feel, I just really don't leave from that point of view; because I really feel it is [like this].*

This resonates with identity theory, in the sense that a change in an identity standard occurs only rarely and then over a considerable period of time (Stets and Serpe, 2013, p. 47). Later in the interview Lea again searches for words to explain that she is not able to change her

opinion. She adds ‘I actually feel it inside’, and: ‘As I think, so it really is’. However, Lea mentions she would try to ‘prove’ her opinion during a conversation:

> *Lea: Well, maybe I can't explain that either, but I actually feel it inside, yes, that sounds arrogant: ‘as I think [it is], so it really is’. But I would not say that to someone else in a conversation, then I would try to prove it to someone else. That… that's the case at school, with some things I now have my... Yes, somehow you accept the situation as it is. Because you know you can't change this anyway.*

Lea suddenly moves from discussing the possibility of a conversation to an acceptance of the situation ‘as it is’. Apart from the notion that she feels she ‘can’t change this anyway’, it is not fully clear why she changes her mind so suddenly. By accepting the situation, Lea seems to find solace in focusing on her child’s upbringing and correcting the message of the song to her children instead.

It is interesting to note that one Muslim mother[26] also describes ineffectual interactions, but instead of accepting the situation in the long term, she changed school (see also under ‘Identity assimilation in ‘changing situation’’):

> *Muslim mother: Then I thought the first time [in the conversation]: okay. Then the second time: I said: ‘maybe I misunderstood’. The third time: ‘yes, now it stops, it doesn't work like that’. And eh, then I thought, then she [child] will go to another school, then I chose an Islamic school.*

As mentioned earlier, the Muslim parents who sent their children to public or Protestant-Christian schools, have options available to choose a different school for a younger child. In contrast, Christian parents possibly encounter a lack of alternative schools, as there can be a lack of stricter schools than the orthodox reformed schools their children already attend. As a result, they move into a sense of acceptance alongside feelings of ineffectualness, which, in some cases, is expressed as a ‘dead-end’ in the parents’ identity negotiations. However, during the interviews, parents openly discuss their surprising ways of coping with such ‘dead-ends’. These will be further explored in the next section and next chapter.

Turning reciprocal

Lea, a Christian mother, describes such a ‘dead-end’, but then surprisingly also explains how she will influence her child at home:

[26] To guarantee the anonymity of this mother, her fictional name is not given.

Lea: And then I have no choice but to say it to her at home, like, 'hey, listen, what was said in this verse, that's not really the case. Perhaps very little is said about us ehm… little is mentioned in fact that we… eh, have fallen into sin', I'll just say. Very often there is just another side, as if you can just grab it yourself, and I try to explain that to her…

Lea notes how she would discuss issues taught at school with her child at home. As Lea notes, she accepts the 'situation as it is' and, instead, relies on intergenerational religious transmission. A similar phrase appears in the interview with Tineke, as she would not 'argue about that', pointing to a situation of friction:

Interviewer: Yes. And you indicated; usually I just leave it alone. Is that also the case here?
Tineke: I'm not going to argue about that. Because you never win.
Interviewer: Oh yeah.
Tineke: And then you just try to pass it on to the kids at home.

This discussion of the situation with the children 'at home', as Tineke formulates, again suggests that a need for recognition is not the parents' primary need. Instead, intergenerational religious transmission appears to be of main importance. This focus at the home can also be seen amongst the Muslim parents. Maysa, a Muslim mother, describes how she initiates activities in the home:

Maysa: And then we know the next day when he watches it at school, then he doesn't get confused or he doesn't think any further. Or if he thinks about it then… We are very open, no matter what happens. And um, what's going on, it doesn't matter. Um, we can always talk about anything.

In chapter 8, identity processes in which parents seek to compensate for the school's influences in their children's lives are explored further. Before presenting such 'reciprocal identity processes', one more aspect that appears in the parents' identity negotiations is presented in the following section.

Building connections between religions

When confronted by identity incongruencies, Muslim parents in particular note their search for connections with Christian communities. For instance, during the interview, Maysa shares her negative experiences with ideologies in the macro context of society. She then continues and expresses her conviction of the importance of collaboration. She shares how she recently started to support a Christian organisation collecting signatures to change public policies:

Maysa: Because as a parent I have to explain that it's, you know, that it's not supposed to. So for me, I have mixed feelings. I must say. So that's why I'm also with that group CitizenGo [name of lobby organisation with a Christian background].. eh..
Interviewer: Just join in?
Maysa: Yes. [laughs] Because they also often have surveys or petitions eh… because also with [TV-programme 'Just naked']. Look, I already sent him a message, I think he is the chairman of that group. Because often we also send direct messages [on Instagram].

In one case, two children of Muslim parents attend a state school and, based on these experiences, these parents decided to send their youngest child to a Protestant-Christian school. When the parents are asked about their thoughts on the difference in religion, they respond:

Muslim mother: Yes. Well I'm not really that worried about it, because all faiths actually have a basis, the same basis. And um, if you, yes, if you're not a conscious parent – if you let your child go, then your child can choose. Look, if he eventually chooses Christianity, then he will also choose. If he walks around with those questions, he will choose them. But I think because I went to a Christian school myself; every morning prayers and singing and such, I have experienced things like that myself. I don't have any worries about that myself...

The father of this family confirms this:

Muslim father: Yes, we feel better with someone who is Christian and who has faith, than with someone who is an unbeliever. That may be because we are also believers; we also have many things in common with Christians.

Thus, in negotiating experiences of discrepancies these parents seek connections with other 'believers'. Emine, for instance notes: 'we also see Christians as people of the book', because 'Allah also addresses mankind; as a whole say, believer or unbeliever. 'People of the book', so the groups that have received a book…' Based on these connections, these Muslim parents, for example, send their children to Protestant-Christian schools or the parents join in political activities concerning shared points of view, organised by (conservative) Christian minority groups. Notably, this search for connections amongst Muslim parents is in contrast to the Christian parents, who do not mention a search for connections or collaborations with other religions.

Conclusion

The research question answered in this chapter is:

Research question 3. How do parents negotiate their religious identities in situations as explored under research question 2, and what is the influence on the social interaction in the educational environment?

This question is addressed in three parts in this chapter: the processes of identity verification, identity disclosure, and the negotiations in the subsequent unseen dynamics. Firstly, it is found that the religious parents often do not primarily focus on the verification or recognition of their religious identities. Instead, parents are concerned with 'God as the significant Other', with the common good for (non-)religious others, or with being a minority within a minority group. The parents' focus on 'God as the significant Other' resonates with the findings of chapter 5 in particular: the parents' emphasis in their identity standard is on the personal relationship with God, and their formulation of their identity concern is primarily directed towards a relation with the divine Person. This foundational view of God, as a significant Other in these people's lives, seems to make their religious identities 'immune' for the (lack of) recognition by significant others in society. In other words, these religious parents primarily aim at 'looking for the Lord' (as Emine described it), instead of having their identities recognised in social interactions. Thus, where educational policies are established, these findings indicate parents will first aim for transcendental relational aspects before taking interpersonal aspects in light of established educational policies into account. If educational policies then intervene with these transcendental relational aspects, parents could be expected to be hesitant to go along with such policies.

Secondly, this chapter explored the processes of identity disclosure of the parents' religious identities in social interactions in educational settings. It is found that the parents often do not fully disclose their religious identities in these educational settings. Often, parents seem hesitant about interactions, or even explicitly avoid them. This shows to occur mostly in tense situations in which parents anticipated possible consequences of identity disclosure, and considered the presence of possible environmental support in educational contexts. This finding of partial disclosures of the parents' religious identities is surprising when compared with the finding in chapter 5, where parents' expressions suggests the relevance of their religious identities *across* situations. This finding in chapter 5 illustrates the identity centrality and prominence of the parents' religious identities, which are part of the theorised antecedents for the disclosure of stigmatised identities (Ragins, 2008). Thus, despite the presence of theoretical antecedents of identity disclosure, the interviewed parents mention to often avoid the disclosure of their religious identities in tense educational settings.

Although the aim of this study is not to extend or validate a theory, but to seek to explain the deeper sociological-psychological identity-processes of religious parents in educational settings, I propose a new antecedent for the parents' disclosures of their religious identities in

educational settings. This follows as a theoretical extension from the data analysis. Firstly, it seems that a lack of disclosure is especially apparent in tense situations, in which parents and teachers hold explicitly different views. An example concerns the case of Dianne, whose child did not want to participate in the singing of a religious song. The content of the song included, in Dianne's words, 'no reverence for God, for Jesus at all'. Based on the situation of Dianne, I argue that such 'narrow spaces' can be transformed into 'free spaces', by allowing children the freedom to choose whether or not to participate in these religious activities. In the educational setting, this could ease the disclosure of parents' religious identities. Importantly, this freedom should especially be understood in light of the parents' religious identity standards, going beyond the recognition by significant others, often primarily concerned with a divine Person. As part of this, 'reverence' for the sacral Person could be a concrete aspect of a safe space in the classroom, fostering mutual understanding and, with that, it could encourage the disclosure of the parents' religious identities in the educational settings.

Thirdly, in light of these partial identity disclosures, the thinking 'beyond the recognition by signification others' often seems to occur outside the educational context. Thus, 'unseen' for educational personnel. This possible invisibility due to partial identity disclosures and identity disconnects suggests that there is a chance that teachers do not know parents disagree with faith-related issues at school. As a result, the data in this study suggest there are 'unseen dynamics', which seem to play an invisible role in the educational context and, with that, in children's lives. In this study, in the term 'unseen dynamics', 'unseen' has been used to explain the invisibility of parents' identity negotiations in the educational contexts.

These unseen dynamics are presented in the final section of this chapter and concern six categories. First, parents are shown to rely on religious activities, such as prayer or baptism. Second, parents seek to change a situation, for instance by choosing a different school for a younger child. Third, parents interpret situations differently, for example accepting situations while noting the educational value for their children. Fourth, some parents express particularly negative emotions due to 'dead-end-discussions' and therefore accept these situations, but fifth, surprisingly, also seek ways to influence their children at home instead. This again suggests that intergenerational religious transmission, rather than a need for recognition (Mead, 1934; Taylor, 1994) is the parents' primary need, (resonating with findings in chapter 5). Sixth, Muslim parents in particular seek ways to collaborate with persons from other religions, to counteract possible undesirable developments in society.

It is not clear to me why Muslim parents in particular express this final dynamic, in contrast to Christian parents. Both groups of parents have similar concerns in Dutch society, and can possibly both profit from advantages from seeking connections with each other. Possibly, in light of the history of pillarisation in the Netherlands, the Christian parents are historically prone to be more focused on their own religious community. Another possible

explanation can be found in the position of the interviewer, who is a Christian. This could have impacted the interviews, as Muslim parents may have sought to express some commonality with the interviewer. Identity processes in which parents seek to compensate for the school's influences in their children's lives are explored further in chapter 8.

Chapter 8. ‘And then I have no choice but to say it to her at home’: reciprocal identity processes

Introduction

In chapter 7, the findings on identity disclosure revealed how religious parents often avoid situations of confrontation at the schools. Through this avoidance of identity disclosure ‘unseen dynamics’ emerged in the parents’ religious identity negotiations. Unseen in the educational contexts is also the surprising turn of parents’ actions to educate their children at home in order to counter educational influences. At home, parents teach their children ‘correct’ views on tense, religious identity-related issues. This chapter aims to explore these processes in the parent-child relationships, and is thus a continuation of chapter 7 in addressing research question 3:

Research question 3. How do parents negotiate their religious identities in situations as explored under research question 2, and what is the influence on the social interaction in the educational environment?

In terms of identity theory, it can be expected that parents search for the verification of their religious identities in the educational context. This chapter, however, instead presents findings on how the parents engage with their children’s identity negotiation at home. During the data analysis these processes emerged unexpectedly. In these processes parents show to apply a variety of mechanisms to guide and support their children’s religious identity negotiation.

In the literature, Kerpelman et al. (1997) conceptualised such processes as ‘reciprocal identity processes’. In reciprocal identity processes in the parent-child relationship, ‘both control systems’ as conceptualised in identity theory (see chapter 3), ‘simultaneously monitor or adjust during interactions’, and ‘over time, these reciprocal interactions mutually shape the identities of both individuals’ (Kerpelman et al., 1997, p. 338). Kerpelman and colleagues (1997) theorised these processes from the perspectives of adolescents and parents, to theorise the microprocesses involved in adolescent identity exploration. Most salient in the data of my study is the mutual identity negotiation in the parent-child relationship, where especially parents show to influence their children’s identity systems. In some minor instances, children show to influence parents’ identities, whilst the teacher-child relationship also plays a role. The aim of this chapter is to explore these ‘reciprocal identity processes’, in order to further understand and explain the parents’ processes of religious identity negotiation.

Reciprocal identity processes over time

In situations of identity non-verification and identity disconnects (see chapter 7), parents seem to basically rely on their engagement with their children's processes of religious identity negotiation. As Lea formulates: 'and then I have no choice than to…' or Tineke: 'and then you just try to…':

> *Lea: And then I have no choice but to say it to her at home, like, 'hey, listen, what was said in this verse, that's not really the case. Perhaps very little is said about us ehm… little is mentioned in fact about that we… eh, have fallen into sin', I'll just say. Very often there is just another side, as if you can just grab it yourself, and I try to explain that to her…*

> *Interviewer: Yes. And you indicated; usually I just leave it alone. Is that also the case here?*
> *Tineke: I'm not going to argue about that. Because you never win.*
> *Interviewer: Oh yeah.*
> *Tineke: And then you just try to pass it on to the kids at home.*

The words 'and then' in both accounts show a before and after moment in the parents' experiences. The use of 'and then' seems to point to a *key moment,* after which a 'turning point' in the experiences occurs. This key moment signalled by 'and then' thus points to a 'before' and an 'after'.

