

University of Dublin
Trinity College

“I BELIEVE IN A GOD THAT I BELIEVE IN”
The Religious Identity of Primary School Student Teachers

A thesis written in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor in Philosophy (Ph.D.)

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise for a degree at this or any other university and it is entirely my own work.

I agree to deposit this thesis in the University's open access institutional repository or allow the library to do so on my behalf, subject to Irish Copyright Legislation and Trinity College Library conditions of use and acknowledgement.

John-Paul Sheridan

Date

Acknowledgements

Without the kindness, friendship and dedication of an army of people this thesis would never have come about or have been completed.

I begin with my supervisor, Dr. Aidan Seery, whose intelligence, kind-heartedness and patience has been a source of encouragement and inspiration over the five years of meetings and conversations. Other members of the Education faculty at Trinity College have also been very kind and encouraging, for which I am most grateful – Andrew Loxley, Conor McGuckin, Elizabeth Oldham, Carmel O’Sullivan, and Anne Fitzgibbon.

Four friends have been helpful with their advice and counsel as the years have gone by and their direction has been invaluable, Drs. PJ Cullen, Joan Hanafin, Damien McLoughlin, & Kevin Whelan.

I want to thank those who assisted with the test interviews – Olive McGuinness, Eliza Grant and some members of staff at Archbishop Ryan Senior National School in Balgaddy, Lucan and the St. John of God Primary School in the Faythe, Wexford.

Three Colleges of Education were helpful in the task of data collection, and my thanks go to the members of staff who assisted me. I wish to thank the thirty students who were willing to be interviewed and to tell their story. Their names are known to me and their words will keep me busy for many years to come.

The job of typing interviews was undertaken by six generous and patient souls: Carole Earl, Suzanne Hilliard, Fiona Murphy, Karen O’Connor, Suzanne O’Leary, and Linda O’Rourke. Their hard work advanced the work by at least six months. Patience was also shown by proof readers, Regina Halpin, Sr. Marie Jones, Annette McCarthy, Frs. Frank Murphy and John Carroll. Their work was above and beyond the call of duty.

I spent the summer of 2011 at the University of Notre Dame as a visiting scholar at the Institute for Educational Initiatives. My thanks to Frs. Tim Scully, Sean McGraw, Ron Nuzzi, and Jim King who helped make this possible. The staff of the Institute and the Alliance for Catholic Education was always kind and generous with their time and assistance. The Holy Cross community at Corby Hall formed a home away from home and were always kind and welcoming, in particular, Frs. Nate Wills, Dan Parrish, and Bill Dailey.

I want to express my thanks to Bishop Denis Brennan for his support and to the previous bishops/administrators of the diocese, +Brendan Comiskey and +Eamonn Walsh who have been supportive and generous fathers.

To friends, colleagues, and staff in others groups and organisations who have been kind and helpful – O’Connell House-University of Notre Dame, Dublin; the Priests of the Diocese of Ferns; Diocesan Catechetical Team; the Sisters of St. John of God, Ballyvaloo;

the Teachers, Staff of Blackwater National Schools and the other Primary Schools of the Diocese of Ferns; the ACE Ireland Community.

To those who have been generous in their advice and guidance regarding aspects of the research: Dr. Finola Cunnane (Congregation of the Sisters of St. Louis); Msgr. Liam Bergin (Pontifical Irish College, Rome); Rev. Richard Byrne o.carm (Terenure College, Dublin); Fr. Michael Drumm (Catholic Schools Partnership); Rev. Dr. Janice Farnham (Boston College); Canon John McCullagh (Church of Ireland); Sr. Ella McGuinness (Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy); Msgr. Dan O'Connor (Archdiocese of Dublin); Dr. Tom O'Donoghue (University of Perth, Western Australia); Mr Eoin O'Mahony (Council for Research and Development of the Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference); Mr Niall Wall (Educate Together); Dr. Neil Walshe (University of San Francisco).

To my friends who have been patient over the years and have been willing to listen to my insights, my frustrations, my despair and my victories – David Agler; Paula Carolan; Roisin Dempsey; Mary English; Kiernan Gildea; Theresa Gleeson; Peg Hanafin; Ruth & Ollie Keenan; Maeve Mahon; Alan & Maura O'Connor; John O'Malley & Elaine Mahon; Roberto & Celine Pons; Ned & Rosalie Prendergast; Fiona Reed; Rosaleen Shiel.

My brother priests in the diocese of Ferns, in the Church of Ireland, and those further afield in particular, Brian Broaders, Billy Flynn and Brian Manning.

To the people of the Parish of Blackwater, my sincere thanks for their patience, kindness, friendship, support and tolerance, and their parish priest and my colleague, Fr. Hugh O'Byrne who was always willing to facilitate my absences, especially towards the end..

Finally, to my family, Liz and Stephen Byrne; Bill & Noreen McCarthy; Sean McCarthy; Conor Sheridan; Frank and Cora Sheridan; Greg & Beth Sheridan; Tony Sheridan; John Weber; Cathy & Andy Whitefield.

Summary

This research is a case study which sought to explore and map the religious identity of a group of thirty primary school student teachers in their third and fourth year of teacher education. The questions arose because of my personal experience of primary school teachers over the last twenty years in schools under religious patronage, where there is a requirement to teach religious education.

The study was framed in the social, political and economic landscape of Ireland from 1990 – 2010, which broadly encompasses the life-span of these students. The country witnessed great socio-economic change: the rise of a vibrant economy and industrial stability; the arrival of immigrants from all over the world; the building boom and the rise of a consumerism not seen in Ireland before. There was a changing political landscape: the election of two female Presidents of Ireland; political stability; and the success of the Northern Ireland Agreement.

As well as this secular change, it was a period of religious change, when religious affiliation and attendance at religious services continued to decline. It was also a period which saw the failures of the Catholic Church uncovered and laid out in public. Religious Congregations and Dioceses were investigated by Government Inquiries as the sexual, physical and psychological abuse of children was exposed.

The aim of the literature review is to survey identity theory in a number of different ways. It is divided into three sections to investigate identity theory, teacher identity and religious identity. The identity theory is also divided into three sections to review social identity, personal identity and self-concept. The section on teacher identity is concerned with emerging or beginning teacher identity and how teachers begin to negotiate their role as teachers and the concept of professionalism. In both general identity and teacher identity a number of concepts emerge – identity is seen both as an internal and an external entity: how a person reconciles internally one's identity and how a person's identity comes across

to the people one encounters. In a similar manner, identity is both personal and social – as much about a person on their own, as it is about them as part of a group. Another common concept is narrative – identity is interpreted through the story of a teacher's life: their experiences and how they learn from them; their mistakes and how they correct them; their aspirations and how they attain them.

The religious identity section is divided into two parts – public religion and religious identity. The public religion looks at secularization theory and the situation of religion in Ireland as might be experienced by student teachers. The section on religious identity looks at how this identity is manifest in the individual, in particular with the concept of spiritual versus religious. This separation of one from the other is increasingly prevalent, which makes for the separation of individual spiritual life from mainstream religious denomination.

A final component of the identity section is the chapter on the writings of Karl Rahner. As the primary function of the study is to investigate and map the religious identity of primary school student teachers, Rahner's writings are used to provide a more comprehensive identity – a thick description. Three elements are explored – his Theological Anthropology; his Epistemology; and his Pastoral Theology. Rahner's writing echoes a great deal of what is said here about identity theory, teacher identity theory and obviously religious identity theory, but it gives it a final dimension – the orientation towards God. This orientation is not just in terms of who we are as people, but also how we understand and make meaning of that identity.

The literature review and chapter on Rahner are then framed theoretically so as to give a comprehensive basis for creating the interrogative stage and writing the research questions. There are three questions: What characterises the religious identity of a Primary School Student Teacher? How does a Primary School Teacher understand their Religious Identity? How does their religious identity influence their teaching religion in Primary

Schools? The first two questions are answered by the thick description – the rich, comprehensive description of the religious identity of the student teachers and how they understand that identity. The third question will be answered by exploring the student teachers' initial experience of teaching and teaching religion.

The general research paradigm is social constructivism/interpretivism; a paradigm which is concerned with the way that individuals interpret their world. Part of this interpretation will include the use of narrative and phenomenology as methods. The principal at the heart of the work is the 'double hermeneutic' – my interpretation of their interpretation.

This is a case study of thirty students, bounded geographically, chronologically, and demographically. The case study offers both a unity of purpose, a sufficient depth of study, and an expansive level of description to meet the purposes of the research.

All five colleges of Education in the Republic of Ireland were approached; one declined to be involved, one was uncooperative and the remaining three allowed me to interview some of their third-year students. I met with the students in each college as a group and invited them to participate. I also spoke to a number of fourth-year students and eight of these were willing to be interviewed. A semi-structured interview method was used with the thirty students with all considerations of ethics, confidentiality and anonymity duly noted and attended to. The interviews were transcribed by a team of typists.

The data generation and collation was undertaken manually. Codes were applied to the interview transcripts and these were gathered in to sets of codes, themes and concepts. The explanation and exposition of the themes and concepts was then completed. This exploration of the data is divided into five sections, along the same lines as the literature review and the research questions: identity theory; teacher identity; religious identity; understanding religious identity; and teaching and religion.

The eighth chapter returns to the three research questions. The first two research questions regarding religious identity and the student's understanding of it encompass the 'thick

description' outlined in chapter seven. This description of the three modes of identity is outlined in the literature review and used at the interrogative stage is enriched by Rahner's anthropology and it provides the basis for four typologies of religious identity which are employed to create an image of the student teachers who were interviewed. The third research question lays out the findings concerning religious identity and teaching religion and takes into consideration the current debate concerning school patronage and management and the religious education background of the student teachers.

The final chapter is a summative chapter and as well as outlining some of the limitation of the study, provides the research findings in a summative form along with major recommendations and areas of further research.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my family, in particular the next generation
(Eve, Cathal, Alex, Bella, Aimee, Daisy, Evan)

The Buried Life

But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life;
A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true, original course;
A longing to inquire
Into the mystery of this heart which beats
So wild, so deep in us--to know
Whence our lives come and where they go.

Matthew Arnold

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List of Abbreviations

CII	Contemporary Irish Identities – research from the Identity, Diversity and Citizenship Programme at the Geary Institute of University College Dublin
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (A Department of Education and Skills initiative for monitoring and assisting schools in disadvantaged areas)
EVS	European Values Study
INTO	Irish National Teachers' Organisation
ISPCA	Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
RE	Religious Education

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Glossary of Terms

Meitheal – Used by a number of students in interviews, this word might be translated as ‘the community working together’. Its origin is rural, when everyone in the local community would assist in saving a harvest, or some other activity which required a whole community’s participation. In some Irish post-primary schools it is the name given to a peer-mentoring and bullying prevention programme which is run to assist the socialisation of first year students into post-primary school life. The word is very much an action word – it is not translated as ‘community’, but as ‘community working together’.

Idir Inn – One student used this phrase to describe their understanding of God. It might be translated as ‘in between’ or ‘among us’.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Background

One of my first and enduring experiences as a priest has been an association with primary schools and the men and women who teach there. This experience came firstly as a curate in a parish, which carried with it a responsibility for both the management and chaplaincy of a number of schools. Later on, in 1995, I was appointed Diocesan Advisor for Primary School Catechetics for the Diocese of Ferns, which meant that I was responsible for supporting and resourcing the ninety-eight primary schools in my diocese. It also required that I visit the schools on a regular basis, a duty that I have carried out ever since. These visits to schools have always been remarkable; not always easy, but always significant. I have been inspired and frustrated, delighted and horrified by the religious education that is taught in the primary schools in the diocese. Over the years I have noticed changes and shifts in these schools. The prevalent Catholic culture of the Irish primary school is beginning to fragment in certain areas. It is a time of monumental change in schools and these changes have a profound effect on the entire school community. These changes also have an effect on the teaching of religious education in the schools.

Another significant aspect of the background to this research has been my part-time lecturing at Froebel College of Education over the last five years. I have encountered many students and have been present at many discussions regarding the place and teaching of religious education in Irish primary schools. Like the visits to the schools these discussions have had a mixed reaction. They have also set me on the path of this research.

Among any group of Irish people religious identity and the acknowledgement of the practice of a particular faith can no longer be taken for granted. This is no different for primary school student teachers. I think it is an appropriate time to study religious

identity. I think it is a suitable time to study the challenge of religious identity, both as a personal matter and as a part of one's particular profession.

In the current situation in Irish primary schools, which for the most part are denominational in ethos and management, a teacher is required to teach religious education as part of the school curriculum. The programme of religious education is devised and produced by the various Churches and is not examined or inspected by the Department of Education and Skills.

What of the teacher? What is the requirement for teaching religion? What is the least that might be expected of the teacher in the class? These were the sort of questions that I was beginning to ask as my mind was drawn to do some research in this area; the research contained in this thesis.

The aim of the research is in three parts: to construct a thick description of the religious identity of primary school student teachers; to explore the student teacher's understanding of religion and religious identity; to investigate the connection between an understanding of a religious identity and the teaching of religious education. These three parts form the three research questions:

- What characterises the religious identity of a Primary School Student Teacher?
- How does a Primary School Teacher understand their Religious Identity?
- How does their religious identity influence their teaching religion in Primary Schools?

I decided to speak to primary school student teachers and to ask them about their religious identity, while at the same time discussing general identity theory and theories regarding teacher identity, in particular in the field of beginning and emerging teachers. Then I decided that I would ask them about their experience of teaching so far and their experience of teaching religion. The purpose was to form a thick description of the

religious identity of these students and then see what links, if any, exists between this religious identity and their teaching of religious education.