However, it seems that, over time, the division between these moments of 'before', 'and then', and 'after' fade away and parents start to continually act as if they're in the 'after'-moment. For instance, Lea points out how she seeks to correct at home, after receiving several ineffectual answers from the school's principal:

> *Lea: And then I think -- I don't think I'm going to go to a teacher ten times in a school year. And because you often think, look if, for example, a principal writes and I get an answer back and I think yes, I can't do anything with that, well. Then in the long run I think: then my task is that I just say [it] at home.*

As Lea explains, after receiving an answer she thinks she 'can't do anything with', 'in the long run', she seems to consolidate her active role in countering the school's influences for her child. Thus, after experiencing several situations of disappointment related to her religious identity negotiation in educational contexts, Lea seems to adapt mechanisms in reciprocal identity processes on a continual basis. In this respect, Lea also mentions how she would check with her child what the teacher told them:

> *Lea: And just informing: what kind of song have you learned. Or I'll just say: if the Bible story is there, or the catechism, how is that explained. And not in an annoying way; to find fault with something, but more to see what they learn when it comes to Biblical teaching. And that I then think of: then I would just like to add a kind of addition to that: did the teacher also mention this? Or did he also say that? Yeah, I think that's really, um, that's the way it should always be. And even if you have your own schools. In the end you talk about it with your child; about the school. It's not that you think: 'the teacher at school does it [the faith formation]'. In the end yes, they belong together, I think they should actually be intertwined.*

Interestingly, after Lea describes how she checks with her child about the content of education, she then argues, 'that's the way it should always be'. Lea emphasises that she does not think 'the teacher at school does it', pointing to the faith formation by the teacher at the religious school (see also Markus et al., 2018, who extensively studied teachers' perspectives on this in orthodox reformed schools in the Dutch context). Instead, Lea stresses: 'In the end you talk about it with your child; about the school'. In Lea's experience, she seems to feel primarily responsible for her child's religious identity negotiation and formation, compared to what 'the teacher at school does', at all times: 'always'.

This impactful role of parents which seems to appear in reciprocal identity processes is also reflected by Dianne, who discusses a situation in which she and her husband take an active role as parents both towards educational personnel and their children:

> *Dianne: If we as parents would never say anything about it, even towards our children, they would really find it normal to sing such songs. And we find that hard [/ bad], we just don't want that.*

Dianne expresses how she and her husband, Evert, feel negatively about a possible continuation of the teaching of certain songs. They seem to continually feel pressured to keep saying something about it, also towards their children. Resonating with identity theory and reciprocal identity processes, the experienced incongruence seems to encourage them to influence their child's (educational) situation and identity standard.

As the parents describe, the reciprocal identity processes between children and parents seem to mainly take place in ongoing dialogues in the home context. The importance of such parent-child discussions is highlighted when a Muslim parent, Derya, emphasises that she listens to her children when they, in this case, come up with sensitive topics around gender diversity and sexuality. Here, the children take the initiative to discuss sensitive topics from the situation at school with the parents. In describing this, Derya emphasises that she would not respond to her child in a strict or direct way:

Derya: It's not like - that I would say: 'no, we don't do that'. I love to listen. And usually they [the children] start talking about it in the evening, before they go to sleep. They come up with such a story, then the youngest sleeps and then we talk about it; how to deal with it and stuff.

Interestingly, Derya's children themselves take the initiative to discuss sensitive issue at home. Derya describes a more Socratic way of engaging in the parent-child discussions, as she says that she does not want to be strict. Instead, she wants to listen. It seems that parents take different stances in this respect, and that not all parents would prefer such openness, but would rather guide their children in what they discuss. For instance, Maysa says: 'then I tell him how it is', or Lea notes: 'you do have a task to actually pass on to your child the way you think God's Word says it'.

Central to the parents' accounts seems to be the child's need to compare the meanings in their own religious identity standard with both the input from the teacher and the input from parents. As in Derya's situation, the child takes the initiative for a discussion. Similarly, Dianne describes her child discussing a song taught at school (chapter 7, 'Antecedent: environmental support'). Thus, although these children seem to be independent 'active agents' of their religious identities (Hemming and Madge, 2012; Hemming, 2015; as both cited in Hemming, 2018), during the interviews the parents indicate how children discuss issues taught at school with them, seemingly in order to seek conformation to the parents' stances in religion.

Besides influencing the child's identity standard, one Muslim mother, Maysa, also explicitly addresses her child's responsibility to change a misperception of Islam in society. The reciprocal identity process seems to be reflected even more here. Maysa does not try to verify a 'self'-definition herself, but rather, she motivates her child to show or tell 'what Islam is'. After Maysa has discussed a situation concerning a programme on television, which she said covers negative perceptions of Islam, she involves her child in altering the perception of their religion in broader society.

Maysa: And then T. [name son] says, 'huh heavily Islamic again? But what rules are those?' I say, 'yes, what are those rules?' I say, 'because they do not know our faith. So we must; you [to child], it's now very heavy on your shoulders', I say: 'you must tell your friends, your environment, no matter what, what Islam actually is'. I say, 'so has our Prophet [done]'.

Here, Maysa explicitly points her child to what the Prophet Muhammed did. It is not their aim to change the situation so that they themselves are perceived in a different way. Rather, it seems to be her aim that Islam is perceived in a more positive way (reflecting the negotiations reaching beyond the self-verification of the religious identity, chapter 7, 'Identity verification and nonverification: negotiations reaching beyond').

Apart from normalising the reciprocal identity process towards their children, some parents actively enact these processes *in advance* of the educational situations. In several

cases, parents mention that they prepare for situations in their children's classroom in which they know their religious identities will be part of the lessons or a news programme being watched:

> *Maysa: … then I tell him [child] how it is. Like I always do with youth news on TV. Because we always watch a day before they get to see these at school. And then I always tell them…, (...), if there is something that we think, yes, but it is not like that at all, then we say that as well. (...) then we say, well, it is actually not like that at all. (...) And then he also asks why. Well then we also tell him why.*

Maysa makes sure she discusses possible difficult or confusing topics with her child before these are discussed at school. In these discussions, she seeks to provide her child with answers to upcoming questions or sensitive issues:

> *Maysa: And then we know the next day when he watches it at school, then he doesn't get confused or he doesn't think any further. Or if he thinks about it then… We are very open, no matter what happens. And um, what's going on, it doesn't matter. Um, we can always talk about anything.*

Here, Maysa makes sure she supports her child, in case the child is confronted with incongruencies towards the religious identity. It seems that doing this in advance helps to avoid that her child gets involved in situations of incongruencies. In Maysa's terms, she seeks to make sure her child will not 'get confused' or 'think any further'. It seems that Maysa is frightened that the enactment of such thinking processes could influence and change her child's religious identity.

Maysa also discusses how she ensures to influence her child's religious identity at all times, in order to prepare for other influences. For instance, Maysa mentions how she views her children as a 'blank slate' to be filled in, by 'passing on the faith of Islam'. Maysa thinks that this filling in has prevented her children from becoming 'more prone' to Christian celebrations such as Christmas and Easter:

> *Maysa: Look, if my kids didn't get anything from home, I'm sure they'd be more prone to Christmas, and Easter. Because children are a blank slate. You can fill that in well. Or not fill it in. Or have it filled in by others. But um, I filled it in for them, or we filled it in for them. By passing on the faith of Islam.*

In terms of the reciprocal identity processes, Maysa consciously seeks to preserve the religious identity standard of her child by 'filling it in' before external persons or other sources within the school environment can do so.

In conclusion, coming up in the interview data on a recurring basis, both the Christian and Muslim parents seek to influence their children's identities to compensate for educational influences. The parents not only do this sporadically, but they seem to have normalised this in their lives. They do so in advance of certain educational activities and, as Maysa states, it is related to 'passing on' her religion. Moreover, many parents discuss the importance of establishing a basis from which they aim to raise their children. This will be explored further in the next section.

Establishing a basis as a requirement

Common among both the Muslim and Christian parents is their conviction to 'found a basis' or focus on 'the basics', so children will be prepared for external influences. For instance, Rayen, a Muslim father, notes they experience to be 'something different' from the majority in the Netherlands, and then continues:

> *Rayen: Yes, but you have to go through this anyway. (…) This is the basics, we try to pass the basics on to them well.*

Thus, in light of being a bit different, Rayen emphasises 'the basics' he and Derya seek to pass on to their children. A Christian couple, Peter and Marianne, also discuss the importance of 'the basics', particularly before their children enter a conversation with (non-)religious others:

> *Peter: I also don't think it's quite right, that it's so necessary, that you're going to keep them all away from everything and everyone. In that sense, the basics, if they have it, then they should be able to handle it easily, without [becoming] unbalanced I think.*

Later during the interview, Peter mentions a conversation his children had with children from a different church denomination. He discusses that the children never showed signs of seeking to change their religious identity-related behaviour. This religious identity-related behaviour points to the clothing of the girls, who wear skirts and dresses in contrast to the trousers[27] worn by other girls. Peter notes how this comes back to the 'starting point' from which the girls have the conversation:

> *Peter: Because of course they always wear trousers. Those girls, of course. Not them [daughters]. So yeah, that's a topic of conversation for those girls of course. [But] you never*

[27] For background information on girls who wear trousers in the orthodox reformed community, see chapter 6, 'Disagreements on theological understandings'.

notice anything: 'I want this', or 'I also want trousers'. No, that's just, that's just a given. From a starting point... From that starting point they talk…

Interestingly, Peter argues from his viewpoint of 'you never notice anything: 'I want this', or 'I also want trousers''. It seems important to Peter that his children will not change their identity-related behaviour. Instead, he argues that establishing a basis withholds his children from changing their identity-related behaviour.

Parents also relate the establishment of a basis to the different developmental phases of their children. For instance, Maysa notes the importance of establishing 'the basics' in relation to the amount of control she has, as long as her children are still attending primary school. She points to her awareness to profit from that control in the religious upbringing, before her children enter puberty and attend secondary school. In this respect, she seeks ways to counter future influences on her child's religious identity:

Maysa: If I give them a bit of the basics right now. See, up to grade 8, as parents you have a lot of things in your hands [under control in the upbringing] before puberty. But if they go to high school, then you do not. Then as a parent you have - whether you jump high or low: you really have minimal influence on your child.

In contrast, Lea thinks teenagers in secondary education are less 'receptive' for external influences than children in primary education:

Lea: And yes, that… you know in itself you talk about that with your children. Only I always find myself. Look, your children are just teenagers and they are just very impressionable [/ susceptible]. And yet your children [the adolescents] will hear a difference. At least mine does. Let me put it this way: I know they sometimes say well; those of religion… yes, that they will notice that that is someone [e.g. a teacher] from the right-wing side, so to speak… But… ehm, I think children in primary school, they get… I think children are very receptive.

Lea and Maysa both take the developmental phases of their children into account in relation to their influences and the establishment of a basis. However, both also differ in their thinking. Lea worries less about (early) adolescence, while Maysa worries more about this. Possibly, the difference between Maysa and Lea is due to their view on the independent thinking of adolescents. Both parents express thoughts about their children in secondary school being more capable of thinking independently. However, Lea assumes that her children will be able to 'hear a difference'. She already has children who are in the adolescent developmental phase. In contrast, Maysa's children have not reached adolescence yet, and Maysa seems afraid of losing control to her children's independence in this time to come.

In short, the findings discussed above show that parents hold assumptions about certain developmental phases and expectations about consequences of these developmental phases for the reciprocal identity processes. In addition, they relate this to establishing a basis at home, which they seem to view as a requirement for their children when they have conversations with others, whether these others are differently religious or non-religious. Establishing a basis also seems to be deeply related to the parents' identity concerns and goals (Schachter and Ventura, 2008; chapter 5), as within this basis parents can express and consolidate their identity concerns and goals. Parents describe how the basis serves to make their children 'resistant', which is explored further in the following section.

Teaching resistance and faith at home: the need for openness in many contexts

During the interviews, the freedom of education and a possible disappearance of religious schools in the Netherlands in favour of public education is discussed. Asked how parents would deal with such a disappearance, they continually point to the importance of educating their children at home and, in this context, they used the Dutch word '*weerbaar'* repeatedly. It is important to note, this word can be translated as 'resilience'. However, in my perception, the parents want to point to a kind of immunity against views that differ from their own, and did not seek to associate with some of the flexibility or activity that is embedded in the word 'resilience'. Therefore, I have chosen to use the word 'resistance'. I think this is a more adequate English translation, as it more appropriately conveys the meaning parents wish to express, in my perception.

For example, when asked about a disappearance of the freedom of religion in the Netherlands, Dianne, a Christian mother, wants to prepare her child to be ready to deal 'with all kinds of children, all kinds of religions at primary school', 'so that they can give their answer from the Bible':

> *Dianne: … yes, that would then become more necessary for me, that I should be more busy at home with teaching religion, faith, even more.*
> *Evert: Yes.*
> *Dianne: I think I would feel that more then. To make the children more resistant if they also have to deal with all kinds of children, all kinds of religions at primary school. Then it is only even more necessary to teach them more resistance and um… more faith, as far as we as humans can do that.*
> *Interviewer: Mmm. And when it comes to being more resistant… ehm, what do you then really mean? How 'resistant'?*
> *Dianne: Well, we used to have an elder who always said at catechism [church education] that you had to learn and listen well, 'so that you have some answers to your ['smader', translation: slanderer/enemy],' he always said. Well, I think that's what I mean. If the children then hear certain things from classmates, so that they [then] can give their answer from the Bible.*

Sara also mentions a need for resistance, however, she points to the increase of resistance in the context of public education. She uses an example of one of her children's friends who necessarily attends a state school due to her high intelligence. When asked how Sara thinks about orthodox reformed education, she argues that it is a 'privilege', but also 'confusing':

> *Sara: Yes, that's... that's a great privilege too, that we have that. But it can also be confusing.*
> *Interviewer: What do you mean?*
> *Sara: Yes. Ehm... there is also a lot of worldliness, of course. Yes.*

Then, Sara uses the example of one of her children's friends. Once this girl visited Sara's home, she was surprised about the girl's openness about her religious identity, expressed through telling stories about church history and reminding other children 'to be nice to everyone':

> *Sara: Ah, I was really surprised. I was at a birthday [party], well, she was the boldest of them all. (…) And, uh, well, they took turns telling stories from church history. And, well, someone was rude or something. Well, [the girl said:] 'you have to be nice to everyone, huh!'. I think: and she said something else... I don't know.*

Sara points to the difference between children attending public versus orthodox reformed schools:

> *Sara: Well so open, and we [Sara's family, contrasting the girl] don't know [/ do] that. Because it's too obvious then. And then [/ if you're not so open] you never have to... then you are not resistant so to speak. And that girl grows up with it from an early age.*

Here, Sara argues that in orthodox reformed schools, there is no need to open up about someone's religion as everyone already knows about it. And thus, 'we don't know that [openness]', and 'then you are not resistant'. In contrast, the girl at the state school 'grows up with it from an early age'. Taking the girl as an example, Sara thinks attending a state school can foster the child's openness and resistance. However, she is also careful in making claims about this, as she remembers another child, in the family of the girl, who attended an orthodox reformed school:

> *Sara: … with her third child, she [the child] had more socially desirable behaviour. So she found that much more difficult and now she has chosen the orthodox reformed school again. But the*

eldest two were just open about it, and they could also disprove it, [for example,] why they did or did not participate in Harry Potter games in the schoolyard.

This 'third child' seemed to have been less resistant, whereas the 'eldest two' could explain why they did not participate in 'Harry Potter games'. When Sara is asked how to encourage resistance in her children, she cites a Bible verse, pointing to the investigation of the Bible to know what is 'true':

Interviewer: You say that those children are actually resistant, more resistant. Or become more resistant?
Sara: Yes. That's what I try to teach them myself. I always say, 'even if the whole class says it isn't, you should always inquire what the Lord says'. (…) Yes, you should investigate. Berea[28] was praised for investigating whether it was true. Yes. So uh...

In addition, Sara mentions several specific religious activities, such as teaching children Bible texts and the Heidelberger Catechism. However, she then stops and continues after a deep sigh:

Sara: Yes. Yes, you just try in your daily life. My desire is to walk with God. And if you deviate from that, you turn your back on Him. And then you don't bear fruit either, because you have to stay in the Vine[29]. Hey, if you stay close to Him, those fruits will come naturally.

Here, Sara cites a Bible text in which Jesus proclaims He is a Vine, and His children the branches. Sara thus expresses her dependency on God by stressing the importance of staying close to Jesus, as she believes that will make herself and her children 'bear fruit' and make the children resistant. Without being in the Vine, Sara believes 'you don't bear fruit'. This suggests once again that Sara experiences a complete dependence on God in raising her children. It seems that most Christian parents interpret resistance as staying close to religious content and being able to 'answer from the Bible', as Dianne states. This reflects findings in

[28]Sara indicates a Bible verse, NIV Acts 17:11: 'Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.'

[29] Sara indicates a Bible verse, NIV John 15:4-5. 4: 'Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in Me. 5. "I am the Vine; you are the branches. If you remain in Me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.'

previous chapters, in which parents seek to primarily aim for a divine Person of God throughout their religious identity processes.

Many parents relate openness in the home to becoming more resistant. For instance, as discussed before, Maysa associates discussions at home about the youth news programme in the classroom to her child not getting 'confused'. She notes 'we can always talk about anything':

> *Maysa: And then we know the next day when he watches it at school, then he doesn't get confused or he doesn't think any further. Or if he thinks about it then… We are very open, no matter what happens. And um, what's going on, it doesn't matter. Um, we can always talk about anything.*

Similar to Maysa, and as previously mentioned, most parents highly value open discussions in which their children can ask questions freely. For instance, Peter and Marianne, who have children in both primary and secondary education, also emphasise that everything is discussed in their family:

> *Marianne: We talk a lot about everything that happens in society.*
> *Peter: We have a very open attitude.*
> *Marianne: A lot, everything is discussed. Politics, uh...*
> *Peter: There's no topic that's actually left unspoken here. We do have, we think, a general broad view outwards. [name son] also knows just about everything that goes on around him, eh...*
> *Marianne: Interested.*
> *Peter: We have in that respect… an open mind.*

With regard to this openness, the Christian parents Peter and Marianne mention a secular magazine which is actively read in their family, although the magazine's content could be in contrast with the religious convictions of the parents. It is relevant to mention that these parents 'wholeheartedly' agree with the political ideology (rather than the religious views) in the magazine. Peter describes the magazine as: '... well, maybe some right-wing conservative opinion is being proclaimed, with which we actually eh, wholeheartedly... can agree'.

Nevertheless, the magazine is secular and sometimes diverges from the parents' religious identity meanings. In the following extract, the mother illustrates the content of the magazine that she does not agree with:

> *Marianne: No, but it really is. I sometimes find in the final pages – I find that quite annoying – um, but hey. We sometimes say that too, like yes; in the final pages, so to speak, films are discussed or eh, you name it, that is really not possible. I also think that you eh... But also certain articles. That will of course be...*

Peter: Yes, but we do not have a disclaimer for that. Never.
Marianne: No, we don't.

As Peter says, they do not want to have 'a disclaimer' for the magazine. In the following extract, Peter compares this with a situation they heard about from one of their daughter's friends, whose parents required their children to tear out parts of a magazine. In comparison to this situation, Peter stresses they would never require their children to censor magazines, but rather he stresses the importance of 'a basis':

Peter: He was going to tear everything out. Because they weren't allowed to see that. That is absolutely not the case with us. We're not going to censor [name secular newsmagazine], of course. And it's just in the newspaper basket so uh... Yeah. And sometimes you have a time that you think, I think you should never have to do that [concerning themes in the secular newsmagazine] eh... We are more of: make sure they have a basis, have equipment from the family. And I think you then eh... Just like you say: they read a lot. That is so incredibly valuable.

It seems that for Peter and Marianne, building resistance originates from working on 'a basis', as discussed in the previous section. As Peter explains, a condition for openness is the 'basis' at home. This basis seems to form the starting point for the growth of resistance which, subsequently, is enacted and further increased in the situation, such as when reading the magazine.

Identity perceptions of the teacher: instilling respect for the teacher

While the term 'resistance' could possibly have a defensive connotation, teaching children respect is a recurring theme amongst both Christian and Muslim parents. For instance, Maysa, a Muslim mother, describes what she said to her child when he met other children who were raised non-religious:

Maysa: I said: 'We just have to respect each other, regardless of religion, colour or race, no matter what it is'.

Likewise, a Christian mother, Lea, mentions she seeks to instil respect for the teacher in her child, in cases when the child is confronted with a teacher's differing religious views. Here, it seems that the mother avoids confrontation with the teacher:

Lea: Look and I just know; there are some who, for example, who sing a gospel song [Lea views this negatively], while we aren't used to that, for example. And ehm, yes, I just always think…; you can mention it when confronted with the teacher, that you have trouble with it or something, on the other hand, I always think it is important that you show respect for the teacher, but that

you say at home, that: 'you know we do not do [/ sing] it, because the verse can also be interpreted in such a way or in such a way that you actually get a wrong image as a result', I'll say. I always find that very important for a child.

In aiming to show respect for the teacher, Lea both tells her children the alternative interpretations 'at home', and also thinks it is good to mention it to the teacher. Lea seems to actively avoid situations in which her child gets 'a wrong image as a result', which, in terms of identity theory, can be defined by the identity meanings in the child's religious identity standard. Thus, it seems that Lea wishes to preserve her child's religious identity standard:

Lea: Then in the end you try to explain to your child: do you know what you are singing now, that would actually be nice if you can sing it with your heart, and not, if you sing it, that it is for everyone (…). In the end, you try to pass that on to your child.

Here, the parent discusses different types of interpretation of a specific song. One interpretation holds that the Christian faith is available to everyone. Another interpretation holds that the Christian faith is only for personal believers who can sing such a song with their 'heart'. Lea disagrees with the teacher on this and aims to explain the difference to her child.

Additionally, Lea describes a dilemma, when she indicates that her child's perception of the teacher's religious background is positive:

Lea: And that, I think that is quite a bit of a dilemma I think, or at least... Your child really looks at most… or at [simple and visible characteristics]; [like,] yes, he [/ the teacher] also goes to church. I think he [/ the child] looks at it very differently. And you really just want to keep it that way. Yes, in the end you also want to deal with it honestly, I think.

Lea explains that her child knows that the teacher 'also goes to a church', but despite that, she disagrees with this teacher's religious opinions. For Lea, this implies a dilemma of upholding a positive view towards the child about the teacher, while also seeking to counteract the teacher's religious opinions. However, Lea states it is important 'to deal with it honestly'. And thus, it remains most important for Lea to explain things to her child at home:

Lea: … I think the most important thing is that I explain to my child at home what it really is like. That I really explain; "mommy just doesn't want you to be misled." Shall I say. I really say it like that. Look, she's eleven. But I know that my other children also sometimes said something like 'the teacher said this or the teacher said that'. Is that actually true? Then you are also happy when children say that.

In brief, apart from religious content and 'passing on faith' as constituting the transmitted identity meanings in the reciprocal identity processes, interpersonal aspects or social considerations towards the teacher, such as keeping respect, also seem to be important aspects in this situation. Of paramount importance is Lea's approach of discussing what she believes to be true with her child at home, redressing what the teacher said.

To conclude, the findings imply that, by establishing a basis, these parents aim to make their children resistant to deviations from the parents' religious identities. To this end, these parents have open discussions with their children and seek to stay close to religious content. At the same time, it becomes clear that some parents clearly instil respect for teachers and others, who may think differently, in their children.

Teacher-child to child-parent: mutual identity negotiation

Interestingly, the parents also discuss how their children influence their religious identities. Several studies have shown such bidirectionality in processes of religious socialisation between parents and children (Pinquart and Silbereisen, 2004; Roeben and Dommel, 2005; Schachter and Ventura, 2008; Kuusisto, 2009; Özdikmenli-Demir and Şahin-Kütük, 2012). These bidirectional, reciprocal, or bilateral processes focus on the reciprocal influences of both the child and the parent in the parent-child relationship. Such processes of children influencing parents religious identities also emerge in this study. For example, a revitalisation of religiousness in the period around giving birth (also found in the study by Roebben and Dommel, 2005), occurred with Maysa, who became more religious when she was pregnant with her first child:

> *Maysa: … when I was 26, I learned to read the Quran. (…) Because I was pregnant with T., and I was like, if I don't learn that now, I can't pass it on to him like that. With that feeling, I was also - yes also with hormones and everything - I myself went to the mosque twice, to really learn it. And then there was the prayer, then the Imam called - and I always thought it was so important that my child heard that already in my womb. So I always tried, before the evening prayer, I was always in the mosque. To learn it myself, to actually update myself again.*

However, the findings in this study also suggest that parents can be influenced by their children's negotiations originating from an educational situation. Responding to a situation in which the child could not sleep due to a teacher's storytelling, Marianne explains that she felt moved by the child's religious feelings, perceiving their child's behaviour as mirroring their own religious life:

> *Marianne: … that was also a lesson for us: that we all ought to have such a holy turmoil. You know, that you...: he [/ the child] didn't dare to sleep anymore. Well then he came [out of bed]*

again: [unintelligible]. Well. '[Let's] pray first', he would say. Right before he went to sleep. So, well: and then you almost sometimes had something like: [to child:] '(…) now you have to go to sleep, [instead of keep on praying].' (…) [However,] you almost feel that: if only we [as parents] lay awake more because of our sins [like the child does], but, yes.

Her child makes Marianne reflect on a theological aspect of realising sins. As the teacher influenced Marianne's child's identity processes, Marianne describes how, via the expression of her child's religious identity negotiations, this had affected her own religious life. Thus, an interplay between the different reciprocal identity processes in the parent-child and teacher-child relationship emerges here, leading to an interplay of teacher-child-parent religious identity processes.

Reciprocal identity processes in the teacher-child relationship

Teachers take an important role as identity agents in reciprocal identity processes (Harrell-Levy and Kerpelman, 2010; Cohen-Malayev, Schachter and Rich, 2014) when it comes to influencing the children's religious identity standards. Christian parents in particular repeatedly mention the teacher's influence in the orthodox reformed schools. In this respect they especially emphasise the particularity of specific teachers. For instance, Lea says:

Lea: It also stands or falls sometimes with a teacher who then stands in front of the class, so to speak.

And Marianne and Peter argue that the handling of specific topics in the classroom depends on the particular teacher:

Marianne: Well, it makes a difference which teachers they are with too.
Peter: Exactly.

Thus, the parents seem to compare specific teachers to others (see also chapter 6, 'Relatedness specific teachers and concerns on school policies'), and express a kind of preference for particular teachers. Lea says: 'it stands or falls', pointing to both positive and negative consequences of particular teachers' instruction. Marianne also illustrates the importance of the particular teacher's religious identity for her children's religious identity negotiation. She mentions an example of a situation in which their child responded in a sensitive way to the religious teachings of the teacher at preschool:

Marianne: I know, [name son], of ours, who had her [/ the teacher] at preschool, she's gone, but she was a really serious teacher. And, then he came home with us... and then he couldn't

sleep at night. He didn't want to go to bed, and uh, yeah, I guess she [teacher] was very serious too. So to speak. And a young child is quite sensitive to that. So uh, yes. That was really uh... that really made an impression. He was also about five years old then. Then you can notice really well that that really came from eh... from the teacher. I don't know, then she would read The Pilgrim's Progress, or another book like that, or the Bible stories.

Later in the interview, Peter responds on Marianne, saying:

Peter: You can see that such a teacher or a teacher has a lot of influence on a child. So yeah: positively or negatively. (…)

A Christian mother[30], who is a teacher at an orthodox reformed school, also mentions a similar situation with her child. In this particular case, the mother has a part-time job as a teacher at the child's school and is the child's teacher one day a week. The mother describes the child noticed a difference between her mother's role as a teacher and the main teacher:

Christian mother: And I now notice that with [name daughter] too, in class. I am her teacher on Fridays as well. Um, in her class, and that's definitely a bit bigger than him [not clear what parent means]. And she will notice that: she says: 'the teacher just says, that story is just finished'. She means: I think the application or the message, yes, the teacher just leaves it for what it is, I think. I thought it was noteworthy[/odd] that she said that.

Here, the mother points to a difference her child (age 9) noticed. Specifically, the child perceived a difference in the way both tell a Bible story in the classroom. The child had shared this perception with her mother, telling that normally after telling a Bible story the main teacher 'just leaves it for what it is'. In contrast, according to the child, after telling the Bible story the mother would continue to discuss 'the message' of the story.

The child's attentiveness illustrates how a nine-year-old consciously perceives the transmission of religious stories, understandings, and thoughts. In addition, this child seems to be able to compare different ways of transmitting religious stories. It shows that this child is not a passive receiver of information in the educational context, but rather has an active inner thinking world, in which she actively negotiates the different identity meanings perceived in the situation (Hemming, 2012; Hemming and Madge, 2015; both cited in Hemming 2018).