1.2 Chapter Summary

1.2.1 Chapter 2 – The Context Chapter

The purpose of the second chapter is threefold – to place the research in an historical and social context; to explain the historical background to the patronage and governance of Irish primary schools; to give an overview of the nature of religious education in Irish primary school under the patronage of the Church of Ireland and the Catholic Church. The historical and social context is limited to the twenty year period from 1990-2010. The reason for this is to limit the timescale to the period when most of the students interviewed were growing up. This meant that the background to the research is the backdrop to their lives and the history through which they lived. This background narrative is divided into three sections: outlining the demise of institutions, in particular the role and presence of the Catholic Church in Ireland; the political sphere and the economic changes, the rise and demise of the Celtic Tiger; the social and cultural change that Ireland has experienced from a mono-cultural theocracy to a modern multicultural European society.

1.2.2 Chapter 3 – The Literature Review

The third chapter is the literature review and is divided into three parts – identity theory, teacher identity and religious identity. It is a broad outline of a number of different theories and ideas that will contribute to an understanding of identity as found in the lives of primary school student teachers.

The chapter begins with reviewing literature review on identity theory. The exploration is done from a sociocultural perspective which emphasises the self in practice, which

seems a logical point of view to adopt considering that it is the lives and practice of teachers which will be researched. Three concepts are explored in particular: personal identity; social identity; and self-concept. In the context of personal identity I have included the writings of Charles Taylor and Paul Ricoeur. Taylor's writing on identity in this particular age has valuable insights which will enhance the research. Ricoeur's writing has a great deal to offer when talking about narrative identity. The locus of both teacher identity and religious identity is the community, and so Social Identity is also considered. We belong to a multiplicity of groups and communities, with varying degrees of commitment and interest. To what degree the membership of a religious community might be important to a student teacher is relevant here. Finally, I review literature on Self-Concept and what is of particular interest is its reflective and reflexive dynamic.

Following on from this I review teacher identity literature, while acknowledging that some of the theory that has already been reviewed has a bearing on teacher identity. Significant here is the terminology: 'role', 'function', 'professionalism'. Narratives and teacher biography are also mentioned and discussed and there is a consideration of some of the literature concerning emerging teacher identity.

The final section of the literature review is religious identity. This is divided into two parts: public religion and religious identity. The reason for this is to explore literature around what might be described as the external and the internal aspects of identity. It is also valuable to differentiate between big themes such as Secularization and the Church in Ireland and the more private matter of internal and personal beliefs and practices. In the part on personal religious identity I explore some of the literature regarding spirituality versus religion: a common and a current issue. I spend some time discussing religious identity literature, in particular the concepts of religious

congruence and incongruence.

1.2.3 Chapter 4 – Karl Rahner

The fourth chapter is an exploration of the philosophical/theological anthropology of Karl Rahner. The reason for choosing Rahner is that I think his writings will bring a depth of scope and philosophical richness to the religious identity that I am attempting to examine. Rahner's anthropology and subsequently epistemology allows for the possibility of 'religious experience' in the context of the faith narrative of the human being.

The chapter is divided into three sections which will display the logical progression of the argument for using Karl Rahner. These sections are: the Human Being as Person and Subject (Rahner's Anthropology); Knowledge and Experience (Rahner's Epistemology); Rahner as Pastoral Theologian. In his anthropology, Rahner's first and constant concern is the human being. This study begins with an exploration of his ideas around philosophical and theological anthropology, because it is the core of what, for Rahner, a human being consists. His model is grounded in the human condition.

The Christian ...knows that despite being a creature and despite his sinfulness – and in fact in it – he is a person spoken to by God in history, in the word of God's absolute, free self-disclosure in grace. This affirmation is directly intelligible for the Christian as a summary of what he hears in faith about himself, and is also suitable as a fundamental principle of theological anthropology. (Rahner 1968-1970, 368)

I continue with Rahner's epistemology: the way that the human being knows and understands what it is to be a human being as a person and subject. Finally, I turn to his pastoral theology. It is in his concern for the human being in the world that Rahner's theology and philosophy finds a context. It is the point where the sciences meet the reality of a human life lived out in time and in a place. This section, naturally flows from the section on the spectrum of identity, *because it is there that the model of the human being is grounded in the human condition.* Rahner began always with the

human being, and so I have here. I begin with defining a spectrum of identity in human terms and move from there to the place where that identity takes on a richer and broader context – the transcendent and the relationship with God. Furthermore, I believe that some of the themes in the identity chapter would have been of concern to Rahner as a pastoral theologian.

What Rahner has to say about the human person differs from what is explored in the third chapter. The human person can be analysed according to identity in its multifaceted forms, or the human being can be viewed under various different religious, cultural, and psychological microscopes. What is lacking in these ‘microscopes’ is what is at the core of Rahner’s Anthropology– the fundamental relationship between God and the human being.

Christianity exists in the individual person in his concrete, historically conditioned finiteness only if this person accepts it with at least a minimum of knowledge that he has personally acquired and that is encompassed by faith, and, on the other hand, this knowledge is what is understood of Christianity as something that is in principle accessible to everyone and can be grasped by everyone. (Rahner 1978, 15)

A particular religious identity may help us to understand the way the relationship with God is lived, but it may not necessarily explain the relationship that binds our existence to God. Rahner even mentions that it is the intention within the empirical sciences to explain the human being and that each of the sciences, titled by Rahner ‘particular or regional anthropologies’, has something to say regarding the subject of the human being.

1.2.4 Chapter 5 – Theoretical Framework and Research Questions

Chapter five is in two sections: the theoretical framework and the research questions. The chapter acts as a bridge between the literature on the one hand and the methodology and data collection/analysis on the other. The chapter begins by mapping out a theoretical framework in an attempt to map clearly the process of the research. It

outlines the themes to be considered which will lead to a thick description of the religious identity of primary school student teachers. It also maps out some of the constant themes which may have an influence on their teaching religious education in the classroom.

Following the theoretical framework, the research questions are discussed, beginning with Punch's hierarchy of concepts: research area; research topic; general research questions; specific research questions; data collection questions. This section clearly explains the scope and content of the research. Each of the three research questions is then discussed.

The first research question will be answered by the creating a thick description of student teacher religious identity, from the literature review and as explained in the theoretical framework. The rationale behind this is to try and construct a model of identity that is both broad enough and open enough to allow the addition of the religious dimension, which will be constructed from the literature review and also enriched from the theological anthropology, epistemology and pastoral theology of Karl Rahner. Rahner presents a model of the human being that is richer than that which can be found in theories of teacher identity, and which captures and elaborates on the unrealized nature of the human being; the 'buried life' of Arnold. Rahner's anthropology is not merely a framework for investigation and analysis, but the model of the human being that can be useful to describe and explain the identity of the teacher of religious education in the primary school.

The second and third research questions, regarding the students' understanding of religion and religious identity and their teaching religion in the classroom, will be answered from the theories and ideas in the literature review and from the historical and social context chapter.

1.2.5 Chapter 6 – Methodology

The methodology chapter is divided into five sections. The first section deals with the philosophical basis for the methodology, covering the research strategy, the research paradigm and the theoretical assumptions. The general research paradigm that I am following here is interpretivism.

This approach emphasizes social interaction as the basis for knowledge. The researcher uses his or her skills as a social being to try to understand how others understand their world. Knowledge, in this view, is constructed by mutual negotiation and it is specific to the situation being investigated. (O'Donoghue 2007, 10)

The guiding motivation behind the data collection is a double hermeneutic – I am attempting to understand and interpret what those being interviewed understand and interpret. Within the research paradigm two factors are discussed: phenomenology and narrative. In the case of this research these factors are both at the service of the social constructivism/interpretivism paradigm and are not paradigms in themselves. Both phenomenology and narrative may form a large part of the data collection as student teachers discuss their understanding of religious identity.

This research is a single case study of student teachers and this is the next section which is explained in the methodology chapter. The case student is defined and the boundaries of the study established, along with the reasons for using this particular method of research. Other methodological considerations are discussed: validity and reliability, interpretation and sampling.

The fourth part of the chapter is concerned with the actual process of this research from the initial work undertaken through the construction of the interview questions (Appendix 6) and the process of interviewing the students and finally the data analysis. The sections outline the problems that I encountered in the initial stages and what was done with regard to the ethical considerations, the partners in the research and my

positioning as the researcher. Regarding, researcher positionality, I am conscious of being a Catholic priest and someone who has my own ideas about religious identity and the teaching of religious education. I am aware of this and that it may have a bearing on the research. What I can say at this point is that I will be careful around issues such as relationships of dependency and power, and the danger of the interviewee giving me answers that they think I might want to hear.

The final section of this chapter deals with the issues of validity and reliability.

An account is valid or true if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise. (Hammersley 1992, 69)

These issues will be discussed in terms of establishing validity through the researcher lens and the research paradigm. Significant is the use of ‘thick description’ which, with its emphasis on detail and description allows for a reliable account of the data.

1.2.6 Chapter 7 – Data Generation, Collation and Discussion

The data chapter follows the logic of the research questions. The answers to questions regarding identity, teacher identity and religious identity are laid out first. Following this are the answers to the questions about understanding of religion and religious identity. The third section is about teaching and religion.

In the identity theory section there are answers about how the student defines identity as a concept, the personal traits and characteristics of identity, and in particular if they saw themselves as a leader or a follower. This question has a bearing both on the idea of being the ‘leader’ in a classroom when teaching, but also being a leader or follower when it comes to opinions or attitudes in identity. The students were asked about their personal construction of identity, the external influences and relationships that were a part of it, identity change, and identity salience.

With regard to teacher identity the answers dealt with why they wanted to be teachers,

and about influences on their decision to become teachers. I had asked them about what else they needed to be teachers apart from college and teaching practice and what mattered most about being a teacher.

The section on personal religious identity dealt firstly with answers about God and their understanding of God, including words and images that they thought about when thinking about God. Attempting to get away from a one-dimensional view of religious identity – Church attendance, the next section includes answers to questions on a number of religious indicators: faith and personal spirituality, morality, religious objects, charity etc. The section finishes with the answers to questions about the phenomenon of separating religion from spirituality.

The third section of the data collection and analysis dealt with the second research question concerning understanding religious identity and religion. This section included answers to questions about the role of religion in Ireland today and if religion is a good thing, and what had replaced religion in the lives of people today. The issue of the Church was talked about and in particular the recent Child Sexual Abuse scandals. This was not a question that I asked about directly, but some of them brought up the question when speaking about the Church.

The fourth and final section contains answers to questions regarding the teaching of religious education in Ireland. The first answers in the section are about the Church in Education in Ireland and the topic of religious education and the particular religious education programme, before the answers about their religious identity and teaching religion.

1.2.7 Chapter 8 – Data Analysis and Research Questions

In the chapter 8, I have returned to the research questions and have provided some findings from the data generation. Research Questions I and II, which are about

religious identity and an understanding of that identity, comprise the ‘thick description’ of the three modes of identity researched here, and which has been enriched by Rahner’s Anthropology. I begin with a religious identity paradigm which comprises the most common responses taken from the data. I also have outlined the validity of using the thick description in this research to allow the voice of the student teacher to come through. I have created a fourfold typology of religious identity, which offers a way to loosely categorise the students in this research. This typology has been drawn from two sources, Arnett Jensen & Jensen Arnett (2002) and Inglis (2007). The Arnett Jensen & Jensen Arnett typologies come from their research into emerging adults 21-24 years of age, and so are pertinent to this research. The Inglis typologies come from his research from the findings of the European Values Study (EVS) and Contemporary Irish Identities (CII) study and are pertinent to the research here because the findings deal specifically with Irish people.

Research Question III, which is concerned with the relationship between religious identity and the teaching of religious education in primary school is discussed, based on the answers given at the interrogative stage. I begin with some of the students’ comments with regard to their own religious education at primary, post-primary level and during their time in College. I have offered some of the findings regarding religious identity and teaching religion, which for the most part is a diverse range of answers. This variety of answers gives further evidence of the validity of using the thick description, as only in this method are the voices of the students heard in all their diversity and richness. I have also mentioned the current debate on school patronage and the forum established by the Minister for Education and Skills in 2011. Although it happened after the data collection, some responses in the students’ answers regarding teaching religion in schools and the denominational patronage system anticipate this

forum and contribute to the debate.

1.2.8 Chapter 9 – Conclusion and Summation

The final chapter will give a summary of the thesis and will outline the major findings of the research. Continuing on from this are the recommendations which the findings suggest, in particular regarding Teacher Education and Curriculum Development for the future. I have included the limitation of the study with regard to two particular areas: the sample and the methodology. Having offered some opinions regarding areas of further research, I close with some final comments.

Chapter 2 - The Historical and Social Context of the Research

2.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to place the investigation of the religious identity of primary school student teachers in a historical, social and pedagogical context and to provide the reader with the background landscape to the research. The reason for this is threefold: to understand better the world that the student teachers have inhabited since an early age; to outline the particular model of primary schooling in the Republic of Ireland; to outline the religious education expectations in denominational schools.

The chapter is in three parts. The first part will look briefly at the context of Ireland from the period 1990-2010, because it was the period in which the participants in the research grew up and it was also a time of enormous change both in religious and civil society in Ireland. Three particular factors will be discussed: the demise of institutions; the political sphere and economic change; social and cultural change.

Secondly the chapter will look at the denominational nature of Irish Primary Education. This section will outline some of the historical factors which led to the system of primary education in Ireland; the relationship between Primary Education and a Changing Ireland, principally in the areas of the 1998 Education Act and 1999 Primary School Curriculum, in new school management structures, and with the addition of children from other countries in primary school. There are a number of reasons as to why this is important. Student teachers now have more school management types to choose from in terms of employment and may no longer feel obliged to teach in a school with a particular religious ethos. The 1999 revised school curriculum has introduced some new subject areas contributing to an increased workload on teachers. Children from other countries in Irish schools have changed the mono-cultural and mono-denominational nature of primary schools.