It is important to be careful when drawing conclusions about children's identity negotiations from the parents' points of view alone. For a complete inquiry, the child's own point of view should be included by interviewing the child. However, drawing solely upon

[30] To guarantee the anonymity of this mother, her fictional name is not given.

qualitative data derived from the interview with the parents, it seems the child has a preference for their mother's way of telling a Bible story in class. This could suggest the dominance of parents' religious views over teacher's views for children. This relatively independent religious identity negotiation of this younger child appears to be more strongly reflected amongst young adolescents. An interesting finding is what Marianne notices amongst her children in secondary education:

> *Marianne: But that's also at [name school], if you have the morning devotion [by a teacher], I was just talking about that with [name son]. Yes. Look. One teacher has a very different opening than the other. Look, and I don't know all those people who are teachers of course. But then you sometimes, I hear of eh, so to speak, like: if he does the opening, well that's really great. Well, look, that's nice that a child of 13, 14, 15 feels it, that should…*
> *Peter: … and notices.*
> *Marianne: And notices. Like, yes, look. Well, I think that's very nice and good.*
> *Interviewer: Yes yes.*
> *Marianne: And... then they hear another one [teacher] too. And uh... who says less about that, or [from] a different angle. And at a certain point they also know: 'yes, he says so', that is no longer an issue every day, so to speak. From 'oh, he said so, and that's not true at all!'. No, they know that now with that teacher, it was that. He says it like that. Yes. And they don't go along with that.*

Marianne argues that her children, individually and largely independently, negotiate their religious identities when listening to the morning devotion. In terms of identity theory, teachers seem to offer alternatives to the transmitted religious identity meanings by parents. The adolescent children appear to be able to independently compare these identity meanings in this situation with identity meanings in their identity standards, the so-called function of the 'comparator'. Their parents are confident that their children will not 'go along' with the teacher's interpretations. Peter even argues that his children 'should be able to act on that, without starting to think like that', in other words, without taking over the teacher's opinion:

> *Peter: And they should also be able to act on that, without starting to think like that or something.*
> *Marianne: Become unbalanced.*
> *Peter: Or own their [teachers'] opinion.*
> *Marianne: It's also good that they know; suppose they are concerned, or have questions about it, that they... they can also ask these at home. But I don't hear much about it.*

In the final sentence, Marianne again maintains the importance of openness in their home, as she notes that her children know they can come to their parents to ask their questions and

share their concerns. However, as Marianne mentions, the children do not often come up with such issues.

As noted in the beginning of this section, Marianne explains that every teacher is unique and thus has a unique contribution in the children's classrooms. However, despite a potentially 'completely different attitude', Marianne notes she would not 'start discussions every week' reflecting the identity nondisclosures as presented in chapter 7:

> *Marianne: Yes, they say it, but um… he was just in his… look, a teacher radiates [who he is, what he thinks] in everything. Also in the choice of song, or in a narration, yes. Uh... it really is. I mean, he really does make different interpretations and with a different teacher you notice something eh… yes, a completely different attitude. Yes. But not that you eh... we are not going to start discussions every week. Such things.*

Peter agrees with this, and argues that the 'basis at home' is the reason that parents do not necessarily enter into confrontations at school:

> *Peter: No, definitely not. But that's why we have to... I think that education should be done here at home. If they have that foundation here at home, then they can handle the diversity in school, shall I say, a little more. From teachers, and from pupils themselves.*

Thus, Peter agrees with Marianne's nonconfrontational stance, and adds that providing children with a strong foundation at home helps them deal with alternative opinions at school. Peter describes this diversity on the levels of the 'teachers, and from pupils themselves'. It seems that, in Peter's view, the establishment of a basis is related to the nondisclosure (chapter 7) of the parents' religious identities in the educational setting. The finding discussed in chapter 7, namely that parents move to the reciprocal identity processes, seems to be expressed more comprehensively through the establishment of a basis, due to which they do not feel pressured to enter the situation and disclose their religious identities. In addition, the parents somehow rely on this basis, they trust it. They speak about this predominance of the home beyond the influence of the school, when discussing the 'triangle' of the home, school, and church.

Although the Muslim parents mention the role of teachers recurringly, in contrast to the Christian parents they do not emphasise the central role of *particular* teachers in their children's religious identity processes. Instead, the Muslim parents categorise the impact of teachers per type of school, as one couple of Muslim parents notes:

Muslim father: We also know that state schools, actually all schools, should also discuss this from the government. But some might be really good at it… but some…
Muslim mother: … do that carefully.
Muslim father: Do this carefully, which is why we have also chosen to send our youngest daughter – primary school next year – to a Christian school as well. And then they treat things like this with a little more respect.

In describing specific experiences at the schools, Muslim parents nevertheless relate their experiences with particular teachers without emphasising the importance of particular teachers the way the Christian parents do. Interestingly, the impact of particular teachers is discussed by the translator, herself a teacher at the mosque, when education at the mosque is discussed during the interview. The translator tells the mother, Zamira:

Translator: If your children would only receive information from you, that would be different than from one teacher, [or] from another teacher.

This might imply that the role of teachers in the identity processes surrounding children's religious identity development is particularly relevant when the education is relatively more religious. In the orthodox reformed schools, the religious education by teachers constitutes an important part of the curriculum, while teachers in Islamic schools can be Christian or non-religious. In contrast, at the mosque where Zamira's translator is a teacher, the content of the education is religion, in which case the importance of individual teachers is also mentioned. This, then, points to a broader impact of the religious place of worship, the home, and the school on children.

The nexus: 'a continuous line' and predominance of the home

As described above, parents deeply value the discussions at home as crucial to the preservation of a basis for their children, in order for them to then safely enact their identities outside of the home. Apart from the reciprocal identity processes in the parent-child relationship, parents often also express to search for the support of school and church or mosque, in processes of religious socialisation and religious transmission. Many authors argue for the importance of religious socialisation in a 'nexus' (Casson et al., 2020), or 'integrative triangulation' (Metso, 2018, p. 17), of the home, school, and church or mosque (Sözeri, 2021).

The findings in this study show a similar result, while it should be added that, for the religious parents, religious transmission in the *home* is paramount to the church/mosque and school, within such a 'nexus'. Parents seem to view themselves as the basic and most important actors in their children's religious identity development, compared to school:

Bart-Jan: So we try to pass it on to them. And then in combination with school… although we are both very aware of it; you shouldn't outsource it to school; look, we are the parents.

According to a Christian mother[31], who is teacher at an orthodox reformed primary school, many parents think that religious socialisation is something which is done by the school. This resonates with findings in a study by Noteboom, De Vries and De With (2019), which suggest that orthodox reformed schools are to 'adopt' parents' responsibilities with regard to the religious upbringing of children. This mother argues fiercely against that:

Christian mother: I think working [on religion] from home is really the most important. There are of course plenty who think: 'oh well that happens at school and that at school (...), well, it will probably be okay'. No, that's not good. It should especially happen at home, also because– if all goes well – the basis is there.

Maysa describes the prominence of the home in similar terms:

Maysa: … my father always said: every home is a [place for] education. And the mothers are the first teachers of the children. So you don't have to go to an association, you don't have to go to a mosque. Or you don't have to do anything, but you can also provide that at home.

Nevertheless, Zamira, a Muslim mother, expresses how the Islamic school helps her:

Interviewer: Yes. Would you mind if your children can no longer attend an Islamic school?
Zamira: Yes, I would be very sorry. Yes. Because if they go to Islamic school, then I have less to worry about, so to speak, then they will learn something there and then I have at home eh… something eh.

Selim, a Muslim father, describes the Islamic school in the same vein:

Selim: …an extension of what they get at home.

Derya and Rayen, however, have different views on this. Rayen in particular stresses the importance of a school recognising some traditional aspects of (Dutch) society in which they live, and not being 'put in a box':

[31] To guarantee the anonymity of this mother, her fictional name is not given.

Rayen: … I didn't want my child to go to a black school either. I do want my children to be in this society.
Derya: Oh, so you think an Islamic school doesn't belong in this society. [laughs]
Rayen: No, I mean; not in this society, just…
Derya: No, just kidding. I know what you mean.
Rayen: … don't put them all in one box you know. Um, because that's happening now. Then they come with a van, they go there, there is not a single Dutch child…
Derya: But if that [Islamic school] was in [town of living], would you have done that?
Rayen: No, neither. Things are happening here. For example, Sint-Nicolas [a Dutch celebration with a Catholic history for children], it is here. You can deny that. But it is there.
Derya: Yes they have to live together yes. I agree.
Rayen: And look, Christmas, Christmas is just here. But that [Islamic] school doesn't recognise that. They don't talk about that. But yeah. It is here.
Interviewer: Yes.
Rayen: You just have to give them, in my opinion: just both. I think that is the disadvantage of an Islamic school. Just both.
Derya: Yes, also from society, yes you are right about that.
Rayen: I think that's the disadvantage of an Islamic school that actually exists, but doesn't really adapt to society.

Interestingly, here Derya responds to Rayen, arguing that, in light of the diversity within Islam and the possible influences that come with that at an Islamic school, she prefers sending her child to a Protestant-Christian school:

Derya: That was actually our underlying thought with my sisters, we discussed that too. Because our kids are all about the same age. And uh, I said, no, yes. I'm not sure either. Look, I can, you can tell your child now, this is a Christian school but we are Muslim, you know. You can pass that rule on to your child, [laughs] but in an Islamic school… There are so many groups within Islam that I think yes… What he just said at the beginning of the conversation, the Turkish government sends this imam; you have some control. If you think of; he now says something that is not correct, then you can still file a complaint somewhere. Do you understand? That's how we were raised and we want to keep it that way. Don't exclude yourself. That is not possible.

Thus, the Muslim parents differ in how they view Islamic schools in Dutch society. Where Selim views it as an extension of the home, Rayen views it more as an 'exclusion' from Dutch society. The Christian parents mainly view orthodox reformed schools as part of a 'triangle'. Peter especially stresses the importance of unity in messages from the religious place of worship, the family, and school (resonating with Noteboom et al., 2019; Broer et al., 2021):

Peter: Yes and of course we have the triangle: family, school, and church. Which, of course, is also important. And you notice that here too. Look, there should be no contradiction.

Sara also points to the importance of her church minister supporting aspects of religious upbringing, bringing forth this unity in his messages. In light of the reading of books, and the Bible in particular, she points to the time-consuming aspect of mobile phones:

Sara: … he [church minister] said: yes, instead of that phone, you should check if you spend as much time with the Bible. Hey hey, great, I wish he said that more often. Yes. It's just necessary to wake them up.

Tineke adds an interesting aspect to this, by mentioning the importance of school: then, a 'stranger' tells her children, which 'often works better than [when] a parent says it'. The same is argued by a mosque teacher who assists as a Turkish-Dutch translator during the interviews (see chapter 4, 'Introduction of the participants'). The mosque teacher emphasises the importance of hearing 'things from several people', and a 'new face, new voice':

Translator: But what I often hear myself, children I teach say, I also talk to their mothers, so that they say; 'When I say something I have the idea that it will soon be put aside; [citing mothers] 'well there she is again with her mommy-talks for example', yes it's not…
Interviewer: Yes, yes yes, I get what you mean…
Translator: You can provide a certain upbringing, but if you are always talking, so to speak, at a certain point you start to select things like this, being a child… [laughs]
Muslim mother: [unintelligible]
Translator: (...) It is the advantage of; it's nicer to hear new things from several people, not the same thing over and over again…. For example, if I sometimes teach, I sometimes try to invite someone from eh… friends, then I ask, do you want to tell them something. And then I also say to those children: look, [a] new face, new voice…
Interviewer: yes.
Translator: So I think it's also nice to learn new things from several people, to hear new things. That is actually the case with you too. If your children would only receive information from you, that would be different than from one teacher, from another teacher.

Here, as described in the previous section, the particular role of individual teachers is reflected in the context of mosque education. In relation to ideologies parents disagree with (see chapter 6), and similar to the other parents, Peter and Marianne mention the importance of unity in the messages of the family, the church, and school:

Peter: Leave them alone, please let them be kids. There is already enough coming at them, and I think a good foundation at a primary school is therefore very important, that they are also trained in that. Of which they receive a bit of the background at home and at school eh...
Interviewer: Yes.
Peter: But of course that doesn't rule out eh... yes Christian education, there are so many aspects out there that are valuable. That uh...
Marianne: Yes, because what you said, they get something from the church, of course. I mean, it's, one doesn't exclude the other. It's not like, oh, we'll make it in the family. Or oh, it only works at school. Or: as long as they have the church and otherwise it's fine. I think it's nice, that it's a continuous line.
Peter: Exactly. It's that triangle...
Marianne: Yes. Just what they heard at home, and what they hear in church. Or uh. Or what you heard in church, and can still talk about it at home. Yes. I just think, throughout the week. So to speak, mm.

This unity in messages strongly resonates, according to Marianne, with a religious school that provides children with a 'safe' environment:

Marianne: Yes, I think again a sense of safety, which a child experiences. Certainly a child of four, who goes to school for the first time. Eh, yes, I think that is a very young age to have to let the child go to another school. Yes, I think so eh... that seems very difficult to me. Yes.

Overall, the findings on the nexus show how parents, in their religious identity negotiation, seek the most appropriate environment for their children. In most cases, they prefer the 'safe' environment of a religious school, but in some cases they especially note the importance of acknowledging aspects of society. Overall, the findings indicate that the parents give themselves the pivotal role in their children's lives of providing their children with environments that foster their children's religious development, in line with the parents' identities.

Conclusion

This chapter continued to answer research question 3:

Research question 3. How do parents negotiate their religious identities in situations as explored under research question 2, and what is the influence on the social interaction in the educational environment?

This chapter thus continues from chapter 7, with parents seeking ways to influence their children at home, counteracting influences at school. Most importantly, this finding suggests that recognition (Mead, 1934; Taylor, 1994) is not the parents' primary need; instead, identity

negotiations reach beyond this, and intergenerational religious transmission is of central importance to most parents. This intergenerational religious transmission as the parents' main concern is explored further in this chapter, taking the theoretical perspective of reciprocal identity processes (Kerpelman et al., 1997) in which individuals actively influence each other's identity control systems.

In this respect, coming up in the interview data on a frequent basis, parents express the desire to influence their children's identities, in order to counteract educational influences. During the interviews, several parents express that they not only do this sporadically, but that they have normalised this in their lives. Furthermore, parents often mention that they establish a 'basis' at home, which they seem to view as a requirement for their children when they encounter other people, be they religious or non-religious. This basis seems to form the starting point for the growth of 'resistance', which, subsequently, is enacted and further increased in a situation, such as reading a secular magazine or in interactions. This basis is, then, an important perspective from which parents enact processes to influence their children's identities.

In addition, the establishment of a basis is related to the findings in chapter 7, namely the parents' nondisclosure of their religious identities in educational settings. In light of the presence of reciprocal identity processes, parents seem to feel less pressed to enter the situation and disclose their religious identities, as Peter describes. The parents also somehow rely on this basis, they trust it, which reinforces the suggestion that 'education cannot compensate for society' (Bernstein, 1970, in Biesta, 2021, p. 3). Apart from religious content and 'passing on faith' as components of the transmitted identity meanings in reciprocal identity processes, interpersonal aspects or social considerations towards the teacher, such as being respectful, also play an important part.

The Christian parents in particular mention the central role of particular teachers in their children's religious identity processes, which is in contrast to the Muslim parents, although amongst Muslim parents the impact of a mosque teacher is mentioned. As suggested, this can be a result of the involvement of teachers in faith formation, in both orthodox reformed schools and mosques, as in Islamic schools many teachers are Christian or non-religious.

Finally, the findings concerning the 'nexus' show how parents, in their religious identity negotiation, seek the most appropriate environment for their children. In most cases, they prefer the 'safe' environment of a religious school, but some Muslim parents especially note the importance of involvement in society. Among the Christian parents, the unity in messages in the 'triangle' of the home, school, and place of religious worship is valued (see also Noteboom et al., 2019; Broer et al., 2021). However, contrary to earlier findings of schools 'adopting' parents' responsibilities (Noteboom et al., 2019; Broer et al., 2021), in this study,

parents view their own role in this triangle as of paramount importance. In short, central is the pivotal role parents view in their children's lives, in providing their children with environments that foster their children's religious identity development, aligning with the parents' religious identities.

Chapter 9. Conclusion and discussion

Introduction

The purpose in this study has been to gain a deeper understanding of the processes of the religious identity negotiation of religious parents in the contexts of their children's education. Doing so, it aims to offer in-depth explanations of social events in these educational settings, in which these parents experience frictions with their religious identities. The findings were presented in the previous four chapters.

Centrally, the findings highlight the personal nature of parents' religious identities, being relevant across situations and strongly interwoven with their parenting identities. The parents' experiences in educational contexts show to be surprisingly diverse. In essence, throughout the interview data, the parents prioritise a relationship with God, above social recognition in interactions in the educational context. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the parents avoid interactions and religious identity disclosure in educational contexts, apparently resulting in 'unseen dynamics', for instance by instead influencing their children's religious identities at home. With these findings, based on a limited number of interviews, this study deepens an understanding of religious parents' thinking processes in educational contexts in a secular, western country, the Netherlands.

This final chapter is concerned with bringing all these findings together, to further highlight the central contribution of this study to the academic field. This chapter further aims to set out the practical and societal implications of the findings for the field of (religious) education policy and practice, and the importance of these findings to broader society. Doing so, this study does not aim to give definite answers on lasting political questions. Rather, it aims to illuminate the complex religious identity processes, to deepen the understanding and to widen the view on religious parents' religious identity negotiations in educational contexts. It seeks to extend knowledge on these complex processes, as abstracted in this thesis, and to give insight into possible causal explanations that emerge from the cases researched in this study. However, it can only build upon the interpreted interview data gathered for this study, amongst two specific groups of Muslim and Christian parents in the Dutch context.

Below, a conclusion and summary of the findings will be given first, in order to highlight the original contributions of this study. Then, implications of these findings to broader society are described, after which the limitations and strengths of this study are outlined and indications are given for future research. This chapter is followed by a reflection on this study as a whole.

What does this study contribute?

The central aim of this study was to explore the processes of religious parents negotiating a religious identity in the context of education. To achieve this aim, two specific religious groups were selected and, via gatekeepers and snowball-sampling, participants were recruited from their religious places of worship. One group of participants, Turkish-Muslim parents, were recruited from the Diyanet mosques. Another group of parents, Christian orthodox reformed parents, were recruited from the Reformed Congregations in the Netherlands (*Gereformeerde Gemeenten in Nederland*). Ten interviews with a total of 16 parents were conducted. Ethical considerations formed the foundation of the research, both during the process of data collection and the process of data analysis. In pursuing the reliability and validity of the interview data and findings, the verification strategies of Morse et al. (2002) were applied and reflected upon.

The data collection consisted of two phases. In the first phase, five interviews were conducted, transcribed, and analysed. The second phase continued with the data collection by conducting another five interviews. In this phase, the findings analysed in the first phase were also included, and served to assist the analysis of the interview data in this second phase. The data analysis consisted of abductive analysis, a combination of inductive and deductive analysis in which identity theory (Burke, 2007; Burke and Stets, 2009; Stets and Serpe, 2013) and additional theories served to 'identify causal mechanisms' (Fletcher, 2017, p. 182). This process of data analysis went through five phases, and moved from deeply familiarising myself with the data to consolidating relevant parts, to organising, thematising and coding of the data and, finally, to identifying social mechanisms and underlying structures in the findings.

This study, then, offers both theoretical and empirical contributions. Overall, the unique focus of this study lies on religious parents' personal religious identity negotiation processes in educational contexts in the Netherlands. To date, no other study has focused on the specific processes of religious identity negotiation of religious parents in the Netherlands. Outside the Netherlands and unrelated to educational contexts, studies have particularly focused on parents as identity agents in adolescent (religious) identity development, and parents' role in religious transmission and religious socialisation. However, studies focusing on parents' personal religious identity processes in educational contexts are scarce. Theoretically, this study thus necessarily resides in a junction of studies on religious socialisation and transmission, religious identity development and formation, and religious identity negotiation and recognition. In this field, this study's findings offer unique theoretical insights into religious parents' identity processes in educational contexts. Furthermore, this study offers an explorative, theoretical framework to approach religious identity processes amongst religious parents in educational contexts.

Empirically, this study offers qualitative data of parents' religious identity negotiation processes in educational contexts. It conceptualises the personal experiences of religious parents in a variety of contexts, in which Christian and Muslim parents act as identity agents and as democratic citizens in a participatory section of society in the Netherlands. It presents data on Muslim and Christian parents' religious identity processes in relation to their parenting identities and their children's education, and insights into its implications for interaction in education. As a result, this study answers calls for knowledge on the implications of religious cognitions for family life (Volling et al., 2009, Petro et al., 2018) and, in particular, calls to include the voices of religious parents in the field of education (Rissanen, 2020; Kolb, 2021; Van Schoonhoven, 2021).

Although there are some notable differences between the Christian and Muslim parents, especially as the Muslim parents additionally negotiate processes surrounding a national identity and both religions have a different history and different 'perceptions' in Dutch society, the findings in this study show many similarities shared by the groups. The religious identity processes of these 'religious parents' reflect how their 'parenting takes place in the context of the encounter of different, sometimes conflicting, cultures, worldviews and values, social and educational institutions' (Schachter and Ventura, 2008, p. 456). In this respect, this study thus illuminates how religious parents in Dutch society *may* describe, *may* experience and *may* negotiate their religious identities in their own contexts. In the following section, the central contributions of this study are outlined by summarizing the findings of each respective results chapter, whilst addressing the research questions.

The parents' religious identities

In order to explore the parents' processes of religious identity negotiation, chapter 5 addresses the first research question which focuses on the parents' own definition of their religious identities: 'How are the religious identity standards described and experienced by the religious parents?' Most centrally, the religious identities of the parents are shown to circle around a perceived relationship with the divine Person of God (resonating with previous studies, Pargament, 2002; De Bruin-Wassinkmaat et al., 2019; 2021). Importantly, the parents express their religious identities as highly individualised and personal, rather than as a group identity (see Savage et al., 2017). This individualised expression of religious identities can provide an explanation for parents' appeals for actions, which are found to be higher for 'person identities' than for 'group identities' (Stekelenburg and Klandermans, 2014). In addition, parents describe their religious identities as relevant across multiple situations.

This relevance of religious identities across situations, seems to result in the parents interweaving their parenting and religious identities. This is expressed in three ways in the interview data: in their actions, in their transcendental relational aspects, and in their perceived

religious responsibility towards their children. This interwovenness illuminates the generativity of the parents' religious identities in all these ways. In other words, in the experience of the religious parents, their children are part of their very own religious identities. As Emine notes, 'your child is one of you', and, 'I take care of my children because I know I received them from Allah'.

This expressed interwovenness of both identities resides, or synthesises, in the parents' identity concerns (Schachter and Ventura, 2008) about their children's religious identity development and lives. They seek to direct their children towards a relation with a divine Person of God. In line with Schachter and Ventura (2008), this involvement with their children's identities, theorised as identity concern, can be seen as 'part of' the parents' own identity standards. As Patrick expresses, his negotiations surrounding issues in the education of his children, follow from his very personal religious convictions, thinking, and being as a religious parent. This interwovenness calls for and supports including this parents' concern (Schachter and Ventura, 2008) in future identity research involving parents. Important implications follow from these findings for debates on parents' and children's rights in the domain of education, which will be addressed in the section 'Practical and societal implications'.

The parents' religious identity experiences

To study the parents' processes of religious identity negotiation, chapter 2 explores the experiences of parents in concrete situations in educational environments in which tensions concerning religious identity negotiation are located. The research question addressed here is: 'What are the personal experiences of religious parents (Christian, Muslim) in educational situations, in which parents perceive a lack of self-verification of their religious identities?' Instead of solely residing in frictions between religious minority groups and so-called 'majority coercion' of broader society (Inspectorate of Education, 2020, p. 11; see also Kuusisto, 2009; Metso, 2018), the parents' experiences are shown to reside in a diverse field of majority versus minority interactions.

Therefore, previous theoretical categorisations (Adams and Marshall, 1996; Schachter and Ventura, 2008) are applied and adjusted in structuring the parents' experiences in two categories: 'discrepancies between the macro and micro context' and 'discrepancies within the micro context'. Here, the macro context is defined as broader society and its processes involving 'concomitant modes of thought'. The micro context is defined as specifically focusing on the parents' personal convictions, expressed in 'social processes in families', such as the parent-child relationship, and in interactions within religious communities, including at religious schools. This categorisation of the parents' experiences proved especially helpful in locating the frictions observed in the diversity of parents' experiences in the Dutch educational context.

Instead of pointing to and defining the groups these parents belong to (minority or majority groups), this categorisation was applicable to a broader range of experiences, and remained useful alongside the highly individualised expressions of parents' religious identities.

Experiences categorised under the first category, 'discrepancies between the macro and micro context', mainly reflect discrepancies on parents' convictions versus ideologies in broader society. Here, experiences include situations in which parents are directly involved, for instance in a particular classroom situation, or indirectly involved, for instance when religious schools received attention in the national media. Experiences categorised under the second category, 'discrepancies within the micro context', mainly reflect discrepancies concerning theological understandings within the religious communities and religious schools, and only emerge amongst Christian parents. Specific teachers, school policies, and observations in private lives play a central role.

The parents' experiences show that situations are particularly perceived as problematic when they impact the generativity (chapter 5) of parents' religious identities. The parents in this study can live with strong disagreements in educational settings. However, when disagreements conflict with parents' identity concern (Schachter and Ventura, 2008, see chapter 5) towards their children's religious identity development, impacting the generativity of their religious identities, they perceive it as negative. This can offer an explanation for why religious parents can suffer from 'majority coercion' (chapter 1) in a more multidimensional way than only in majority versus minority interactions (Kuusisto, 2009; Metso, 2018).

The parents' religious identity negotiations

Arriving at the central aim of this study, in chapter 7 the parents' processes of their religious identity negotiations in educational settings are researched, answering the third research question: 'How do parents negotiate their religious identities in the situations as defined under research question 2, and what is the influence on the social interactions in the educational environments?' The findings here show that, first, parents do not aim for the recognition and verification of their identities. Instead, they often do not disclose their identities in the educational context, which results in 'unseen dynamics'. These findings are structured and presented in three parts.

First, the underlying aspects and motivations of the parents' identity (non-)verification in educational settings are explored. It is found that the religious parents do not primarily focus on the recognition or verification of their religious identities. Instead, parents are concerned with 'God as the significant Other', with the common good for the (non-)religious other, and with struggling to connect as a minority within an already religious minority group. In brief, if the religious identity of the parents is central in a situation, the parents in this study are focused on aspects going beyond the verification and disclosure of their personal religious identities.

Second, the psychological-sociological aspects of the parents' disclosure of their religious identities and the antecedents of this identity disclosure (Ragins, 2008) are explored. In particular, it is found that parents aim to avoid disclosing their identities in educational settings, and that internal processes, such as identity centrality and seeking identity verification, do not serve as antecedents for the participating parents' religious identity disclosure. At the same time, parents anticipate consequences of a possible identity disclosure, for instance by considering the implications of school policies. In terms of environmental support, a new antecedent of identity disclosure follows as a theoretical abstraction from the data. This concerns the transformation of so-called 'narrow spaces' in educational settings into free spaces, by focusing on an understanding of religious boundaries. Here, a central aspect is the notion of 'reverence' for divine Persons. This could serve as a particular possible antecedent of the religious parents' identity disclosures in educational settings. As a consequence of the identity nondisclosures, emotions, such as disappointment and feelings of powerlessness, are expressed in parents' identity negotiations.

Third, these identity nondisclosures appear to result in 'unseen dynamics' in the educational settings. Here, 'unseen' refers to unseen by teachers and other educational personnel. Instead of disclosing their religious identities in educational settings, the parents express to negotiate their identities in light of religious activities, such as prayer, or by reflecting on their children's baptism. In other cases, parents seek to rely on identity assimilation (Bosma and Kunnen, 2001) by changing the situation, for instance by choosing a different school for a younger child. Another way of such identity assimilation emerges when parents interpret a situation as a 'lesson in acceptance' for their children. Over time, parents also seek to accept situations of discrepancies alongside feelings of ineffectual interactions. This often turns into processes theorised as reciprocal identity processes (Kerpelman et al., 1997), in which parents seek to correct for educational influences at home. Finally, Muslim parents in particular seek to build connections between religious groups, for example by sending their children to Protestant-Christian schools or by joining conservative Christian minority groups' political activities.