Thirdly the chapter will look briefly at the philosophy and content of religious

education in the denominational primary schools (Catholic and Church of Ireland).

These sections are a way to contextualise briefly the stage on which the lives and future careers of student teachers are played out. It is assumed that cultural, political, religious, and socio-economic factors may have an influence on the lives and opinions of the interviewees.

2.1 Ireland: History and Social Context

Three factors in the social and historical context of Ireland over the last twenty years have been chosen for consideration: the demise of institutions and in particular the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland over the last twenty years; the political sphere and the rise and fall of the Irish economy; and social and cultural change. The word ‘change’ seems an oversimplification for what has happened in Ireland in the years from 1990-2010.

Irish identity is being renegotiated inevitably and perhaps most rapidly not only through political and religious transformation of the Ireland, but also through the economic growth brought about by globalization. (Savage 2003, 19)

As Savage says, the change in Irish identity has come about through a combination of political, religious and economic factors, which will be discussed shortly. The subject of secularization will be examined in chapter three, and again this combination of the religious, the political and the economic factors will come into play again.

The aim of this section is not to outline every event in Ireland in the space of twenty years, but to highlight some of the events, trends and changes which may have been important in the lives of student teachers as they were growing up.

2.1.1 The Demise of Institutions

Even in the days before the Catholic Church was mired in the controversy of sexual abuse the end of Irish Catholic culture was nigh, and as Littleton states,

...it would be a mistake to think that the decline in the influence of the Catholic Church is due entirely to the child sexual abuse scandals. In addition, Ireland, like so many Western countries, is becoming increasingly secular. Large numbers of people are not interested in organized religion because they can manage themselves and their activities without it. Therefore, they argue that religion – in any of its expressions – should not be given any recognition. (Littleton 2008, 14)

Almost from the moment that it was revealed in 1993 that the Bishop of Galway had fathered a child with an American friend, there has been a constant stream of revelations concerning the Catholic Church.

However before these events there were significant factors which played a part in the demise of the influence and authority of the Catholic Church. In 1972 the Irish people passed a referendum which removed the ‘special relationship’ of the Catholic Church enshrined in the constitution.

Gone are the days when de Valera enshrined the ‘special position’ of the Catholic Church in the Constitution and when bishops were consulted on government policy. As scandal and controversy beset the Church, its influence plummeted. (Savage 2003, 12)

There was a decline in the number of vocations to the priesthood and the religious life. In 1966 there had been 1409 vocations; by 1998 this number had dropped to 98 (Ingليس 1998, 212) and by 2006 this was numbered at 30 (Council for Research and Development 2006).

Through the aegis of the media, Ireland was beginning to face up to what Ferriter refers to as ‘hidden Irelands’.

Greater openness about physical abuse, sexuality and public and political morality also facilitated discussion of dark pasts, as did widespread reportage of contemporary events such as concealed pregnancies, rape, corporal punishment and sex abuse. But by the end of the century it could be argued that the media occasionally went overboard, to the extent that one newspaper in reviewing the year 1997 referred to it as ‘the year of the paedophile priest’, narrowing the scope of a discussion and reflection that needed to go much further than that. (Ferriter 2004, 665)

At this time the media began to challenge the Catholic Church and led the way in making the Church accountable for what had happened in the past. Donnelly and Ingليس

suggest that,

Linked to and facilitated by the state's secular liberal-individualistic social policies, the media became increasingly bold to resist and challenge the Church. They began to make the Church accountable, forcing priests and bishops to move away from a rhetoric of Catholic devotion, conviction and obedience to more rational, reasonable, and 'media-friendly' presentations of its teachings and policies. (Donnelly & Inglis 2010, 2)

Donnelly & Inglis also suggest that the 'Fourth Estate' replace the Catholic Church as the 'social conscience and moral guardian of Irish Society' (Donnelly & Inglis 2010, 1).

This notion seems to be borne out by a comment made by the journalist Fintan O'Toole in an article in the *Irish Times* in 2010...

I have my own pulpit and my own articles of faith. And people like me have even taken on some of the ritual functions of the clergy. Priests used to bless public events. They used to open things and launch things. Now, it's minor celebrities who do the honours. (O'Toole, 2010)

The decline in deference to the Catholic Church whether in the media, by politicians, or among the general population "...has encouraged debate as a more sceptical society questions the authority of Church policy on a range of issues, including contraception, divorce, abortion and sexuality" (Savage 2003, 13). O'Toole offers a two-fold influence in the decline:

The gradual rise of urban, secular and Anglo-American cultural norms on the one side and the revelation of horrific crimes of child abuse on the other broke that dominance. (O'Toole 2009, 182)

Few people today would think that the Catholic Church in Ireland could be identified with the conscious religious culture that was at the heart of Irish life in the past, as described by Louise Fuller:

A good barometer as to the state of Irish Catholic culture in the early 1950s is the summary of a report to the Congress of the Lay Apostolate, made in Rome, on 10 October 1951, by Very Rev. M. O'Halloran, administrator of City Quay parish, Dublin. Referring to the state of Irish Catholicism, he pointed out that 'we are living in an atmosphere steeped in Faith. (Fuller 2002, 19)

The world described by Fuller no longer exists today.

The reality in twenty-first-century Ireland is that although the Roman Catholic Church is still the majority church, at least nominally, it does not exercise the unquestioned power and significant influence it had during the previous few centuries. (Littleton 2008, 14)

The journalist and broadcaster, Olivia O’Leary, when speaking of her education by Mercy sisters in Carlow calls to mind the paradox that epitomised the Catholic Church of the past:

Girls like me from modest backgrounds were educated for a pittance by dedicated women who focused all the energy and their ambition on us. In recent times though, I’ve had to remember that while we flourished in our school, other children in residential homes, run by religious, led stunted lives, lives of ritual humiliation and even horrific abuse. The system which helped me, damaged them, sometimes irreparably, and the reckoning had to come. (O’Leary 2004, 122)

The former Taoiseach, Garret Fitzgerald places the revelations of the past in a more balanced context than many who have written on the subject. While acknowledging what had happened in the past he asserts that

...in the vast majority of cases the record of care by religious of both sexes was exemplary, and it was through the generosity of the services they provided that huge resources were made available to cover many of the running costs of the institutions in which they worked. (Fitzgerald 2003, 142)

Ireland is no longer the mono-cultural country of the past described by the various commentators. The past twenty years have seen the emergence of multiculturalism, cultural diversity and pluralism. The arrival of immigrants to this country either for economic or asylum reasons has contributed significantly to this. However, in comparison to other countries in Europe, and despite the recent revelations concerning the Church, Ireland’s attendance at Church is high:

Decline in mass attendance became more noticeable in the 1990s. While an Irish marketing survey in 1997 suggested most people’s religious beliefs had been unaffected by Church scandals, more than half believed the Church had been permanently damaged, and that mass attendance figures had substantially dropped. Attendance had remained exceptionally high by international standards in the 1970s and 1980s, but a national survey revealed attendance had fallen to 78 per cent in 1992, with a figure as low as 65 per cent recorded for 1997; the decline was most pronounced among urban youth. (Ferriter 2004, 733)

The 2008 EVS reported that 45.2% attended Mass on a weekly or more often basis, and an additional 16% said that they went once a month (European Values Study 2008). According to Ferriter, the end of the authority of the Catholic Church in Irish society began long before the revelations about Bishop Eamonn Casey.

The criticisms levelled at the Church were at times ferocious and the power of the Church in Ireland was shattered in many ways, though to suggest that the end of its dominance can be date to the 1990s is misguided; it was in fact well under way by the 1970s. (Ferriter 2004, 666)

Around the same time as the 'Casey affair', revelations about the abuse of children by Catholic priests and of physical and sexual abuse and neglect in Institutions run by Religious Congregations began to emerge.

Emboldened by the new climate of revelation, documentary makers and victims of abuse in various orphanages, industrial schools and reformatories run by religious orders unravelled a series of brutal 'hidden Irelands', stretching back many decades. So many had endured a painful silence that was now shattered, and the media response was ferocious. (Ferriter 2004, 736)

The picture as outlined so far has been about the role, influence and authority of the Catholic Church in Ireland. Ferriter writes about the Church of Ireland in the same period:

The Protestant churches in Southern Ireland ended the century more confidently, even though their population was only 3.4 per cent of the recorded total in 1981 (down from 10 per cent in 1911). Ten years later, there were only 90,000 Church of Ireland members in the Republic. From the early 1970s, 30 per cent of Church of Ireland member' marriages were to Catholics and special commissions were needed to help dispose of idle churches. They had other important decisions to make: permitting the ordination of women priests in 1990, and in 1995 allowing divorcees to remarry in the church. (Ferriter 2004, 739)

At the same time as this seemed demise of Institutions, the 2008 EVS findings with regard to confidence in various institutions reported that 23.2% of respondents had a great deal of confidence in the Church as an institution. It topped the poll as the Institution that people had the greatest amount of confidence in, compared to the Police (17.5), the Press (6.5%), Political Parties (3%), the United Nations (12.4%), NATO

(10.1%) and the European Union (9%).

It would be incorrect to think that the Catholic Church was the only institution that went into decline during this period. The first Tribunal of Inquiry in the 1990s was established in 1991 to investigate the beef industry. The 1990s became the ‘decade of the tribunals’, as Governments established statutory and non-statutory tribunals and commissions of inquiry into a wide range of organisations and issues:

By the end of 2000 there were six tribunals: the Moriarty Tribunal investigating payments to Charles Haughey and Michael Lowry, a former Fine Gael minister; the Flood Tribunal on allegations of planning corruption; the Laffoy Commission in the abuse of children in institutions; the Lindsay Tribunal on the infection of haemophiliacs by contaminated blood products; the Barron inquiry on the Dublin, Monaghan and Dundalk bombings of 1974; and a non-statutory Dunne inquiry onto organ retention by hospitals. (Ferriter 2004, 677)

Others were to follow: the Morris Tribunal which investigated the activities of the Gardaí in Donegal in 2002 and the three which directly related to the Catholic Church - the Ferns Enquiry (2002-2005) on clerical sexual abuse in the Irish Catholic Diocese of Ferns; the Ryan Commission (previously the Laffoy Commission) of 2000-2009 on child abuse at religiously-run institutions; the Murphy Commission (2006-2009) on the manner in which complaints of sexual abuse by clergy in the Archdiocese of Dublin were dealt with by both the archdiocese and the State authorities. In this period traditional forms of authority and leadership – church leaders, politicians, doctors, and Gardaí all found themselves undermined by the actions of a number of their ranks. A number of commentators have also suggest that this loss of the ‘moral monopoly’ of the Catholic Church has left a vacuum in Irish society, in that there was no understanding of morality other than that of a religious morality. When it came to how one should act within the world of commerce, or banking, or the attitude towards the payment of taxes the Irish had no moral compass to be guided by:

The real effect of the loss of Church authority was that there was no deeply rooted civic morality to take its place. The Irish had been taught for generations to

identify morality with religion, and as very narrow kind of religious at that. Morality was about what happened in bedrooms, not in boardrooms. It was about the body, not the body politic. (O'Toole 2009, 183)

2.1.2 The Political Sphere and Economic Change

In a time of political stability, Ireland looked both into itself and beyond itself in the years before and after the turn of the millennium. In terms of the inward, the 1990s saw a peaceful and political end of the conflict in Northern Ireland with the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which “led to the transformation of political institutions in Northern Ireland” (O’Sullivan 2007, 2), and the gradual normalization of life for the people of the province. The resolution of the situation in the North gave encouragement to people around the world that similar long running disagreements could be resolved – specifically the Middle East.

Political life in Ireland in the period was marked by increased prosperity and economic stability. One of the ways this was achieved was through the various partnership agreements with the unions.

...leading to programmes for National Recovery (1987), Economic and Social Progress (1991), Competitiveness and Work (1994) and Prosperity and Fairness (2000). Trade union leaders, in stark contrast to their militant founding fathers, became champions of social stability and consensus. (Ferriter 2004, 671)

This period was when the ‘Celtic Tiger’ was born and the pace of economic was faster than anyone could have imagined. The phrase was a reference to the Asian Tiger economies of the 1980s, which were characterized by rapid growth. It was then used to refer to the Irish economic miracle.

The transformations that have occurred since the dark days of the 1980s are truly staggering, and were certainly in excess of any of the predictions of economists and social and political commentators of the day. From the nadir of a deep economic depression it seemed that the most the country could hope for was slow but steady growth. Nobody predicted that between 1987 and 2003 Ireland’s economy would move from being 63 per cent of the EU average to 136 per cent, that the influential role of the Church would simultaneously collapse, that a relative peace would be instigated in Northern Ireland, and so on. (Bartley & Kitchen 2007, 25)

O'Toole suggests that this transformation in the economic state of the country had less to do with what happened in the country at this time and was more to do with the redress of the balance, bringing Ireland in line with the rest of the developed world:

For a start, one of the reasons the Irish economy grew so fast after 1995 is that it had grown so slowly before that...Much of what happened in the 1990s was simply that Ireland caught up with the living standards of the region it belongs to – Western Europe – and got to where it should have been all along. (O'Toole 2009, 15, 16)

The economic boom gave the Irish people a new confidence. It was a period of full employment. It exorcised some of the ghosts of the past periods of Irish history, when the country's biggest export was her population. Ireland even went one better, and the period saw the rise of immigration into Ireland, a phenomenon never seen before.

The creation of new jobs averaged more than 1,000 a week between 1994 and 2000. Between 1986 and 2000, 513,000 new jobs were created, an increase of 47 per cent, hence the 'Celtic Tiger' label, as Ireland's economy grew at a pace akin to the 'tiger' economies of south-east Asia. (Ferriter 2004, 674)

As employment rates rose and salaries increased people were now able to afford more luxury goods, able to provide their children with whatever they required or demanded, were able to have a number of foreign holidays a year, and were able to increase the population of luxury motor cars in Ireland.