Bringing theory and data together in this chapter, the relevance of theoretical concepts of identity prominence and identity salience emerges. As Serpe, Stryker and Powell (2020) have noted, identity salience should be understood as individuals being 'agentic' to 'choose to enact' and 'seek out opportunities to enact' the identity, whereas identity prominence implies the emotional value that persons attach to their religious identities. Throughout the interview data, this emotional value parents attach to their religious identities (identity prominence) becomes clear. Interestingly, parents especially choose to enact their identities (identity salience) within the home context, rather than within the educational context. This enactment, then, seems closely related to the disclosure (Ragins, 2008) of their identities. Parents often

express to not disclose their identities in the educational context, but rather use the opportunity at home to influence their children, or in theoretical terms, to enact their interwoven parenting and religious identities. At home, this enactment then is expressed in the reciprocal identity processes (Kerpelman et al., 1997) towards their children, which is further explored in chapter 8.

Finally and interestingly, the lack of identity disclosure does not reflect the societal outbursts described in the introduction of this study. Rather, the findings illuminate Hanan Alexander's arguments (2019, p. 421). He argues that feelings of 'exclusion' precede societal outbursts, as differences in worldviews are more and more to be left 'at the door of the public domain'. Alexander notes these views are then 'thought to be too divisive, distinctive, or dominating', and observes: 'when these voices do finally make their way into the public domain, they can sometimes be especially harsh and discordant, even violent'. The findings in this study reflect how parents seek ways to leave their religious views at the door of (even mono-religious) schools. However, the societal outbursts described in the introduction of this study indicate how these voices *can* finally, violently, 'make their way into the public domain' (Alexander, 2019).

The parents' reciprocal identity processes offering a way to cope

In continuing to answer the third research question addressed in chapter 7, chapter 8 continues to explore how the parents seek to influence their children's identities at home. They seem to normalise this both before and after educational situations in which children can 'start to think'. Parents recurringly state to establish 'a basis' on which children can rely at home, so that they will not become 'unbalanced'. In accordance with this basis, the parents seem to express and consolidate their identity concerns and goals (Schachter and Ventura, 2008; see also chapter 6) towards their children. In addition, this basis seems to provide the parents with a reason not to disclose their religious identities in the educational setting. As Peter notes: 'that's why (…) I think that education should be done here at home', so that, 'then they can handle the diversity in school'.

In doing so, the participating parents in this study aim to make their children 'resistant', especially through open dialogue in the home-context. As a requirement for this resistance, it appears that most Christian parents in particular see staying close to religious content, especially to the Person of God (the 'Vine'), as necessary. They view this as helping them and their children to be able to 'answer from the Bible', as Dianne states. Apart from their own roles, parents also describe reciprocal identity processes in reflecting on teachers' roles as identity agents (Cohen-Malayev, Schachter and Rich, 2014). Several parents describe their dependency on particular teachers. Although parents recurringly state to correct for a

teacher's influence, one parent in particular notes the importance of nevertheless 'instilling respect' towards the teacher.

Finally, parents highlight the importance of the 'triangle' or nexus (Casson et al., 2020), between the religious place of worship, the religious school, and the home. The Christian parents emphasise the role of the home, as of crucial importance over the religious school and church. The Muslim parents describe this differently, stating on one hand the positive impact of the mosque and Islamic schools as an extension of the home, and on the other hand the importance of a public or Protestant-Christian school, to ensure their children are not 'put in a box', avoiding an 'exclusion' from the Dutch society.

The pivotal role parents view for themselves in their children's lives, to provide their children with 'safe' educational environments in line with the parents' identities, which foster their children's religious development. As Marianne mentions, this is related to 'a sense of safety which a child experiences'. Here, the Muslim parents express this safety in not being set apart as Muslims or discriminated against, whilst the Christian parents note the importance of religious schools.

Observed differences between both groups of parents

Finally, research question 4 is addressed throughout the result chapters: 'Is there any difference (regarding the results on question 1, 2 and 3) between the two religious groups of parents (Christian, Muslim)?'. Although both the number of participants and the explorative and qualitative nature of this study do not allow for strong comparisons between Muslim and Christian parents, the most central differences which emerge in the interview data are summarised below.

First, in light of the differences in the descriptions of their religious identity standards, the Christian parents express the need for conversion, in other words, believing that the Person of Jesus, seen as the Son of God and human, died and resurrected to save the individual person of the parent. In contrast, Muslim parents express the need do good in life for Allah, and to then be granted eternal life as a result. This difference is reflected in their identity concern (Schachter and Ventura, 2008) towards their children.

Second, a salient difference between both groups emerges in the parents' personal experiences, in the category 'discrepancies within the micro context'. Experiences under this category are only found amongst the Christian parents. Muslim parents note the diversity within Islam, but do not describe frictions experienced in educational contexts as a result of this diversity. In chapter 6 several possible explanations for this difference are formulated.

Third, both groups of parents differ in their search for connections with other religious groups. Muslim parents in particular express interest in collaborations or connections with (conservative) Christian groups, as they saw them as fellow 'people of the book', as Emine

describes. Christian parents, however, do not mention an interest in collaborations with Muslim groups. Chapter 7 provides possible explanations for this difference.

Fourth, the Christian parents describe the particular positive or negative impact of specific teachers in their children's educational contexts. This is not noted amongst the Muslim parents. Nevertheless, the role of particular teachers is mentioned for mosque teachers. This could point to the teachers' roles in the faith formation of children (Sözeri, 2021). This role of teachers in faith formation is previously observed in the orthodox reformed schools that children from the Christian families attend (see Markus et al., 2018). Muslim families' children often attend public and Protestant-Christian schools, and in Islamic schools many teachers are non-Muslim. This may suggest that the teachers' influence is perceived by both groups of parents, however, especially if a teacher is involved in aspects of the faith formation of children.

Fifth, and finally, only Muslim families mention that they changed the school of their child after negative experiences. This is not observed among the Christian parents, where children all stably attend orthodox reformed schools. As noted in chapter 7, it could be that the Christian parents simply encounter a lack of alternative, more orthodox schools than the orthodox reformed schools their children already attend. The lack of changing school might also be a result of the left-over pillarised aspects of the 'Bible Belt', as the Christian parents are committed to the institutional identities of the orthodox reformed schools that belong to this Bible Belt. In contrast, the Muslim parents are less attached to specific school types and show to be more prone to choose schools with different institutional identities (as observed among Muslim families since the immigration processes emerged in the Netherlands, see Rietveld-van Wingerden, Westerman and Ter Avest, 2009; Ter Avest and Rietveld-van Wingerden, 2017). Taken together, these differences give an insight into the different dynamics in both groups. As a whole, this study offers implications resulting from the findings summarized above, which are outlined below.

Practical and societal implications

The following section highlights some central findings associated with current societal or political issues. First, implications of the notion of 'God as the significant Other' are presented. Second, implications of aspects in the parents' identities are highlighted and related to ongoing tensions between children's and parents' rights. Third, the findings of this study are associated with recent debates on the freedom of education in Dutch society. It is important to remember that these implications only rely on the findings in this study.

Implications of 'God as the significant Other'

In the introduction of this study, the classical work of Taylor is cited, *Sources of the self: The making of the modern identity* (1993). Taylor argued that, over the years, the modern identity

and the recognition of one's self-definition in interaction with 'significant others' had become a vital human need. Here, Taylor cited the founder of symbolic interactionism, George Herbert Mead (1934), in whose work identity theory is rooted (Stets et al., 2020). In the current study, the religious parents deviate from this modern identity when describing and negotiating their religious identities. This deviation is visible throughout the interview data, as the religious identities of these parents seem to primarily aim at relating to a divine Person of God. Thus, in contrast to the modern 'vital human need' Taylor describes, these parents do not primarily aim to express and verify their 'own particular way of being'.

As Berger argued in *The sacred canopy*: 'God then becomes the most reliable and ultimately significant other' (Berger, 1967, p. 37, 38, in Seul, 1999; see also Froese and Bader, 2010). Seul (1999) described this aspect of religious identity as the more 'private aspect of individual identity', compared to public identities (p. 559). This privately being in a 'right relationship with God', gives a 'foundation seemingly secure from the shifting reactions of other men' (Berger, 1967, p. 37, 38). Berger (1967) related this surrendering to God to a human longing for meaningfulness (see also in Fletcher, 2004). As a result, religious identity can involve a 'greater degree of loyalty' than other identities (Seul, 1999, p. 559).

This reliance on a relationship with God as the 'ultimately significant other' (Berger, 1967, p. 38) offers an explanation why the parents in this study do not seek the verification of their religious identities by significant others in educational settings but, instead, avoid disclosing their individual religious identities altogether. In essence, these parents rely on a 'higher' relationship. They thus move beyond the verification of their identities by significant others.

In addition, the individualised relationship with God explains some of the findings in this study, when religious diversity emerges within religious communities. In particular, the personal experiences of the parents within the micro context reflect a heterogeneity in their experiences of frictions (Kuusisto, 2010). Here, the individualised, 'private aspect' of parents' religious identities emerges when parents opposed religious convictions in their religious communities (see also McGuire, 2008). Thus, instead of only experiencing so-called tensions between the values in larger society versus their own faith traditions (Suhr, 2014; De Bruin-Wassinkmaat, 2019, p. 63), these religious communities seem to be not as 'unambiguous in their religious belonging' as possibly expected (Roebben, 2021, p. 6).

Rather, the parents' highly individualised religious identities reflect a fluidity of religions in pluralist times, resonating the personal and creative handling of religion (Geurts, 2017). In essence, the parents express a surprisingly complex entanglement of a modern, individualised religiosity (Taylor, 1994), whilst primarily committed to a relationship with a divine Person of God. They also wish to familiarise themselves with religious communities and schools, and seek to include their children into their religion and religious community.

Interestingly, overall, this opposes recent voices which argue that particularly the Christian orthodox reformed community would use a 'discourse of modern emancipation movements' (Treur, 2021). In an article in Dutch newspaper NRC, it was argued that orthodox reformed individuals 'present themselves as individual Christians on social media, possibly inspired by the emancipation of other minority groups in our society' (Treur, 2021). Although the religious parents do indeed express themselves as 'individual Christians', the data in this study show that these parents contradict a 'discourse of modern emancipation movements' (Treur, 2021). They appear to do not seek societal spaces to express and verify their identities. Instead, these findings rather reflect the view of Snel (2007), who described the orthodox reformed community of the Bible Belt as far from reflecting 'the 'expressive me'' (p. 55), citing Taylor (1994).

In light of voices that the pillar of the orthodox reformed community is moving (Rijke, 2019), even denoted as 'secularising' in becoming 'less strict' (Broeksteeg, 2021, p. 126, 127), the personalised religious identity negotiations of the orthodox reformed parents in this study suggest the opposite. In particular, as noted, the data reflect a heterogeneity within the community, for instance, when parents explicitly express tension with less conservative parts of the Bible Belt, and describe themselves as 'the conservative side' (see 'Group-belonging: a minority in an already minority religious group', chapter 7). This supports more nuanced definitions of 'secularisation' tendencies in this community, to better reflect its diversity, for instance by using notions such as a 'purification' of religious identities. This purification could imply a movement away from a focus on the 'strictly Reformed tradition and interpretation of the faith' (De Bruin-Wassinkmaat, 2021, p. 133), towards a deepening of a 'personal relationship with God' (Wisse, 2020, in De Bruin-Wassinkmaat, 2021, p. 133; see also Weber, 1930/2002, in Roeland et al., 2010). Roeland et al. (2010) even designated this movement as a 'critical attitude towards established religious and cultural traditions and institutions' (p. 21).

Such public notions of a possible 'secularisation' or 'emancipation' seem to be different in the field of Dutch-Turkish Muslim communities. For instance, a study by Fleischmann and Phalet (2012) showed a strong religious vitality, as religious socialisation predicted second-generation religiosity in Dutch-Turkish Muslim communities. With regard to a public 'emancipation' amongst ethnic Muslim minorities, De Hoon and Van Tubergen (2014) found a strong transmission of private aspects of religiosity within immigrant families and a weak transmission of public expressions of religion. The authors related this to a possible fear of parents, and possibly of children themselves of 'anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiments' when expressing their religion in public life. The findings in this present study suggest that this transmission of public religious expressions can be heterogeneous amongst Turkish-Dutch Muslim parents. For instance, on the one hand, Maysa addresses the responsibility of her child to publicly show 'what Islam really is'. On the other hand, in several cases both Maysa

and Derya do not explicitly disclose their religious identities in the educational context, keeping these private (chapter 7).

Thus, the perception of 'God as the significant Other' by the parents in this study brings them a 'cognitive burden' (Habermas, 2006, p. 13) compared to secular persons. It requires them to 'translate' (Habermas, 2006, p. 11) their thinking towards non-religious others, who hold a 'modern identity' (Taylor, 1989, 1994). In this respect, these religious parents can encounter a secular normativity (Berglund, 2017; Rissanen, 2020). This calls for theoretically and empirically including this relationship with (imaginative or subjective notions of) God into understandings of religious identities in social-psychological processes (see for instance Black, 1999; Froese and Bader, 2010; Luhrmann, 2012[32]).

In addition, in the field of education and religion, this focus on an individualised relationship with God as a divine Person can offer a new perspective on the current religification of religious identities (Panjwani and Moulin, 2017; Berglund, 2017). Doing so would broaden the sometimes narrow understanding of religious identities as 'primarily a matter of following religious obligations and believing in certain doctrines' (Panjwani and Moulin, 2017, p. 520), by giving insight into the deeper relational nature of religious identities. Instead of reinforcing the 'binary' between religious and secular citizens in the field of education (Panjwani and Moulin, 2017, p. 520), it could be included in a 'religious citizenship education' (Miedema and Bertram-Troost, 2008, p. 131). Overall, this could offer valuable insights into the complex understanding of religious identities, responding on calls for advancing the understanding of religious minorities (Netherlands Institute for Social Research, 2022) and with that, finally, it would clarify the priorities in the decision-making processes of strongly religious individuals.

Implications of the parents' identities

The findings concerning the parents' identities, and the interwovenness of the parenting and religious identities in particular, offer implications for the educational field. First, chapters 1 and 2 outlined the tensions between individual rights and community rights (Maussen, 2014; Maussen and Vermeulen, 2015) in relation to this study. The findings on the interwovenness

[32] In support of the 'justification and verification' of such notions, Bae (2016) notes that Luhrmann especially expands on the 'culture of belief', the participants' 'meaning-making processes', and their 'imagination' (p. 4). Luhrmann, however, additionally notes, with regard to the central process of imagining God, that 'to say this is not to say that God is an illusion'. It rather opens up and explains the process of being aware of the 'supernatural' which 'has no natural body to see, hear or smell' (p. xxii), and thus, such 'theory of mind' concerning the imagination processes, is necessary. In short, conceptualising and studying such a transcendental relationship, does not imply it does exist, nor does it imply it does not exist.

of the parenting and religious identities explicate these tensions. After all, in the experience of the religious parents, their children are part of their own religious identities (chapter 5). As a consequence, the findings in this study indicate how religious parents consolidate and express their identity concern (Schachter and Ventura, 2008) towards their children with a 'basis' at home, from which their children will learn to be 'resistant' to influences in society and education in particular.

Additionally, the identity prominence of the parents' religious identities illuminates the heightened emotional value they attach to their religious identities and express towards their children (chapter 5). This resonates with findings by Haga (2019) who, in the Swedish context, found this among Somali-Muslim parents as the 'first priority' (p. 115) over children's educational goals. This gives insight into what these parents view as 'ultimately the goal of our lives, including their lives', as Maria expressed. Even more so, when taking into account that parents' identity concern towards their children's religious identities is seen as 'part of' their own identities (Schachter and Ventura, 2008, p. 469).

This clarifies why these parents, in the field of education, can probably be somewhat 'immune' to societal and political pressures, as a result of tensions between the individual right of a child and the community rights of the religious parents. In essence, both the interwovenness and the identity prominence of the parents' identities strongly contrast with distinguishing children's from parents' rights, and the educational context from the home context.

Second, the findings indicate that, as a result from this interwovenness of religious and parenting identities, parents seek the ultimate environments for their children that are aligned with their religious identities (chapter 8). This interwovenness of both the religious and parenting identities points to notions of 'safety' in both the home- and school-context. The connection between home and school, or ultimately the triangle between the home, the school, and the religious place of worship (chapter 8), show how this 'sense of safety' for the child can be experienced in a congruency of religious messages in this triangle.

This 'sense of safety' in the experience of the child is reflected in a recent paper by Exalto and Bertram-Troost (2019). Drawing on the ideas of MacMullen (2004, 2007) and Merry (2018), Exalto and Bertram-Troost (2019) theorised that a strong connection between the home and school prevents children from a harmful stigmatisation of their religious backgrounds in a secular educational environment. It fosters these children's 'provisional identities' (p. 7), as foundational for the child's autonomy development. As Exalto and Bertram-Troost (2019) argue, children's cognitive abilities are still in development at primary school age (e.g. reasoning and assessing different views), and offer a legitimate reason for a strong connection between the home and the school context. In other words, by bringing children's education in line with their parents' religious identities, providing a connection between the

home and school, a harmful stigmatisation of children's religious identities can be avoided. This way children experience safety in a school environment that reflects their parents' religious identities.

Third, the empirical data on the interwovenness of the parenting and religious identities offer insight into how parents have an ongoing desire to prioritise messages that arise from their religious identities in the home-school connection (see also Haga, 2019). The parents in this study make this concrete in the dialogues in the home context (chapter 8). Thus, in light of the findings of these family processes in this study, and going beyond the Dutch context, explicitly distinguishing between the educational context and the home can be an oversimplification of a much more multidimensional process. It does not do justice to the extensive interplay of children being influenced by education on the one side and their religious parents on the other side, and could ultimately lead to an unnecessarily experienced lack of safety in classrooms.

Overall, this calls for bringing school environments in line with parents' religious identities. In other words, it supports arguments for (mono-)religious schools. In addition, the negative impact of a lack of 'connection' between the home and school world on pupils, is broadly acknowledged; the results are children and adolescents hiding their identities in classrooms, psychosocial and emotional distress, and a search for identity management strategies (Phelan et al., 1991, 1994; Østberg, 2000; Faircloth, 2012; Awokaya, 2012; Moulin, 2013). Furthermore, children from religious families themselves tend to seek out friendships with 'classmates with similar religious affiliations' in religiously diverse classrooms (Simsek, Tubergen and Fleischmann, 2021, p. 1). These arguments finally call for a discussion of the contested Dutch policy on religion and education: freedom of education.

Implications in light of the contested freedom of education

The friction between the individual right of a child and the community rights of the religious parents is especially central in the current debates surrounding freedom of education in the Netherlands. In particular, in a recent report by the National Council for Education (2021), the authors analyse this tension and note that, on the one hand, freedom of education serves the freedom of parents to raise their children[33], whilst on the other hand, this freedom of education

[33] Citing from the report of the National Council for Education (2021): 'The freedom of education serves the educational freedom and freedom of conscience of parents and carers. The point of departure is that the primacy of raising children rests with the parents or carers. In general, parents have the freedom to choose an educational concept or a school that matches their educational views and preferences. Due to government funding, this option does not depend on the income or capital position of parents' (2021, p. 24).

is limited by children's religious freedom[34]. As the National Council for Education argues, it is this tense field in which conflicts arise[35]. As a way out, the National Council for Education argues for a 'compulsory, common core' (2021, p. 26), consisting of democratic values, to serve as boundaries of freedom of education.

In essence, the findings in this study indicate that it is this 'compulsory' and 'common core' as formulated by the National Council for Education (2021, p. 26) that forms a challenge for religious parents to fulfil a role as 'mediator between the child and society' (Koepke and Denissen, 2012, p. 75). This is especially the case when this core is not as commonly shared in particular minority groups in society, as the word 'common' would suggest (see also Pike, 2008; Borgman, 2021). As the parents' experiences in chapter 6 show, frictions can especially emerge when ideologies and related values are not commonly shared. In other words, when a discrepancy between the micro and macro context emerges. Additionally, the findings in chapter 7 and 8 show how the parents in this study correct for unwanted educational influences at home. This even emerges in situations less directly related to a possible compulsory, common core, for instance, when children attend government funded religious schools founded from within the religious communities. Even then, the parents in this study seek to associate their children's identities with their highly individualised religious identities (chapter 8).

Thus, this particular 'way out' of focusing on a 'compulsory, common core', seems to intervene with processes in parents' religious and parenting identities. Furthermore, it reflects the notion of Rissanen (2020, citing Himanen 2012), that (religious) 'minority rights are exceedingly tied to demands for loyalty to nation states and their core values' (p. 135). This resonates with the previously mentioned 'secular normativity' (Berglund, 2017, p. 524; see also Rissanen, 2020), which appears to be prioritised above collective, religious minority rights. Similarly, Pels notes that conflicting values are not to be approached by a pressure on uniformity, a focus on 'shared values' and a 'shared identity' (Redactie KIS, 2017). In this field, the findings in this study illuminate the 'individual and community responses' (Oomen, 2011, p. 181) of two religious minority groups towards ideological discrepancies in the current plural Dutch society.

[34] Citing from the report of the National Council for Education (2021): 'In particular, the rights and freedoms of the child set limits on the school actions and the freedom of parents. Think of the child's religious freedom and the freedom of a child to form an own opinion' (2021, p. 25).

[35] Citing from the report of the National Council for Education (2021): 'Difficult issues arise when protecting the rights and freedoms of one conflict with those of another. In many situations where freedom of education is under discussion, exactly that is the case' (2021, p. 25).

Here, still frictions are expected to resurge in situations of societal unrest. The findings in this study illustrate how the 'primacy', resting with the parents (National Council for Education, 2021, p. 24) to raise their children in line with their (religious) convictions, manifests itself in a dynamic and complex way. It is shown to be deeply ingrained in social interactions on educational issues in the family context, and in the parent-child relationship in particular. This illuminates the comprehensive role of the home context in the societal realm of education, which thus far seems largely underestimated in broader societal debates, as well as in academic literature (cf. Van Schoonhoven, 2021; Kolb, 2021). This study therefore accompanies recent calls for the inclusion of voices of religious parents, as democratic citizens, in the societal and academic field of religious education, and the field of freedom of education in the Netherlands in particular.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. Overall, it is important to emphasise that the findings in this study reflect the religious identity negotiations of participants who are active attendants of specific religious places of worship. As a selection mechanism, only parents who regularly attend the selected religious places of worship are included. This is important to note as, for instance, a comparable study by Kolb (2021) included any parent who identified as Muslim, regardless mosque attendance. Amongst these parents, Kolb found strongly differing considerations about their children's religious formation in education. The parents' considerations ranged from 'Preferences for non-confessional and interreligious formation' to 'Supreme status of the religious'. My study particularly reflects this latter finding. However, in light of Kolb's (2021) study, it would thus be possible to encounter a more diverse range of findings throughout the larger religious populations than found amongst the selected parents in my study.

Although the low number of participants is an integral part of the taken methodological approach in this study, it also limits the generalisability of the findings. The low number especially enables a deepening of the understanding of religious identity negotiation processes of the approached religious parents in educational contexts, but this study's conclusions cannot be generalised to specific religious groups in Dutch society. Instead, these only indicate how parents in these groups may experience or describe processes of religious identity negotiation.

The adoption of the snowball sampling technique to recruit participants makes it, for reasons of anonymity, impossible to provide detailed information on the participants' individuals' backgrounds and personal contexts. This information could thus not be shared and used in the analysis. This limitation is countered by providing informative details anonymously, without linking these to the fictional names. Doing so provides insight into the

backgrounds of the participants as a group as well as insights into relevant aspects in the participants' backgrounds.

In addition, due to this sampling technique, participants put acquaintances forward as new participants. As a result, some participants are related to each other which might have limited the diversity of participants in their respective groups. For instance, some are members of a similar family or members of a similar religious place of worship. However, in the interviews parents also reveal to be highly self-conscious. Thus, this relatedness among participants can be expected to be relatively less strong in their processes of identity negotiation. Nevertheless, the composition of the group of participants calls for future research into a larger and more diverse group of individuals of the selected religious groups.

Finally, parents are asked to retrospectively reflect on their experiences and personal negotiations in educational settings, due to which the interview data largely relies on the remembering of the participants. Although this concerns a limitation of this study, in the interviews parents share their religious identity negotiations directly, instead of retrospectively, when they discuss their thinking with the researcher. This offers a more direct insight into their identity negotiations.

Strengths

This study also contains some strengths. First, the interviews being conducted with an individual parent or a couple of parents proved to provide parents with a safe space to express personal negotiations, surrounding their private religious lives, as well as their private family lives. The change from group interviews to individual interviews cultivated this sense of safety. Although the low number of participants does not allow for a comparison of findings between the two religious groups, the combination of both groups and bringing its findings together especially provides this study with possibilities to acquire insight into shared patterns.

The going back and forth between data collection and analysis helps to reach depth in the data analysis, and allows for the continuous checking of findings against previous findings. Additionally, the abductive analysis of the interviews allows for a combination of inductive and deductive analysis, due to which additional theories could serve as explanatory hypotheses in revisiting the data, to 'get closer to reality' and to 'identify causal mechanisms' (Fletcher, 2017, p. 182). This encouraged the theoretical understanding of the data. In light of this, identity theory and related theories serve the understanding of the interplay between parents' religious identities and broader societies.

Future research

The explorative character of this study calls for an extension to larger groups of participants and a wider selection of religious groups. In light of ongoing international debates on the role

of education in society, in particular surrounding citizenship education, more (international) research into religious parents' perspectives and identity negotiations is needed.

In such future research, a remaining focus on the religious identity negotiations of parents would be helpful, especially with regard to such studies in educational contexts. In this study, this theoretical focus provides in-depth insight into processes in which the interaction between religious identities and society are explored. As a quantitative approach would limit the in-depth study and understanding of the dynamics of religious identities and identity negotiation processes, especially qualitative research amongst different religious groups, could broaden the knowledge on the religious identity negotiations of religious parents in western secular societies. In such research, the following four aspects could be highlighted.

First, the parents in this research repeatedly express to turn to 'unseen dynamics' (chapter 7). In seeking to equip teachers to cope with such unseen dynamics, more research is needed to study how the teacher and other educational personnel can be equipped to foster a more open environment. This need even arises from teachers themselves, as Broer et al. (2021) found that teachers in orthodox reformed schools express a need to receive 'more information from the home context'. Thus, future studies could include in-depth research into teachers' roles in relation to parents' identity processes. More specifically, such studies could combine a focus on the formation of the antecedents of religious parents' identity (non)disclosure (Ragins, 2008) and particular interactional aspects in teachers' roles, for instance by using aspects of the perceptual control model (Stets and Serpe, 2013). In this regard, the impact of respective ideas regarding the role of school policies (chapter 6, 7), amongst both teachers (see Bertram-Troost et al., 2018) and parents, should not be neglected.

Second, in the descriptions of their experiences (chapter 5), the parents mention broader societal aspects, for instance how their religion or the religious schools are perceived and represented by the media. The parents express how this impacted their processes of religious identity negotiation in educational contexts. In light of this, future research could be conducted taking a wider approach, for instance with a newspaper analysis that considers the selected religious groups in relation to educational aspects. Several comparable studies have been conducted. For example, recently, Amer (2020) conducted a study on the representation of white British Muslim citizens in the media in the British context, using related theoretical concepts of identity theory. Sözeri, Kosar-Altinyelken and Volman (2019) conducted a study on the portrayal of mosque education in the Dutch press, and Van Drunen (2014) conducted a study on the portrayal of 'Muslims' in the Dutch press. Similar broadened approaches could be taken by such media analyses, and then focus on religious groups in relation to educational aspects.

Third, this study focuses on the religious identities of parents. However, multiple identities, such as political identities and working class identities, could be related to issues of identity verification in education. To explore these different sources of influence on frictions in education, future research could specifically focus on these multiple identities of parents and the roles they play in educational contexts. In addition, in light of the 'nexus' and the broadened approach, the influence of religious places of worship on parents' perceptions of educational issues could be researched more in-depth (see, for instance, writing on the influence of the Diyanet mosques on family and educational issues, Ozzano and Maritato, 2018).