Ireland is no longer a poor nation on the periphery of Europe characterized by a weak economy and high emigration. Ireland is a country with a booming economy that is the envy of many nations. Economic growth over the last decade has been double or more that of its European neighbours, and wealth levels in terms of average income are amongst the highest of any developed nation. (Bartley & Kitchin 2007, 25)

Bartley & Kitchin cite the following key social and economic trends and phenomena that have been at the foundation of the change in Ireland over the last number of years: Social Partnership and Planning Regime; Foreign Direct Investment; the European Union and European Monetary Union; the Peace Process; Secularisation and Social Change; Population Change and Increased Mobility.

Neo-liberalism became increasingly identifiable as the dominant ideology across Irish political, business and economic thought. The logic of the free market predominated and the new mantra was competition. (O'Sullivan 2007, 2)

Ireland elected two female Presidents in this period, and through their innovative tenures as presidents,

...Robinson and McAleese at least created a situation where presidents could make important and powerful gestures about the need for a more mature and inclusive concept of Irish identity, as was seen with the new embrace of Remembrance Day, signifying a growing maturity within Irish nationalism, and the enthusiasm for ecumenism. (Ferriter 2004, 700)

They visited the global Irish diaspora, raised awareness of the global community's responsibilities towards the developing world, and invited all manner of groups and organizations from both Ireland and Northern Ireland to their residence in the Phoenix Park. As President McAleese put it:

History has woven the story of Ireland deeply into the story of America and the story of Europe. (McAleese 2003, 25)

This period of economic expansion was not the rising tide for all boats. It was still a country with poverty and a considerable amount of social injustice:

The Society of St. Vincent de Paul (raising up to £8 million yearly and with 10,000 members, indicating a high degree of personal charity) conducted a survey among old people, while the Combat Poverty Agency engendered an awareness of inequality, as did the Conference of Religious Orders in Ireland. The latter consistently criticised budgets for favouring the rich, and clashed with economists who insisted that the need to create employment should take precedent over raising the level of welfare payments. (Ferriter 2004, 702)

The government sought to remedy this in a number of different ways and by including various social partners in decision making:

The drafting of the 1996 Partnership Agreement involved the participation of many minority groups, and seemed to indicate a move towards a more inclusive society. (O'Sullivan 2007, 7)

2.1.3 Social and Cultural Change

It might be suggested that in this period when economically Ireland was doing so well, it became a greedy place, interest solely in the acquisition and maintenance of its

wealth.

Ireland has arrived. We are richer than any of us imagined possible ten years ago. No Irish person has to emigrate, none of us need pay for education and even our universities are free. Unemployment is the lowest in our history. We have more choice than ever, the place is more tolerant and no-one can be legally discriminated against. We have more cash in our back pockets than almost anyone in Europe. (McWilliams 2005, 3)

This would not last long. Only a few years later, the cracks began to show. Shifts in the world economy led to the collapse of banks and other financial institutions in the United States and in Great Britain. Many commentators have offered analysis on the effects of the economic boom.

This current generation of teens and twenty-somethings is probably the first, in as many decades as you care to review, that does not automatically have the expectation of doing better than their parents. (Power 2010, 69)

In many respects Ireland appeared to have become a more inclusive and tolerant society, with the arrival of a large and visible non-Irish population not only in Ireland, but throughout the entire country:

Immigration is one of the changes to Irish society that is evident in our everyday lives. In a typical day we now come in contact with people from other countries in our work, communities and as we shop and access various services. (O'Sullivan 2007, 4)

The Government passed legislation in 1995 which brought the end to the ban on divorce in Ireland. In 1993 homosexuality was decriminalised, and at the same time it was made an offence to discriminate on the grounds of sexual orientation.

O'Leary suggests people in Ireland had changed over the years of prosperity, which led to an unpleasant reality in the country:

It's a world where nobody waits anymore, where nobody saves for anything, not for holidays, not for cars, not for clothes. Why? Because the money is there; because parents in the swelling ranks of the Irish middle class have it; because youngsters are given loans and credit cards by the banks; because the notion of deferred gratification is quite alien. (O'Leary 2009, 150)

One of the particular manifestations of this is the attitude of some to alcohol and its

consumption. Ireland has always had an ambivalent relationship to alcohol – a relationship through which the Irish are often viewed throughout the world.

A 1999 survey on drinking habits revealed that over half of men and nearly two thirds of women in the 18-24 age group engaged in high-risk drinking, and male deaths from homicide seemed to be closely related to changes in the consumption of alcohol. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, alcohol was an industry worth £5 billion annually, and alcohol accounted for 13 per cent of the average household expenditure, with alcoholism now as likely to affect women as men... It also seemed ironic that what was blamed on poverty at the end of the nineteenth century was blamed on affluence by the end of the twentieth century. (Ferriter 2004, 668)

And from Power:

Sport, booze and shopping are the holy trinity of our new religion. (Power 2010, 20)

McWilliams summed up the social and cultural mores of Ireland in terms that are far from flattering:

We have to be there first, have the best, the brightest, the newest and the biggest. We must also be the ones who are most fun, loudest, best *craic* and most off our head. We are borrowing, spending, shopping, shagging, eating, drinking and taking more drugs than any other nation. We are Europe's hedonists and the most decadent Irish generation ever. Interestingly, this carry-on is ubiquitous. At one end of the scale, Irish teenagers are losing their virginity and taking drugs earlier, while at the other end of the scale, our forty and fifty-somethings are binge-drinking, swinging and hoovering cocaine to allow them to stick the pace and have one last drink. (McWilliams 2005, 3-4)

Those who may find it abhorrent may be able to resonate with what O'Brien suggests, which gives an indication to how Ireland has not changed over the period of economic expansion.

Family remains central to Irish life, illustrated not least by one of the highest birth rates in Europe and a still very low divorce rate. For all the talk of 'tip-toeing back to the pews', most people never left them in the first place – weekly church attendance elsewhere in Europe is higher only in Malta and Poland. How leisure time is enjoyed is another example. The GAA has gone from strength to strength, despite perennial fretting that Irish culture is on the verge of being Anglicised or globalised to death, and alcohol consumption – which remains among the highest in Europe – is still central to social life despite greater awareness of health risks. (O'Brien 2009, 5)

Added to this the EVS (2008) findings regarding beliefs seem to give the appearance of

a country which might be still considered somewhat traditional: belief in God was 89.9%; Life after Death – 71.6 %; Hell – 50.2%; Heaven – 76.6; Sin – 75.3%; Re-Incarnation – 29.9%. 63.7% believed in a personal God and 60% prayed either daily or once a week (outside of religious services). Finally, one statistic which should be noted it that 36.1% of Catholics also stated that they had their own way of connecting with the Divine without Churches or religious services.

2.2 Irish Primary Schools and Education

A further aspect of the cultural and educational context of this study is the nature of primary schools in Ireland. The subject of primary schools is discussed in three contexts: their denominational nature; their place in a changing Ireland; the role of the Primary School Curriculum.

2.2.1 The Denominational Nature of Irish Primary Schools

With the exception of a few efforts and periods in its history, primary education in Ireland has always been denominational in nature. From the time of the imposition of the Penal Laws to their gradual repeal, children of religions other than the Established Church (Church of Ireland) were educated at ‘hedge’ schools by itinerant teachers of their particular denomination. The *Association for Discountenancing Vice and Promoting Knowledge and Practice of the Christian Religion* was founded in 1792. It was denominational and privately funded and was viewed with suspicion by Catholics. The *Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in Ireland*, better known as the Kildare Place Society was another Protestant charitable organisation, but it was not viewed with the same suspicion initially as it was non-denominational in nature.

In its early years the Kildare Place Society got the support of Catholics. As an educational society it showed great activity: by 1831 it had 1,621 schools associated with it, in which 137,639 pupils were enrolled. (Coolahan 1981, 11)

Eventually Catholics became wary of the Society for a number of reasons: the use of the bible in the classroom; suspicions with regard to proselytising; and the Protestant majority of the Society's board. This coincided with the increasing involvement of the religious congregations in primary education.

In 1782 with the abolition of the penal laws it became legally possible for Catholics and Presbyterians to have their own schools where children were educated for a modest fee. (Kieran & Hession 2005, 68)

Earliest evidence of formal Catholic education in Ireland came with the establishment of a fee-paying school by the Sisters of St. Clare at Fishamble St. in Dublin in 1680. The end of the eighteenth century to the middle of the nineteenth saw the establishment of religious congregations which would be at the fore-front of establishing Catholic Education, not only in Ireland, but around the globe. In 1760 Nano Nagle established free Catholic education in Cork. Teresa Mulally founded a free school in George's Hill in Dublin in 1794. In 1802 Edmund Rice founded the Presentation Brothers as a teaching congregation. Catherine McCauley's Ladies of Mercy became the Sisters of Mercy in 1832. Archbishop Daniel Murray of Dublin was a significant influence in the establishment of teaching congregations, beginning with the Irish Sisters of Charity in 1824 with Mary Aikenhead. With the assistance of Frances Theresa Ball he invited the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary to Rathfarnham in 1824. He also invited the St. John of God Brothers and the Daughters of Charity to Dublin.

One of the first efforts towards non-denominational education came in 1831 when Lord Edward Stanley, the Chief Secretary of Ireland wrote to the Duke of Leinster to outline establishment of National Education Board and the provision of free compulsory primary education for all children. The Board of Commissioners would consist of two Catholics, one Unitarian, One Presbyterian and three members of the Established Church, one of whom was the Duke of Leinster as chairman. The Catholic Church was

initially in favour of the Stanley school system and Archbishop Murray of Dublin was a member of the board. Coolahan outlines a number of reasons for the intervention of the State at that time, suggesting that the British Government had been interested in education in Ireland, which mirrored the interest of the Irish themselves in education. Innovations in education in Ireland had the added advantage of acting as ‘guinea pig’:

Ireland, as a colony, could be used as an experimental milieu for social legislation which might not be tolerated in England where laissez-faire politico-economic policies were more rigid and doctrinaire. (Coolahan, 1981, 4)

He also mentions that the function of this experiment in education would serve “...politicising and socialising goals, cultivating attitudes of political loyalty and cultural assimilation”. (Coolahan, 1981, 4) The schools would be non-denominational and anybody could found a school provided they had a minimum of 29 children, some land on which to build the school, and a percentage cost of the building. Teachers would teach the curriculum and the various ministers of religion would provide religious instruction to the pupils of their respective denominations.

The system as outlined by Lord Stanley would be short-lived. The Presbyterian Synod of Ulster under the Moderator, Dr. Cooke opposed the national system for a number of reasons, and lobbied for changes from 1832-1840. The Established Church opposed it also, seeing it as downgrading its position in Ireland. Both Churches had problems with the presence of other ministers of religion in their schools and with the separation of the religious instruction from the secular. “This effort to draw a distinction between secular and religious instruction was to prove a most contentious one: each of the denominations disputing it, seeing the whole schooling process as an extension of pastoral care with religion interpenetrating all facets of education” (Coolahan 1981, 5). The Christian Brothers withdrew from the system in 1836. The Church of Ireland established a separate school system in 1839 – the Church Education Society. The

Society schools were open to children of all denominations, but only children of the Established Church were required to attend religious instruction. However Bible reading was compulsory to all pupils and this meant that only Church of Ireland children attended the schools. As time went on the Church of Ireland found it difficult to maintain their schools, leading to calls for these schools to join the national school system. The existence of the Church Education Society catering for the Church of Ireland on the one hand and the national school system on the other hand catering predominantly for Catholic children led to a *de facto* denominational primary education system in Ireland.

The religious authorities were powerfully positioned at the heart of the national system of education...The vast majority of schools were built on grounds owned by religious denominations and the denominationalisation and clericalisation of the educational system gained momentum. Today this legacy is visibly manifested in the close physical proximity of many schools and churches. (Kieran & Hession 2005, 76)

Another multi-denominational innovation was the system of *model schools* established throughout the country between 1848 and 1867. However the Catholic Church was opposed and in 1863 banned the attendance of pupils and the training of Catholics as teachers at the model schools.

What has been said of the denominational nature of primary education is also true of what was then called 'teacher training'. In 1838 a teacher training college was established at Marlborough St, but eventually denominational teacher education was established and supported by the state in 1883: St. Patrick's Training College in Drumcondra for men in 1875; Our Lady of Mercy Training College for women at Baggot St. in 1877; and the Church of Ireland Training College already established at Kildare Place, Dublin. Subsequent colleges were opened in Waterford in 1891; in Limerick in 1898 (Mary Immaculate College); and in Belfast in 1900.

After Independence, the Department of Education was established in 1924 and

education policy at the foundation of the State emphasised the centrality of Irish and Irish heritage. The State made no effort to interfere with the denominational system of primary education. Article 42.4 of the Irish Constitution states that:

The State shall provide for free primary education and shall endeavour to supplement and give reasonable aid to private and corporate educational initiative, and, when the public good requires it, provide other educational facilities or institutions with due regard, however, for the rights of parents, especially in the matter of religious and moral formation.

The key words are “provide for” as opposed to “provide”. The State left the education of children with those who were already providing it, with the inference that the State would support the system financially. In this way the various Minister for Education “adopted the view that the state had a subsidiary role, aiding agencies such as the churches in the provision of educational facilities” (Coolahan 1981, 46).

2.2.2 Primary Education and a Changing Ireland

The denominational nature of Irish primary schools remained unchanged until recently. The Catholic Church is patron for the largest number of schools (89% - 2,841 primary schools). Until a few years ago the patronage of all other Primary Schools was divided between the Minister for Education (Model Schools) and the other religious denominations. According to the Department of Education and Science statistics for the 2009-2010 academic year there are 130 Special Schools – whose patronage is divided between and Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland, the Health Service Executive and nineteen other patron/management bodies (Department of Education and Skills 2011a, 91-92). The patronage/management of mainstream Irish Primary Schools for the academic year 2010-2011 is divided as follows (Department of Education and Skills 2011a, 20).