Fourth, and finally, by focusing on the particular 'unseen dynamics' that emerge in family processes in the home, ethnographic research could serve to deepen findings on particular aspects in these 'unseen dynamics'. Here, future studies could delve into the particular psychological-sociological processes of religious parents in their countering of educational influences, by consolidating their religious identity concerns towards their children's religious identities in the so-called 'basis' at home. The following and final section will provide a reflection on this study.

Epilogue | Reflections

Learning from religious parents, becoming a political activist?

As Rubin and Rubin (2012) noted, 'responsive interviewing requires the interviewer to respect the views of others' and, with that, might influence how the interviewer views the 'political fray' (p. 235). In this research, the interviews with the religious parents influenced my thinking. I have learned from them. The personal conversations with these parents gave me an insight into their family lives, their religious lives and, sometimes, in their very personal considerations on their parenting and religious views and practices. This not only moved my thinking rationally, it also touched me emotionally. As the parents were talking about their concerns in the education of their children, I sometimes felt their deep worries about their children's futures. I felt their frustrations, and their fear for unwanted influences.

As a result, by researching such a politically sensitive theme as the religious identity processes of parents in the contexts of education, it has been highly possible for me to become involved as a 'political activist' (see also Rubin and Rubin, 2012, p. 235). Although I have sought to remain distanced throughout the whole research process, the emotional involvement I described above led me to intertwine both my research work and my personal convictions. In other words, the research process deeply impacted my personal thinking and convictions.

The question then emerges, in what way has my personal thinking been affected? It is interesting to note in this regard that I (still) do not view myself as a 'political activist' for or against freedom of education. The parents' worries about non-religious or other-religious influences in education showed me the complexity and, eventually, the impossibility of neutrality in (worldview) education (see also Sandsmark, 2000; Pike, 2008; Van der Kooij, De Ruyter and Miedema, 2015). It is precisely the aim of this research — a deeper understanding of the religious identity processes of religious parents in the context of education — which leaves more complexities. In this respect, the most central thing I personally learned has been both the complexity of the deep interwovenness of the parenting and religious identities, residing in their identity concern towards their children, and the impact of this on issues surrounding the place of religion in education.

As described in the conclusion to this study, an explicit distinction between the educational context and the home can be an oversimplification of a much more multidimensional process. It detracts from the extensive interplay of children who are influenced by education on the one hand, and their parents on the other hand, particularly as the parents' identity concern towards children's identity development can be viewed as 'part of' parents' religious identities. For religious parents, this is connected in a complex manner. From the perspective of a possible 'political activist', it is this particular complexity that I have

become aware of as a result of this study. In my view, both academically and in societal and political debates, this interwovenness and its extensive impact is as yet underestimated. This, I believe, continues to fuel debates in the realm of education. Although I could have realised this before I started this study, I was not aware of the deep meaning and impact of this complexity. This may possibly be due to the fact that I tend to view persons as individuals, rather than as interwoven within the small family context.

This relates to my own stance as a 'religious researcher'. Additionally, having grown up in the Bible Belt, I can also be viewed as an insider to the parents selected from the Bible Belt and an outsider to the Muslim parents. This brings me to a reflection on my own religious identity, and the role this has played in this research study.

A reflection on being a religious researcher

I realise the importance of reflecting on my own religious identity in this study, as it is especially necessary to give insight into how I personally, in terms of my own religious identity, relate to the religious parents in my study, to 'religious identity' as a concept and to religion in general terms. However, for me, being religious is deeply personal and, although I have thought about it throughout the study, I strongly postponed writing this part of the reflection for this final thesis.

In the end, I find being Christian a miracle. Although I have grown up as a Christian, I view being a Christian as something I would not naturally be myself. I often find it hard to commit to any religious identity, whether seen as cultural, social, or existential. This might be the reason why I find writing about this so difficult. In essence, I see my 'authentic self' (Taylor, 1989, 1994) reflected in the words of C.S. Lewis: 'And this is the marvel of marvels. That He [God] calls me beloved'. The background of this 'marvel of marvels', is possibly reflected in a particular phrase from the Bible, Ephesians 2 verse 4-5 NIV. 'But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved'. These sentences remain the 'marvel of marvels' to me: it moves beyond any of my own considerations. It also reflects my difficulty in believing in any religion, but paradoxically, it reflects I cannot live with a religion in which there is no making 'alive with Christ'.

In that sense, my religious identity especially opposes the beliefs of the Muslim parents I interviewed. A central belief in Islam is the belief in Jesus Christ as a prophet, rather than the son of God. However, I did not disclose my religious identity in detail towards the participants. Instead, I expressed my religiousness towards both Christian and Muslim parents as something 'we had in common', saying I was also religious. With that, I sought to 'comfort' my participants by expressing my understanding towards them, and to overcome the gap of being an 'outsider' (Mullings, 1999) to the Muslim parents. Only when parents explicitly asked for my

opinion, I explained my religious identity further (see chapter 4, 'Conduction of the interviews: handling sensitive topics'). Nevertheless, in reading about and through interactions with both the Muslim and Christian parents, my own religious background and religious identity were involved. In this regard, the process of this research has impacted my personal thinking, as I reflected upon in the previous paragraph.

Reflection on the selection of theories and contrasting findings

My historical and social positions as a researcher have played an important role in the process of selection of theories (Brubakur, 1993, in Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). It is worth giving insight into this selection process of searching for a useful analytical perspective (Fletcher, 2017), to help explain the parents' situations. A further reflection on methodological aspects, such as reflections on pursuing the validity and reliability of the data and on my actions as interviewer, can be found in chapter 4. In the following section, I will discuss how I came to choose to involve identity theory in this study.

Firstly, I grew up in a religious family and a slightly more strict religious community. As a child I attended orthodox reformed primary and secondary schools. Throughout my life, I have been involved in activities related to the Christian religion, such as student associations, a youth political think tank, and youth weekends. Throughout all of this, I learned how Christians in the Netherlands (and in some instances abroad) view their position in society. All these thoughts and conversations made the connection between religious identity, interaction, and society visible to me.

Additionally, my background is in Psychology. So I have a tendency to approach human behaviour by using psychological approaches and theories. When reading about theories on possible concepts to use in this research, I was surprised that identity theory brought together relevant factors surrounding identities. In particular, I found that the theory's centralisation of interaction between persons associated with the person's 'sense of self', and applied to the religious dimension of that person's life, was very helpful in approaching the religious aspects of parents in educational contexts. This made me choose this theory. Other conceptualisations of religiosity could have been used, but in them I missed the strength of aspects concerning interactions between persons and broader society, combined and associated with the very 'sense of self', and the religiosity of the person involved.

Nevertheless, throughout the study, and in line with the abductive approach in this study, I sought additional theories to offer explanations for the emerging findings. In this search, my background in Psychology led me to delve into psychological theories, but this study also brought me into contact with philosophical texts and the wider educational field. The findings in this study sometimes surprisingly contrasted with my initial expectations, in

some instances impacting the selection of theories. I will reflect on this in the following and final section.

Particularly during the final stages of the data analysis, several findings differed from my own initial expectations. I will name three examples. Firstly, based on theory on the social identity of a religious identity (Ysseldyk et al., 2010), I expected to find group identity to be the driving force behind the parents' stances in society. However, surprisingly, I recurringly found the individual religiosity (Ter Avest, 2021) and 'person identity' rather than 'group identity' to be the driving force behind the parents' stances. Secondly, I only expected parents to be concerned with issues in broader, largely secular society. Surprisingly, the Christian parents in particular were also deeply personally concerned with religious issues within the context of the mono-religious school in their religious communities. And thirdly, I expected the parents to seek recognition of their religious identities in interactions within the educational contexts (resonating with findings by Rissanen, 2020). Surprisingly, their negotiations often moved beyond this. Throughout the interview data, their primary aim was often to search for 'God as the significant Other'. In addition, I found that parents often did not disclose their identities at all but, instead, sought to correct for educational influences on their children in the home context by engaging with their children about sensitive topics. This, for instance, led me to include theories on reciprocal identity processes. Thus, the selection of theories has been influenced both by initial factors as well as by surprising and unexpected findings during the ongoing research process.

This is where this study ends for now. Rather than offering solutions, this study possibly complicates current views regarding political considerations of religious parents in secular countries. The findings possibly even conflict with simplistic approaches, which would possibly only further isolate religious parents in the educational and public domain. As such, this study joins earlier calls for studying religious parents in contexts of education, foremost to diminish the increasing misunderstanding of religious minorities in the public realm, as recently observed by The Netherlands Institute for Social Research (2022). To that, in the end, I hope this study will contribute, as a small building block, fostering the understanding of religious parents in the context of their children's education in plural western societies.

Appendix I | Ethics approval

Below the approval of the ethics application (number: ETH1920-0267) by the University Ethics Committee of the Canterbury Christ Church University.

Canterbury Christ Church University

Ms Rosanne Aantjes

PG Programmes

Faculty of Education

31st July 2020

Dear Rosanne

Confirmation of ethics approval: Doctoral Research Project

Your ethics application complies fully with the requirements for ethical and governance review, as set out in this University's Research Ethics and Governance Procedures, and has been approved.

You are reminded that it is your responsibility to follow, as appropriate, the policies and procedures set out in the Research Governance Framework and any relevant academic or professional guidelines.

Any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over its course will require an amendment application, and may require a new application for ethics approval.

It is a condition of approval that you **must** inform ethics@canterbury.ac.uk once your research has completed.

Wishing you every success with your research.

On behalf of

Faculty of Education Ethics Panel

education.research@canterbury.ac.uk

Appendix II | Information letter – translated English version

Canterbury Christ Church University
North Holmes Rd
Canterbury CT1 1QU
United Kingdom
www.canterbury.ac.uk

Dear parent,

What does your Muslim/Christian faith mean to you? What role does your faith/religion play in your child's education? Questions you might sometimes think about.

I would love to talk with you about these questions in more detail. Therefore, I warmly invite you to take part in a conversation, where we can talk further about these issues.

In these conversations I would like to speak with you about your Muslim/Christian religion and its role in your life, with your children and in the education of your children. This research is not related to government instances: I conduct this research as a postgraduate student.

We can plan this moment at a time that is convenient for you (and your partner). If, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conversation should take place online, I will contact you about this in more detail.

These conversations are part of my PhD research into the religion of parents and the role of their religion in the education of their children. I conduct this research among Christian and Muslim parents in the Netherlands. The content of the conversation will be used **anonymously** for (publications of) scientific research. This means that your contribution to this conversation remains anonymous.

During the conversations you can withdraw at any time and stop your participation. You do not need to give a reason for this.

Do you have any questions after reading this letter? Do not hesitate to get in contact (mail: r.aantjes370@canterbury.ac.uk, or by phone: 0617750786.

I look forward to meeting you!
Kind regards
Rosanne Aantjes

Appendix III | Informed consent – translated English version

Canterbury Christ Church University
North Holmes Rd
Canterbury CT1 1QU
United Kingdom
www.canterbury.ac.uk

RESPONDENT CONSENT FORM

Participation and use of information
Hereby, I give consent:

- to participate in this research project, which means taking part in an individual interview;
- for the recording (audio) of the interview, which will be available only to the research team and removed after the finalisation of this research;
- for the processing of all information into written, anonymised text, available for (future) research;
- for the use of my anonymised statements as quotations in publications, such as a dissertation, (scientific) articles, reports, books and more.

I understand that my participation in this study is anonymised.

I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time, without the need to give any reasons for this.

Name respondent: _____

Email respondent: _____

Signature respondent: **Date:**

_____ _____

Appendix IV | Interview guideline – translated English version

The ‘main questions’ (Rubin and Rubin, 2012; Moulin, 2013) are given per number (see also under ‘Individual interviews’, chapter 4). The sub-questions are examples which served the continuation of the interviews more flexibly.

1. What does your religion/faith mean to you?

- Does a difference arise between: religious identity versus parent identity – is one of the two more important?
- How do you maintain your religious identity? How do you ensure that you and your children remain a good Muslim/Christian?

2. How do you feel as a Muslim/Christian parent at your child's school?

- Can you tell me about your choice for your child’s school?

3. Do you feel or think that people (e.g, teaching staff, other parents) are interested in or have respect for your faith?

4. Do you experience benefits or problems because of your religion in the school?

5. In which situations (in the education of your child) is your faith important?

- How do people around you respond to you/your religion in these situations?
- What do you think of their reaction to your religion/faith?
- How do you react, or would you like to react, in these situations?
- How you want to raise your child in an Muslim/Christian way and life, in current society? What role does freedom of education play in your religious identity?

6. Given that I would like to know what it's like for an Muslim/Christian parent with a child in education – is there anything else you'd like to share?

Appendix V | Sensitizing concepts in interview guideline

Based on the theoretical framework and the research questions, sensitizing concepts were formulated before the conduction of the interviews. Below, these initial sensitizing concepts are outlined per research question.

Research question 1. How are the religious identity in the identity standard ('set of meanings') described and experienced by the parents?
Stets and Serpe (2013) argue that it is foremost important to ask the person about the own identity, rather than imposing a pre-defined identity. Therefore the 'meanings' of the religious identity of the parents are explored at the start of the interviews.

- How important is the religious identity: across situations?
- How do parents perceive their religious identity in relation to other identities? (That is: what is the position of the religious identity in the identity hierarchy? What role does identity salience/ identity prominence play in relation to their religious identity? The more prominent/salient, the more self-verification of the identity should be expected)
- What role does type of religious identity play? (is the religious identity perceived as group identity, role identity or as person identity? Group identities are more location specific, person identities are relevant across situations.)

Research question 2. What are the personal experiences of religious parents (Christian, Muslim) in educational situations in which parents perceive a non-correspondence between their religious identity standard ('set of meanings') and the perceptual output in the educational environment (lack of self-verification)?

- How are religious identity discrepancies represented to the parents (in relation to their identity standard, perceptual output, comparator)?

Research question 3. How do parents negotiate their religious identities in situations as explored under research question 1, and what is the influence on the social interaction in the educational environment?
Aspects of influence on identity negotiation:

- What type of (negative) feelings (emotion) do the parents experience due to those discrepancies (in interactions)?
- What is the influence of those feelings on their behavioural output?
- What role does religious identity content play?

- What is the influence of their behavioural output on the perceptual input, and on the situation? (identity assimilation, identity accommodation)
- Do parents disclose their identity at all? If not, in what extent do parents experience emotional stress / emotional management?
- What role does compartmentalizing identities play?

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