Patron Body	No of Schools	% of Total
Catholic Church	2, 841	89.65
Church of Ireland	174	5.49
Presbyterian	17	0.54
Methodist	1	0.03
Jewish	1	0.03
Islamic	2	0.06
Quaker	1	0.03
John Scottus Educational Trust Ltd	1	0.03
Lifeways Ireland Ltd	2	0.06
An Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge	57	1.80
Educate Together Ltd	58	1.83
Vocational Education Committees	5	0.16
Minister for Education & Skills	9	0.29
Total	3,169	100%

Table 1 - Total Number of Primary Schools by Patron Body (2010/11)

Over the last number of years there has been a growing demand for alternative patronage models and the provision of both inter-denominational (usually between Catholic and Church of Ireland) and multi-denominational schools. Three bodies sought the establishment and management of primary school: Educate Together, An Foras Pádrúnachta Na Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge and the Vocational Education Committees.

One of the significant factors to affect schools over the last number of years has been the intake into Primary Schools of children from other countries. This phenomenon has enriched both the life of the school and the lives of the pupils as children bring new knowledge, customs and world-views to the previous mono-cultural Irish school as mentioned by President Mary McAleese in her second inauguration speech.

Our population is growing, new neighbourhoods of strangers are springing up, and immigrants bring with them different cultures and embrace the richness of ours, as I have observed in the schools where their children speak to me proudly in Irish. (McAleese 2004)

The other result of this phenomenon is the presence of children of other faiths in denominational schools and this had led to many calls for the provision of a more integrated system of inter- and multi-denominational primary schools in Ireland. This request for the provision of different types of primary schools, particularly by parents has its basis in Article 42 of the Constitution and the parents having the primary rights and responsibilities for the education of their children. The State's role is secondary or subsidiary to these rights – and acts in a manner to facilitate the rights of the parents. Former Taoiseach, Garrett Fitzgerald sees the 'rock/hard-place' dilemma caused by the absence of a State-run and controlled primary school system.

On the one hand the guarantee of parents' rights to primary education of their choice is firmly embedded in the Constitution, but on the other hand the State cannot be expected to provide for an indefinite multiplication of different types of school throughout the country. At some stage we are likely to come up against problems posed by the absence of a national system involving one local primary school, in each area, with separate provision for the religious needs of pupils of different faiths and none. But I find it hard to see just how in an increasingly pluralist society we can easily get from where we now find ourselves to a coherent system providing for a wider range of needs than we have so far had to cater for, and I am not clear that any thought has yet been given to this issue. (Fitzgerald 2003, 141-142)

In March 2011 the Minister for Education and Skills established the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector under the chair of Dr. John Coolahan, under the following terms of reference:

1. How it can best be ensured that the education system can provide a sufficiently diverse number and range of primary schools catering for all religions and none;
2. The practicalities of how transfer/divesting of patronage should operate for individual primary schools in communities where it is appropriate and necessary;
3. How such transfer/divesting can be advanced to ensure that demands for diversity of patronage (including from an Irish language perspective) can be identified and met on a widespread basis nationally. (Department of Education and Science Press Release 2011)

The Forum has received submissions from all parties involved in primary education and intends to report to the Minister before the end of 2011. The findings of the forum may

have an impact on the denominational dimension of primary school patronage, which may lead to models of schooling other than the current ones. This in turn might offer student teachers employment alternative to the denominational schools.

2.2.3 The Primary School Curriculum

Before discussing the latest Primary School Curriculum, it is important to place it in the historical context of previous curricula and reports regarding the curriculum. In 1954 and 1962 the Council of Education produced two reports: *Report on the Function and Curriculum of the Primary School* (1954); *Report on the Curriculum of the Secondary School* (1962). The reports emphasised the centrality and importance of religion in schools not only as a subject taught in the schools but also as central to the development of the person:

...of all parts of a school curriculum, religious instruction is by far the most important, as its subject matter, God's honour and service, includes the proper use of all man's faculties, and affords the most powerful inducements to their proper use. (Council of Education 1954, 131)

The 1962 report uses similar language seeing one of the principle purposes of school education as religious:

The purpose of school education, then is the organised development and equipment of all powers of the individual process – religious, moral, intellectual, physical – so that by making the fullest use of his talents, he may responsibly discharge his duties to God and to his fellow men in society. (Council of Education 1962, 88)

Less than thirty years later there was a shift in emphasis. Reports moved away from the inherently religious element in education and words like “consumer” and “enterprise” began to be used with regards to education. National Advisory Council on Social and Economic Matters was arguing that in education “the principles of consumer representation, participation and accountability should be reflected in management and decision making structures” (National Economic and Social Council, 1990, 313-314). In 1992, the Culliton Report suggested that, “the contribution of productive enterprise

to our social and economic objectives should be an issue of primary importance at all educational levels to de-emphasise the bias towards the liberal arts and traditional professions” (Department of Industry and Commerce 1992, 52). This shift in emphasis marks a possible demotion of religion to the place of a second-class subject in the curriculum. This shift from the theocentric to the mercantile paradigm in education is outlined in the diagram below (O’Sullivan 2005, 112).

	Theocentric	Mercantile
Aim	Determined by unchanging Christian principles	Determined by the consumers of the system
Ownership/Control	Christian authorities	Individual/collective initiatives
Policy-making	Expert-based	Broadly-based
Role of Users	Beneficiaries	Vigilant
Role of Educators	Trustworthy professionals	Requires visibility and accountability
Schools	Solidaristic Communities	Commercial/service organisations
Pedagogical Relationship	Paternalistic	Contractual
Evaluation	Truncated, incomplete	Quantifiable
State	Subsidiary	Managerial

Table 2 - Contrasting Manifestations of Theocentric and Mercantile Policy Paradigms in Education

2.3 Religious Education

There are two aspects which I would like to explore here: the current situation of religious education in Irish schools; and the programmes of religious education in denominational primary schools. Briefly, the reason for this is to describe the context in which student teachers are teaching religious education in school and what exactly they are expected to teach. This is why this is not a longer and more detailed explanation of religious education in general.

2.3.1 Religious Education: Current Situation

In regard to religious education, the primary concern,

...is with the spiritual realm of human experience and its primary purpose is to enable young people to deepen their sensitivity and response to the transcendent action of God in their lives. (Williams 2005, 80)

From early Christianity, the two obligations of the Christian curriculum was evangelisation and catechesis,

...employing the systems of education both to convert those outside the Church (evangelization) and to form the faith, from childhood onwards, of those within it (catechesis). (Conroy & Davis 2010, 452)

In terms of the Irish primary school, the catechesis element is still important, which is combined with what might be called religious knowledge. This gives the two-fold function of religious education as formation (catechesis) and information (religious knowledge), and this is explained in the respective programmes for both the Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland, which are discussed shortly. The Primary Curriculum has placed the responsibility of religious education in the hands of the various denominations and states that:

Since the Department of Education and Science, in the context of the Education Act (1998), recognises the rights of the different church authorities to design curricula in religious education at primary level and supervise their teaching and implementation, a religious education curriculum is not included in these documents. (Department of Education and Science 1999, 58)

The consequence of this might be the side-lining of religious education for the sake of other subjects. Every moment of the school day is taken up with all the other subjects of primary curriculum, and added to this are various other programmes, activities and initiatives which take place in primary school. It might be the case that religious education has to jostle for a place on the pupil's desk or might be neglected in favour of other subjects.

In the recent discussion and debate with regard to the role of the Church in primary schools, the issue that has been the most contentious is the preparation for the sacraments in primary schools and the sometimes lack of willing involvement on the part of parents and clergy. In the 2003 INTO survey, *Teaching Religion in the Primary School – Issues and Challenges*, 61% of respondents said they teach religion willingly,

with a further 18% stating that they were relatively positive in their attitude to teaching religion (INTO 2003, 47). The INTO has not undertaken a similar survey more recently, so more current figures are not available. Teachers, however found that the involvement of parents and/or clergy was a matter of concern, in particular with regard to sacramental preparation (INTO 2003, 53-55). Teachers were constantly finding that from their point of view, children were being well prepared for the reception of the sacraments during school, but there was little if any involvement from the home (parents) or the parish (priests).

As one respondent put it, “we feel that we are doing a service for both families and the church, a service that is barely acknowledged and that neither are willing to do themselves. (INTO 2003, 55)

In the survey, the question was asked as to whether it was necessary for a teacher to be a believer of the faith they were required to teach. A majority thought it necessary and, “42.1% thought that it was not possible to teach religion if one were not of the faith one is teaching” (INTO 2003, 47). The survey may echo some of the narrative of the student teachers and their attitudes concerning teaching religious education. As is suggested in the introduction to the INTO survey by the then General Secretary of the Irish National Teachers Organisation:

Current changes in society are also reflected in the teaching profession. Primary teachers have always played a central role in passing on the faith and have traditionally been members of the same faith community as the pupils they teach. However though the majority of teachers still support the teaching of religion in primary schools, the thinking among teachers is changing. What are the implications for teachers who do not belong to the faith community of the school in which they teach? (Carr 2003, 67)

In 1999, Martin Kennedy consulted with teachers, children and priests on their attitudes towards the religious education programme.

There is good news and bad news in the report. The good news is that both teachers and students are highly positive about the programme – the classroom emerges as a space where the students engage with religion in a way that is delightful for them. The bad news is that the classroom is increasingly the only space where the students so engage with religion. While in theory the religious

education of children involves a partnership of home, parish and school the reality appears to be quite different. (Kennedy 1999, 527)

While this research is outdated, it was the foundation on which the current religious education programme in Catholic schools was built. Kennedy wrote about the concept of the ‘three islands of religious experience’ for children: the school, the home, and the parish. Children inhabit these three worlds and, in terms of an experience and the practice of faith, the biggest island is that of the school. More and more there is a drifting apart of the three ‘islands’. Sometimes the faith expressed in the school bears little or no relation to the faith in the home or in the parish. Any catechetical programme ‘worth its salt’ must address this issue and provide resources to foster links between these islands. Furthermore, a religious education programme may have to return to the early Christian Church’s two-fold imperative of evangelization and catechesis as mentioned earlier (Conroy & Davis 2010, 452) as gradually children arrive at school with no religious awareness, knowledge or prior instruction.

The Irish Catholic Bishops set out their philosophy for Catholic Education in Ireland in 2008, which included both the primary and secondary sectors:

...religious education, designed to confirm and deepen an understanding of the faith, forms an essential part of the curriculum in Catholic schools and functions at its core. This means, for example, that Catholic schools commit resources and time to religious education as a matter of priority. By integrating their understanding of faith with their experience of the world as studied in other subjects, our pupils are helped to appropriate what they believe and respond to the exhortation of St Peter to be ‘always ready to give answer to anyone who asks the reason for the hope which is in you’ (1 Pet 3,15). At the same time, while respecting the autonomy of each branch of learning, they are helped to unify the diversity of subjects in the curriculum by seeing all of them in the light of faith. (Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference 2008, 4)

This implies that the place of religious education in Catholic Schools is central and essential to the curriculum in and of its own right, but it also means that it in some way ‘completes’ the other subjects being taught in school by placing them in the context of faith. Therefore the task of a teacher is two-fold – both to teach a prescribed

programme and to make the connections between other subjects and religious education.

2.3.2 Religious Education Programmes in Denominational Primary Schools

There are currently two different religious education programmes in operation in the Catholic and Church of Ireland primary schools, and both programmes are used in schools throughout the island of Ireland. The Church of Ireland schools use the *Follow Me* series and the Catholic schools use the *Alive-O* series. As Pádraig Hogan points out these programmes:

...give more recognition to the teacher as an educational figure, as distinct from a compliant instrument of ecclesiastical authority. They acknowledge the fact that schoolchildren, even where they are baptised, are often more accurately to be described as ‘multitudes’ than as ‘disciples’. In the light of all of this they see the crucial importance of imagination, story, song, festivity, in helping young people to discover something of their own spiritual sensibilities. (Hogan 2003, 67)

2.3.2.1 Follow Me

The *Follow Me* programme was developed by the Church of Ireland Board of Education in conjunction with the Methodist and Presbyterian Boards of Education. Work on this current programme was begun with the funding of a study in 1997 into religious education in primary schools under Protestant management. The survey found that there was still support of the teaching of religious education in the primary schools. A committee was established in 1999, which the Presbyterian and Methodist Churches were invited to nominate members. The committee worked in partnership with Veritas, the publishers of the Catholic programme, *Alive-O*.

The committee was impressed with the style, content and educational approach of the *Alive-O* programme...It was agreed both by the Commission and the publishers that the *Alive-O* materials could be developed and adapted to suit the needs of the primary schools under the patronage of the Church of Ireland and the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches in Ireland. (McCullagh 2007, iv)

While early on, it was loosely based on the *Alive-O* programme, as the programme advanced up the school year it adopted a distinct character. The aims of the programme

are:

- To develop a knowledge and understanding of beliefs, worship and witness of the Christian faith, and in particular of the Church of Ireland and other principal reformed traditions;
- To explore the biblical witness to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- To develop their own religious beliefs, values and practices through a process of personal search and discovery;
- To develop an awareness of and a sensitivity towards those of other faiths and none. (Wilkinson 2007, vi)

Looney outlines a number of principles of learning on which the programme is based, and which are based around the belief of the child as learner, which comes from the primary school curriculum: the child's sense of wonder and natural curiosity; child as active agent in his or her learning; developmental nature of learning; child's knowledge and experience as a base for learning; environment-based learning; the aesthetic dimension; collaborative learning.

Religious Education, if it is to be consonant with the wider educational experiences of children in primary schools, must be informed by these principles...Religious Education in primary schools, well planned, with the support of the parish, the parents and families, can ensure that the 'celebration' of the child which is at the heart of the primary curriculum can become part of the Christian celebration of life that the Churches would seek for all their young members. (Looney 2007, ii-iii)

2.3.2.2 *Alive-O*

The religious education programme in the Catholic Schools, entitled *Alive-O*, has been in operation since 1992 and was a re-presentation of a previous programme, entitled *The Children of God*. The aim and explanation of the programme is as follows:

As we try and enable the children to grow as people of faith, we hope that they will become as articulate in this area as in any other area of the curriculum. We hope that eventually they will be able to give an account of their own faith, to say what they believe and why. This familiarity with the content of faith will be achieved gradually as the children move from class to class, and as their ability to understand difficult language and concepts increases. (Irish Episcopal Commission on Catechetics 2003, 10)

A number of points are notable in this introduction. There is an acknowledgement of

the subject as one of a number of subjects in the curriculum. There is the aspiration that religious education is not just about the knowledge, but also about the personalisation of that knowledge. Finally there is the acknowledgement of the progressive nature of the learning throughout the eight primary school years. The pedagogical method at the heart of the programme was: focus, reflect, and respond.

Focus: The programme begins with the child, both in terms of the limits of their childhood and their experience so far, at home, in school and possibly in church, their experience of the world around them, and the social and natural environment in which they live. The limits of their vocabulary and understanding are also taken into consideration, but challenged where necessary and when appropriate. Within a particular lesson, the subject matter or theme is introduced with games, stories, and activities.

We take for granted much of what happens in our daily lives. Only in rare moments do we stop and think and ask questions about the significance of the ordinary events of our lives. In this religious education programme we seek to provide the opportunity for the children to do that: to stop and think; to ask questions; to explore; to wonder. (Irish Episcopal Commission on Catechetics 1999, xxxv)

Explore/Reflect: The children are invited to dwell on what they have heard and to explore it. This helps to increase awareness of what is being learnt. The reflection helps to evoke a sense of wonder and mystery, which is at the base of all worship, but has an important place in catechesis; otherwise the material becomes dry and barren.

We seek to provide opportunities for the children to become reflective people who will take time to stop and think, so that they will have the capacity to become aware of the presence and action of God in their lives and in the world around them. (Irish Episcopal Commission on Catechetics 1999, xxxv)

Response: Through words and pictures, acting, singing, and prayer the children learn to respond to the material that they have encountered. A variety of responses give the teacher the opportunity to pitch the programme according to the intellectual ability, and

imagination, and flair of the class being taught:

...it may be that they have spent some time thinking about those at home who love them. A response might be, that they would make a card saying 'thank you' to those people. It may be that having spent some time thinking about the wonder of the natural world, they take time to pick up litter in the school playground. (Irish Episcopal Commission on Catechetics 1999, xxxvi)

The programme tries to work at a cross-curricular level, by making links with other subjects as diverse as art and poetry to environmental studies and SPHE. The introduction to the teachers' book offers some of these links and they are also mentioned at the beginning of each lesson.

2.4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to situate the research within an historical, social, and educational context over which the student teachers have no control, but which may have an effect on their lives and opinions. This chapter outlines the context of this research from the position of the past, the present and the future.

From the past it has outlined the social, economic, and political canvas for the past twenty years – the years in which the students grew up. The country grew and changed, became wealthy and saw the demise of many of the institutions which were at the heart of Irish civic and religious life since the beginning of the State, and in some cases further back than that. The demise of the Catholic Church in the last decades of the twentieth century will also become relevant later when discussing theories of secularization in the literature review. The chapter also outlines some of the history of the Irish Primary School system, relevant here because of its unique system of funding and control. While the system is beginning to change, it is the system that most of these student teachers will eventually be part of when they graduate and qualify.

From the present the chapter has described the primary school curriculum at the point where it intersects with the religious ethos of a school and the teaching of religious education. It also described the two programmes of religious education from the Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland. Again these and their future successors will be the programmes that these future teachers will be required to teach, regardless of their particular religious beliefs and practice.

In looking toward the future the chapter has dealt with the changing face of Ireland in terms of religious affiliation and cultural diversity and it has discussed the changing nature of primary education in Ireland. The educational canvas is certainly marked for change over the next number of years, depending on the eventual outcome of the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector which presented its findings to the Minister for Education and Skills at the end of 2011.

While it is not intended to use the content of this chapter directly at the interrogative stage, I will certainly be looking for indicators that what has been discussed in this chapter is of interest and concern to the student teachers.

The next chapter is the literature review which will outline the theories relating to identity in its various forms as investigated in this study and which will provide the theoretical framework and the basis for the later interrogative stage.

Chapter 3 - The Spectrum of Identity

3.0 Introduction

The function of the literature review is to bring focus to the study (Quinn Patton 2002, 226), and the focus of this study is the Religious Identity of Primary School Student Teachers. Its aim is also to “indicate what the state of knowledge is with respect to each research question, or group of questions” (Blaikie 2000, 71). Therefore the literature review is divided into three subjects – identity theory, teacher identity and religious identity, and there are a number of sub-divisions within each of the three and also points of intersection. These sections and subsections will feed into the research questions and the structure of the data analysis in later chapters. In this way the interrogative stage will be based on a comprehensive understanding of the current knowledge of the topic (Machi & McEvoy 2009, 4), which will be logically structured, rationally argued and well informed.

The “focus of the investigator’s attention is on human beings in action and on the mechanisms underlying human action” (Sfard & Prusak 2005, 14). The action in this case is the way in which the religious identity is manifested in the student teachers either in their personal lives or in the classroom as student teachers. The context from which I am looking at identity is based on sociocultural theory, defined by Olsen as,

...a loose cluster of complementary, sometimes competing, contributions from social psychology, social anthropology, sociolinguistics, and philosophy that focus on the self in practice; on the various interdependencies among person, context, history, and others; and on the situated, continuous nature of self-development. (Olsen, 2008, 4)

In this study, religion can be added to the list. The definition offers a wide scope or spectrum with which to study identity, and also the possibility of finding the aforementioned points of intersection. Two that are of particular note here is the *self in practice* and the *various interdependencies*. In terms of teacher identity, *self in practice* denoted the action of a person in everyday life and how one ‘practices’ the various

aspects of life: being a teacher, being a student, being a man/woman, etc. *Various interdependencies* are common in all areas of identity because of the social nature of identity. People play an important role in teacher and emerging identities, firstly from a purely social point of view and secondly from the point of view of mentoring. *Self in practice* and *various interdependencies* are also central to religious identity: the understanding and practice of one's religious identity is first and foremost, and the social nature of religious identity is also essential, in terms of denominational affiliation, treatment of other people, and the practice of religion in the context of the community.

The literature review begins with general theories of identity, added to which are three particular points of relevance: personal identity (with particular reference to Paul Ricoeur and Charles Taylor), social identity and the self as concept. This is followed by literature regarding teacher identity and emerging student teacher identity. The latter is in two sections: the emerging student and the emerging teacher. Finally, there is a section on religious identity, also divided into two sections: the first section contains literature regarding public religious identity, including sections on secularization and religious identity in Ireland; the second section is concerned with personal religious identity and the mind of the individual.

The lines between the various sections are not always clearly delineated: much of the identity theory has been applied to the area of teacher identity in particular.

Religious identity has something of what Olsen says above, in that it has to do with the person as an individual and the practice of a religious affiliation, but it also has the communitarian dimension, in that religious practice is reliant on the interdependency of the religious community, both in a moral and a liturgical dimension.

3.1. Identity Theory

Currie suggests that there are two particular ways of viewing identity. The first has to do with *relation* and *differentiation*: that it is not something that is contained within the person, but exists through the manifestation of the relations between persons.

According to this argument, the explanation of a person's identity must designate the difference between that person and others; it must refer not to the inner life of the person but to the system of differences through which individuality is constructed. In other words, personal identity is not really contained in the body at all; it is structured by, or constituted by, difference. (Currie 1998, 17)

Identity is relational, not just in terms of difference, but also in sameness. Identity as difference can give many characteristics which are unique to a person. However there are many characteristics which can be counted on as the same as other peoples – national identity, career, gender, and ethnicity. These points of sameness are as significant to identity as are points of difference. The second way of viewing identity is that it has to do with *narrative*: the ability to tell our own story and to represent ourselves not just from our own stories, but from our ability to identify with other characters and other stories.

This gives narration at large the potential to teach us how to conceive of ourselves, what to make of our inner life and how to organise it. (Currie 1998, 17)

Sometimes it is when we begin to tell our story, recount the incidents of our day and how we acted or reacted that we begin to understand the type of person we are, how we differ from others and how we are the same. It will tell us if we are leaders or followers, people prepared to speak up or just wanting a quiet life, because “the way a person understands and views himself, and is often viewed by others, at least in certain situations – a perception of self that can be fairly constantly achieved” (Horn et al. 2008, 62).

Identity is fixed and stationary, changing and changeable at one and the same moment.

It is as Baumann (2004) suggests ‘liquid’. The human individual is always discovering who they are in and of themselves, but also in terms of the wide spectrum of human relationships that they encounter every day of their existence. As Baumann suggests, “(i)dentify-seekers invariably face the daunting task of ‘squaring the circle’: that generic phrase, as you know, implies tasks that can never be completed in a ‘real time’, but are assumed to be able to reach completion in the fullness of time – in infinity” (Baumann 2004, 10-11).

We interpret identity as the dynamic configuration of the defining characteristics of a person. The term ‘defining’ is used to indicate that identity does not comprise every aspect of the person, but only those aspects that she herself or others regard as the characteristics that say something about her. Sociologists like Mead (1934) and Parsons (1964) and philosophers like Taylor (1992) ... have argued cogently that what counts as characteristic or defining of individual identity is constructed. First it is constructed in view of the horizons of interpretation made possible by society, and second, by virtue of one’s interaction with the other. (DeRuyter & Conroy 2002, 510)

The act of defining the characteristics of a person is very subjective. For a person to say that the following characteristics ‘define’ my identity can leave the possibility of something stunted and malformed. Identity as defined by society according to specific characteristics would lead to all sorts of abuses: one must be a Christian to be Bosnian; blond-haired to be German, etc.

There are a number of other points that are relevant in this quotation. Firstly, the acknowledgement of both the individual (‘aspects that she herself...regard(s)) and social (‘aspects that...others regard’) constructions in identity. Many sociologists and philosophers have argued the social construction of identity according to the horizons of interpretation made possible by society, and by virtue of one’s interaction with others. Secondly, three words are conspicuous at this point and which have resonance elsewhere in this study: *dynamic*, *horizons*, and ‘*other*’. With regard to the notion of the *dynamic*, identity is not something that is either fixed or static; there is a constant

sense of movement. There is a constant interpretation and reinterpretation of identity, perhaps a life-long dynamic. The implications for this study is that notions of identity, in particular religious identity, are not just something that are developed early in one's life or career but also change and evolve over time. This has implications for the religious identity of student teachers who will form part of this study. With regard to *horizons*, in the next chapter I will talk about Rahner's ideas concerning horizons in terms of the transcendent and understanding of the transcendent as a movement towards ultimate horizons. Here in terms of identity, 'horizons' is understood as the "ideas and ideals of a society or community as to which personal characteristics are to count as important or significant" (DeRuyter and Conroy 2002, 510). With regard to the *other*, this will have resonance with Rahner and the social nature of identity.

Much of the literature investigates identity in terms of something else: cultural identity, religious identity, sexual identity, but trying to establish some basic ideas around identity will help in putting these particular aspects of identity into the particular context in the overall framework of the study.

Identity is "a fixed point from which the individual interacts with the world" (Hoffman-Kipp 2008, 153). He continues with a longer explanation, where identity is the place of intersection of the personal, the pedagogical and the political in the socio-political sphere in a dynamic that is both in active (participation) and passive (reflection) He goes on to define it,

It is the scripts, tool usage, and participation that define the actor in an activity setting. And while identity involves the individual, it is the invention of situated activity, in various communities, that both enable and limit certain identity creation and sustenance. (Hoffman-Kipp 2008, 153)

The intersection of the 'personal, pedagogical and political' offer a number of possible categories to divide out the study of identity as it evokes personal identity, the emerging identity and the socio-political. The concept of *participation and reflection*, I think

refers to the constant ebb and flow of identity formation. Hoffman-Kipp refers to the scripts, tool usage and reflection. It is the active and passive dynamic.

3.1.1 Social Identity

Before exploring social identity and its relevance to this research, it is apposite to make some comments about society as understood in this work.

Society is the mental picture which human beings have of their behaviour, the representation of their interaction. It is the recognition in practice that ideas influence behaviour and that behaviour generates ideas. (Shorter 1988, 31)

A society chooses its basic needs according to the environment and the succession and accumulation of these choices amount to tradition. It constitutes “an inherited body of meanings and conceptions clothed in symbolic forms” (Shorter 1988, 33).

Stets & Burke (2000) establish a general theory of self from identity theory and social identity theory, by offering core components of each theory and by showing that differences in the respective theories are more in emphasis than in actuality. The distinction is made between identity as an individual subjective idea and identity as a social concept for the sake of attempting to chart a course through some of the theories and ideas, because it is very difficult to pull these two apart. In most writings an exploration of either one cannot be done without reference to the other. For Stets and Burke, the merging of identity theory and social identity theory,

...would address agency and reflection, doing and being, behaviours and perceptions as central aspects of self. It also would provide a stronger integration of the concepts of the group, the role, and the person. At the macro-level, for example, we might want to examine whether participation in social movements increases as one *identifies* with the group, is *committed* to the role identities within the group in comparison with other identities one claims, and see the group as corresponding closely to the important dimensions along which one defines oneself. In other words, participation may be highest when individuals are linked at all three levels of abstraction (the group, the role, and the person). (Stets & Burke 2000, 234)

Stets & Burke emphasise the group, the role and the person, and these three distinctions will also be discussed here. The concept of the ‘group’ resonates both in terms of

students and their emerging identity; in terms of the emerging teacher and the social nature of the day-to-day functioning as a teacher; the social nature (or not) of religious identity and practice. Role also has a resonance in terms of the emerging identity of a teacher, and the ‘learning to teach’ and ‘becoming a teacher’ aspects of teacher education.

Herein lies an important distinction between group- and role-based identities: the basis of social identity is in the uniformity of perception and action among group members, while the basis of role identity resides in the differences in perceptions and actions that accompany a role as it relates to counterroles. (Stets & Burke 2000, 226)

One is seen in the teacher ‘role’ and as part of the school community/teaching profession and one can also be ‘identified’ as the individual teacher in a particular classroom. There is both identity as ‘uniformity’, as part of the group and identity as ‘difference’, as what it is not and how it delineates/differentiates the person. Finally the ‘person’ is at the core of the theological anthropology discussed in the next chapter. Again separating these three is a purely academic exercise. Brewer suggests the following with regard to ‘social identity’:

It quickly comes clear that the term has no single, shared meaning: the problem with trying to extract any common definition is that the term is integrally embedded in separate theoretical structures and literatures with little or no cross-citation or mutual influence. (Brewer 2001, 115)

Therefore social identity can mean something entirely different with regard to a religious background as it might with regard to a teaching background, where the former might entail ideas regarding the moral life, and the latter ideas regarding role and/or professionalism.

Sigel cites five common approaches to social identity: that it is a socially constructed concept and subject to change; that it encompasses the self and the groups in which the self is embedded or identified with (social relation); that a group identification is both a definition and a differentiation; it acknowledges the existence of multiple group

identities and the role of salience; that social identities and their manifestation reflect the social structure and culture (Sigel 2001, 112). These approaches have a relevance to this study, when discussing teacher and religious identity. The approach to both will be in the context of the individual and the social.

Social identity is defined as “the individual’s knowledge that he/she belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him/her of the group membership” (Abrams & Hogg 1990, 2). It therefore includes not only membership of a particular group and an understanding of that, but also that this membership has a particular value. Sumara & Luce-Kapler state that, “a sense of personal identity cannot be subtracted from a sense of communal identity; the sense of self alters as social relations and situations change” (Sumara & Luce-Kapler 1996, 69). This two-fold idea is relevant to an understanding of religious identity, because while religious identity has a personal faith point of view, it is also something that is lived out not only as a part of a social group (a Church), but as a contributing member of that Church. Religious identity needs to be understood in terms of the wider context of both the society in which the teacher/student teacher lives and also in the context of the religious community where their religious identity might be affirmed, celebrated, and/or nourished.

The self as autonomous subject is seen in the context of the social. Social identity encompasses both the self and the social group and is for Brewer (2001) the link between the two. Brewer provides a taxonomy of social identity based on four key types of identities: *person-based social identities* (located within the individual self-concept); *relational social identities* (the self in relation to others); *group-based social identities* (where membership of a group is integral part of the perception of self; and *collective identities* (the norms, values and ideologies of a particular group) (Brewer

2001). The person-based social identity and relational social identity will be explored in the interviews with student teachers. As a profession, teaching is one where a certain amount of social skill is required. This develops naturally and gradually in the person, but it also develops more immediately when it comes to learning to be a teacher. While a student may have to learn to interact with the children in a class, the relational social identity does not end there – the teacher must relate to a wide variety of adults in the course of their day – parents, special needs assistants, principals, school staff, etc. In terms of the subject of this research, two groups might be seen to be at play here – religious affiliation and the profession of teacher. In terms of group-based and collective identities, the student becomes part of a profession which is clearly identifiable and which they may have to become familiar and comfortable with. In the Colleges of Education, there is the possibility of gradually gaining an understanding of being part of a particular group, especially as the colleges only have students preparing to be teachers. Therefore the students, through a programme of study and teaching practice, and through a network of lecturers, class-mates, senior students, along with principals and teachers in teaching practice schools are gradually inducted into the *norms, values, and ideologies* of being a primary school teacher.

A teacher lives out, at least part of their life, in the context of the community of the school. In fact, the teacher negotiates any one of a number of group or communities.

As stated by Johnstone (1990):

Just as narrative structures our sense of self and our interactions with others, our sense of place and community is rooted in narration. A person is at home in a place when the place evokes stories, and, conversely. Stories can serve to create places. (Johnstone 1990, 5)

Wenger (1998) writes about the part of identity in the context of ‘communities of learning’.

Because learning transforms who we are and what we can do, it is an experience

of identity. It is not just an accumulation of skills and information, but a process of becoming – to become a certain person or conversely, to avoid becoming a certain person...It is in that formation of an identity that learning can become a source of meaningfulness and of personal and social energy. (Wenger 1998, 215)

He sees identity as being negotiated at the intersection between the individual themselves and as a member of a particular social community. It is identity as: negotiated experience; community membership; learning trajectory; nexus of multi-membership; a relation between the local and the global (Wenger 1998, 149). It is meaning making with regard to identity and the community through what he refers to as *identification* and *negotiability*. It is the tension that exists “in various forms of belonging and our ability to negotiate the meanings that matter in those contexts” (Wenger 1999, 188). Horn *et al.* sees these as analogous to Piaget’s processes of *assimilation* and *accommodation* (Horn *et al* 2008, 72). The engagement between the social and the individual suggests that “the mix of participation and non-participation that shapes our identities has to do with communities in which we become invested, but it also has to do with our ability to shape the meanings that define these communities” (Wenger 1998, 188). The membership of various groups and a teacher’s willingness to engage in the negotiation between themselves and these groups/communities will very much depend on how invested and/or committed the teacher is to that community. While the commitment to the school community may be unquestioned or at least relatively secure, the commitment to the religious community may not be as unquestioned. This may present the teacher, who is teaching religious education with a dilemma.

3.1.2 Personal Identity

Rorty and Wong assert that “(a) person’s identity is constituted by a configuration of central traits” (Rorty & Wong 1990, 20). These are traits “that typically make for a systematic difference to the course of a person’s life, to the habit-forming and action

guiding social categories in which she is placed, to the way that she acts, reacts, and interacts” (Rorty & Wong 1990, 20). They list five aspects of identity: Somatic, Proprioceptive, and Kinaesthetic Dispositions (strong or weak, active or passive, quick or sluggish, etc.); Central Temperamental or Psychological Traits (aggression, friendliness, trust or distrust, etc.); Social Role Identity (the place in the socially defined institutional roles in social dramas); Socially Defined Group Identity (race, class, gender etc.); and Ideal Identity (that which sets directions). These aspects, while independent have a relationship to each other in the development of a person’s identity. Some of these traits will be used for the purposes of this study, in particular the last three: social role identity, as it helps situate the teacher in the institution of either a school or a particular church; the socially defined group identity, in particular from the point of view of gender and class; finally ideal identity with regard to student teachers and how they begin to construct their identity as teachers and religious individuals according to models, examples, mentors etc.

The individual work of Stryker and Burke represent the ‘different yet strongly related strands of identity theory’ (Stryker & Burke 2000, 284). Stryker and his colleagues wrote about the link between social structure and identity. Burke and his colleagues were concerned with the internal process of self verification. They took these two strands of thinking and offered some points of relation and intersection between them.

Each provides a context for the other: the relation of social structures to identities influences the process of self-verification, while the process of self-verification creates and sustains social structures. (Stryker & Burke 2000, 284)

3.1.2.1 Charles Taylor

The writings of Charles Taylor appear in two places in this literature. Later on when discussing public religion, Taylor’s theories on secularism are relevant. Here Taylor’s works, *Sources of the Self* and *The Ethics of Authenticity* are used in the context of the

moral aspect of identity. This facet of identity is included for two reasons: firstly because the human being is a social animal, required to act and react towards society; secondly when talking about religious identity, the moral is a crucial part of developing that identity; we are faced with a myriad of morally permissible (and not so permissible) objects. Taylor sees that moral philosophy, “has tended to focus on what it is right to do rather than on what it is good to be, on defining the content of obligation rather than the nature of the good life” (Taylor 1989, 3). In these terms he talks about four attributes of modern identity: our notions of the Good; our understanding of self; the kinds of narrative in which one makes sense of life; conceptions of society, i.e., conceptions of what it is to be a human agent among human agents (Taylor 1989, 3). Our understanding of ourselves can be defined by the particular group to which one belongs. Our moral intuitions are then the consequence of our upbringing and education. For Taylor this is the framework through which lives are lived and meaning is made of the questions of “what is good, or worthwhile, or admirable, or of value” (Taylor, 1989, 27).

Taylor defines the three malaises of modernity as: individualism, instrumental reason, and political apathy. Individualism means the ability to choose for oneself a particular life. This is a philosophy usually defended by laws and national constitutions, but it has a negative side; “a centring on the self, which both flattens and narrows our lives, makes them poorer in meaning, and less concerned with others in society” (Taylor, 1991; 4). Taylor refers to the contribution of *significant others* in identity, which is a move away from the ‘malaise of individualism’.

We are expected to develop our own opinions, outlook, stances to things, to a considerable degree through solitary reflection. But this is not how things work with important issues, such as the definition of our identity. We define this always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the identities our significant others want to recognize in us. (Taylor 1991, 33)

The second malaise is bound up with the modern fascination or obsession with technology: the best is always that which is the most economically viable. The things in life that are permanent are subverted for the instant, the shiny, and the new. In the end: the discovery of the things that are tawdry and replaceable. This again is significant to the study in aspects of religious identity which look to things that are more permanent and lasting. The word 'horizons' emerges again, as it will in Rahner.

'Horizons' are the ideas and ideals of a society or community as to which personal characteristics are to count as important or significant. Taylor argues that only when a person develops herself against these horizons, which does not necessarily imply that she accepts them or that she agrees with the way in which they lead to a specific characterisation of her, will she develop an intelligent identity. (DeRuyter & Conroy 2002, 510)

Rorty & Wong (1993) and DeRuyter and Conroy (2002) have also discussed *ideal identity*. It is the image of what a person would like to be. Interesting here is the position of *role models*. As a child, a person might have had a role model that they admired or hero-worshipped. Those models or heroes tended to be left on the playroom floor. However a person might retain something of that admiration for role models/heroes into adulthood, where there is something to be admired about or aspired to in the person or example of another person.

The ideals which form part of a person's ideal identity offer the individual a sense of purpose and meaning and give her a direction. The ideal identity of people comprises deep aspirations or desires that provide them with a framework for their formation of their identity and their actions. (DeRuyter and Conroy 2002, 510)

As an adult, ideal identity comes from three sources: actual other persons; ideal situations in which one would like to situate oneself; and ideal character traits. For the second of these sources DeRuyter & Conroy suggest the ideal of becoming an abiding Christian (DeRuyter and Conroy 2002, 514). I think these sources would be useful in the interrogative stage of this study; exploring with student teachers the importance of ideals in their emerging teacher identity, and it will also be worth considering with them

the role of ideals in religious identity.

The final malaise in Taylor is that of the political level, and the effect that the previous two have on it. There is a culture fostered by individualism that people no longer want to be involved. The decline in participation in voluntary organisations and in politics itself is a reflection of the feeling that it is easier to be the 'hurler on the ditch' than to get in there and make a contribution. Over the last number of years there has been a growing awareness of the decline of 'social capitalism' as defined by Robert Putnam (2000), and the rise and sophistication of home entertainment has given us less reason to leave the house. In America there is a loss of how religion is anchored to a sense of belonging.

The issue is the decline in connectedness; a weakening or severing of the social *basis* of religion in family, marriage, ethnicity, and community; a decline in the perceived necessity of communal or institutional structures as constituent of religious identity. Outside of more fundamentalist-like enclaves, religious identity today is not only less bounded by doctrine or creed; it is also less nurtured and reinforced by community. (Dinges 2006, 33)

Gallagher describes a similar phenomenon to the 'malaises of modernity' in the explanation of the three wounds of postmodernity: a wounded imagination, a wounded memory, and a wounded sense of belonging.

A vulnerable sense of identity seems to be one of the characteristics of our time and often this is described in negative terms such as fragmentation, boredom, 'depthless' floating (Hans Bertens), indifference, indeterminacy, multiple selves, passivity, a retreat to the private cocoon. (Gallagher 2005, 150)

3.1.2.2 Identity and Narrative

Gubrium and Holstein define narrative as accounts:

...that offer some scheme, either implicitly or explicitly for organising and understanding the relation of objects and events described. Narratives need not be full-blown stories with requisite internal structures, but may be short accounts that emerge within or across turns at ordinary conversation, in interviews or interrogations, in public documents, or in organizational records. (Gubrium and Holstein 1997, 146)

Watson writes that identity is an 'ongoing process of identification' (Watson 2006, 509)

which “emerges in and through narrative”. (Hinchman & Hinchman 2001, xvi). For Watson “people construct narratives and narratives construct people” (Watson 2006, 510),

Teachers’ stories provide a means by which they are able to integrate knowledge, practice and context within prevailing educational discourses. Telling stories involves reflection on, selection of and arrangement of events in an artful manner which contains meaning for the teller and seeks to persuade the listener of their significance. (Watson 2006, 225)

Why is this important here? As Currie observes, “It does not seem at all exaggerated to view humans as narrative animals, as *Homo fabulans*—the tellers and interpreters of narrative” (1998, 2). The interrogative stage of the study will rely on the stories/narratives that student teachers tell about their lives, their work, and their teaching experience etc., and secondly religion is about narrative, about story.

The stories we tell, whether human or divine, mythic or parabolic, order experience, construct meaning, and build community. (Anderson & Foley 2001, 3)

According to Crossan, the Christian message is transmitted in myth, story, and parable:

Parables give God room. The parables of Jesus are not historical allegories telling us how God acts with mankind; neither are they moral example-stories telling us how to act before God and towards one another. They are stories which shatter the deep structure of our accepted world and thereby render clear and evident to us the relativity of story itself. They remove our defences and make us vulnerable to God. It is only in such experiences that God can touch us, and only in such moments does the kingdom of God arrive. (Crossan 1988, 100)

However narrative should not be seen simply in the limited scope of being an alternative word for story. For Reissman (1993, 41) story is a limited genre, narrative is a far more generic, all-encompassing term. This has had implications for qualitative research in that what is referred to as narrative has had all the limited characteristics of story (Polkinghorne, 1995; Clandinin & Connolly, 2000; Ochs & Capps, 2001). A further note of caution from Watson relates to the idea of construction of narrative. In qualitative research there may be the danger of ‘made-upness’, although this is

counteracted by Holstein and Gubrium.

The respondent does not just “make things up” as much as he or she inventively, judiciously, purposefully fashions a story that is “true to life”. The story is thus a powerful metaphor for a life and the telling of stories a universal human activity. (Holstein and Gubrium 1995, 25)

In Paul Ricoeur the use of narrative identity comes from his desire to integrate historical narrative and fictional narrative:

Self-understanding is an interpretation; interpretation of the self, in turn, finds in the narrative, among other signs and symbols, a privileged form of mediation; the latter borrows from history as well as from fiction, making a life story a fictional history or, if one prefers, a historical fiction, interweaving the historiographic style of biographies with the novelistic style of imaginary autobiographies. (Ricoeur 1992, 114)

For Ricoeur identity is divided into identity as *sameness (idem)* and identity as *selfhood (ipse)*. There are many characteristics of identity which stay the same over time, my name, my nationality, the colour of my eyes. These characteristics are identity as *idem*: they remain the same over time. However over time I am the same person although things have changed, “within the cohesion of one lifetime” (Ricoeur 1988, 246). It is the *sameness-in-difference* which constitutes my *ipse* identity. This for Ricoeur is narrative identity.

As the literary analysis of autobiography confirms, the story of a life continues to be reconfigured by all the truthful or fictive stories a subject tell about himself or herself. This refiguration makes this life a cloth woven of stories told. (Ricoeur 1988, 246)

Atkins defines the narrative approach to identity as:

...one that is oriented to the need for meaning in the lives of embodied, practical beings existing within the constraints of a temporal world. It has developed as a sophisticated philosophical response to the complexities and ambiguities of the human, lived situation, and is not – as has been naively suggested elsewhere – the imposition of a generic form of life or the attempt to imitate a fictional character. (Atkins 2004, 341)

This has resonances in the phenomenology of the body schema and bodily self-awareness in the writing of Merleau-Ponty.

Our own body is in the world as the heart is in the organism: it keeps the visible spectacle constantly alive, it breathes life into it and sustains it inwardly, and with it forms a system. (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 235)

The ability of human self-awareness is reliant on the fact that we have bodies, which co-exist with the rest of existence and of which we attempt to understand.

Our constant aim is to elucidate the primary function whereby we bring into existence, for ourselves, or take a hold upon, space, the object or the instrument, and to describe the body as the place where this appropriation occurs. (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 178)

Kerby offers that the body is:

(B)oth the site of narration and also the normal site of ascription for the subject of a personal narrative. This reflexivity is particularly clear when we listen to another person's words and constantly refer the narrated subject, the subject of speech, back to the site of enunciation (the other's body). The crucial point is that this mediated reflexivity (a form of predication) yields a distinctly human body, a body with a "subjective" history, a meaning, and therefore with a "soul" – it yields a person. (Kerby 2001, 132-133)

The narrative model is

...not simply a first-person report of an individual's subjective experiences and point of view, it is a complex model that interweaves the first-person subjective perspective with the second-person perspective of the communicative situation of social existence, along with a generalisable or third-person perspective presupposed by a shared world of meanings with public standards of objectivity. (Atkins, 2004, 343)

In this model we have the elements which constitute the use of narrative in qualitative research, the first person experience, perception of that experience in the I/Thou context and the relationship of those perceptions across the general norms of the wider world.

3.1.2.3 Identity Salience

Society is a web of social interactions and relationships which take the form of groups and organisations, from the very basic e.g. family, to the global e.g. religion. The individual is part of not one group, but many groups each with their particular embedded ideologies, practices, and mores. Gee (2000-2001) offers a useful explanation for this idea of multiple identities:

When any human being acts and interacts in a given context, others recognize that person as acting and interacting as a certain “kind of person” or even as several different “kinds” at once (on the notion of “kinds of people” and the ways in which different kinds appear and disappear in history...) ...The “kind of person” one is recognized as ‘being’, at a given time and place, can change from moment to moment in the interaction, can change from context to context, and, of course, can be ambiguous or unstable. (Gee 2000, 99)

Stryker & Burke (2000) explain the idea of *identity salience* as the probability that an identity will be invoked across a variety of situations, or alternatively across persons in a given situation. Understanding identity salience and the various ‘communities of ideas and principles’ will be covered at the interrogative stage. A teacher may find themselves at the point of intersection between a number of ‘communities of ideas and principles’: the community of cultural and religious affiliation; the school community; the community of family and friends.

Reflection on one’s identity is important. For Atkinson “(u)sing the tools and strategies of reflective practice the subject is able to become a more effective or enlightened practitioner” (Atkinson 2004, 379). What is also important is trying to establish an understanding of the multiplicity of identities in the one person: what belongs where; the conflict resolution between aspects of differing identities; the strengths and weaknesses of differing identities in the living out of one’s life. Nias (1984) states:

Symbolic interactionists have therefore evolved the notion of ‘multiple selves’ which reflect individuals’ perceptions of themselves in relation to the different groups in which they participate. These ‘multiple selves’ encompass individuals’ ‘ideal’ and ‘real’ selves as well as taking account of the way they seem to themselves (‘self-as-ego’) and how they think others see them (‘self-as-alter’). (Nias 1984, 267)

The idea of multiple identities can be seen to be one particular way in which a person might understand and reconcile points of conflict between identities.

Few if any of us can avoid the passage through more than one genuine or putative, well-integrated or ephemeral ‘community of ideas and principles’, so most of us have trouble with resolving (to use Paul Ricoeur’s terms) the issues of *la mêmète* (the consistency and continuity of our identity over time). Few if any of us are exposed to just one ‘community of ideas and principles’ at a time, and so

most of us have similar trouble with the issue of *l'ipséité* (coherence of whatever distinguishes us as persons). (Bauman 2004, 13)

These ideas have something to contribute to a discussion of the identity of a person who may find they are negotiating any one of a number of social, ideological, gender, professional identities.

3.1.3 Self-Concept

The inclusion of the section on identity as self-concept emphasises the notion of *agency* and *reflection* and seeing identity as something that is both internal and external. *Behaviours* are something that can be seen as the external expression of identity and *perceptions* can be seen as the internal expression of identity. These distinctions will be central to a discussion of both teacher identity and religious identity later. In religious identity one sees oneself (reflexivity) as both individual and as part of the group.

In social identity theory and identity theory, the self is reflexive in that it can take itself as an object and can categorise, classify or name itself in particular ways in relation to other social categories or classifications. (Stets & Burke 2000, 224)

I have already discussed personal identity, and now I want to discuss something that is part of it, to a certain extent, but is also different from it. Personal identity can be seen, at its most basic level as a set of traits, characteristics and categories that are part of the make-up of a person. They are defined from within the person and from the society of which they are a part. Self-concept is the way that the person reflects on and interprets those traits and characteristics: it is the hermeneutic of identity. It is central to this whole research, as the capacity for reflection will be crucial later on in the interrogative stage, where the principle of double hermeneutic will apply – the interpretation of the student teachers' interpretation. Reflection on self-concept rather than just a simple answering of questions when interviewing student teachers will lead to a deeper understanding and a richer, thicker description of religious identity.

The narrative view comes down to the claim that human understanding takes a

narrative form. As self-understanding beings, persons have narrative identities. The narrative model is not simply a first-person report of an individual's subjective experiences and point of view, it is a complex model that interweaves the first-person subjective perspective with the second-person perspective of the communicative situation of social existence, along with a generalisable or third-person perspective presupposed by a shared world of meanings with public standards of objectivity. (Atkins 2004, 342)

Some of the literature on teacher identity refers to identity and self (Nias, 1984; Lempert Shepel, 1995; Hoffman, 1998; Woods & Jeffrey, 2002; Reicher, 2004; Troman, 2008), much of which has its basis in Vygotsky (1978) and in Giddens (1991). Nias (1984) states that,

The 'self' has an individual identity, and an individual capacity to reflect not only upon the actions of others but also upon its own behaviour and the response it invokes from them. Mature actors are self-conscious, even though they can know themselves only through their social identities. The contexts which determine these social identities change with time, place and role. (Nias 1984, 267)

Nias names the situational self and the substantial self, the latter of which, “comprises a person's most salient and most valued views of and attitudes to self, is persistently defended and highly resistant to change” (Nias 1984, 268). Lempert Shepel, in attempting to use the idea of self in terms of teacher development offers a definition of identity based on the self:

At one time it seems to refer to a conscious sense of individual uniqueness, at another to an unconscious striving for a continuity of experience, and yet again, as a solidarity with a group's ideals. In some respects the term identity appears to be colloquial and naive, a mere manner of speaking, while in others it is related to existing theoretical concepts, for example, in the psychological notions of self-concept, self-system, self-representation, and so forth. (Lempert Shepel 1995, 437)

Lempert Shelpel's focus, therefore is on the sense of the individual, the dynamic of experience and the affiliation with the group. Therefore we are back to the earlier concept of group, the role and the person, mentioned by Stets and Burke (2000). Hoffman lays out the argument by placing the *self* in the field of anthropology and psychology. For her, self is the psychocultural dimension to identity “...a culturally

patterned way of relating to others; to the material, natural, and spiritual worlds; and to time and space, including notions of agency, mind, person, being, and spirit” (Hoffman 1998, 326). The area of intersection between the self and culture has a bearing on the consideration of the intersection between identity and religious culture. Giddens (1991) situates his ideas in the sphere of what he terms as ‘late’ or ‘high-modernity’. He sees self-identity not as:

...something that is just given, as a result of the continuities of the individual’s action system, but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual. (Giddens 1991, 52)

Key to Giddens idea is the notion of *reflexivity*. It is reflexive awareness, what the individual is consciousness of when referring to *self-consciousness*. It is something that is seen by the individual in the context of their biography and not merely a collection of characteristics or traits.

The existential question of self-identity is bound up with the fragile nature of the biography which the individual ‘supplies’ about herself. A person’s identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor important though it is – in the reactions of others, but in the capacity *to keep a particular narrative going*. (Giddens 1991, 54)

Giddens (1991) offers four dilemmas of the self: *unification versus fragmentation*, in which the self attempts to protect the narrative of self-identity in the face of modernity; *powerlessness versus appropriation*, in which the self feels powerless in the face of the global, where at one time they felt in control in the context of the local; *authority versus uncertainty*, in which the self negotiates an existence where many of the traditional and specific institutions of authority have been found wanting and have been undermined to the point where they no longer hold any sway; *personalised versus commodified* experience, where the self must contend with the effects of commodity capitalism’s erosion of individual autonomy. Giddens is not defeated. He sees substantial self-identity as the key to counteract the malaises listed above. At the same time as Giddens

was writing, Gergen (1991) was also writing about the ‘saturated self’ and the state of social saturation, from a post-modern perspective:

I am the victim (or benefactor) of profound changes that have been taking place throughout the twentieth century. New technologies make it possible to sustain relationships – either directly or indirectly – with an ever-expanding range of other persons. In many respects we are reaching what may be viewed as a state of social saturation. Changes of this magnitude are seldom self-contained. They reverberate throughout the culture, slowly accumulating until one day we are shocked to realize that we’ve been dislocated – and can’t recover what has been lost. (Gergen 1991, 3)

Sugrue and Furlong, after Beck (2000) are somewhat cautious of this approach of Giddens:

Though the concept of globalization continues to be contested, there is little doubting the globalizing tendency of the postmodern age (Giddens 1990, Beck 2000). However, we are in agreement with Beck when he suggests that the process should not be understood ‘as uniform McDonaldization of the world’ but that ‘[t]he framework in which the meaning of the local has to establish itself has changed’. (Sugrue & Furlong 2002, 190)

3.2. Teacher Identity

A great deal of what has been said in the general section on identity is applicable to teacher identity. This section will survey the literature specifically on some aspects of teacher identity which will be pertinent to the interrogative stage, when speaking to student teachers about their identity and their religious identity.

The first question to be asked is why teacher identity is important to this study. Coming off the back of Heidegger, and in this case Rahner also, Wenger suggests “the experience of identity in practice is a way of being in the world” (Wenger 1998, 151), and that according to Gee, “it can be an analytical lens for educational research” (Gee, 2000-2001).

As in the section on identity there is no one single, permanent definition of teacher identity.

Teachers’ professional identity is not fixed nor is it imposed, rather it is

negotiated through a rich and complex set of relations of practice. This richness and complexity must be nurtured and developed in conditions where there is respect, mutuality, and communication for teachers individually and the teaching profession collectively. (Chong & Low 2009, 70)

The first word here of note is ‘professional’. Gothier *et al* write about the rise in Europe and North America of recognition of the professional identity of teachers, which in their native Quebec is linked to reforms in educational programmes and teacher preparation emphasising competency.

Competencies, the creation of a professional order of teachers, autonomy, and professional ethics are the leading words in the new orthodoxy of the teaching profession...Professional identity is not presumed to be conferred through social means only. Teachers’ professional identity can be defined as the representation which teachers have of themselves as teachers. (Gothier *et al* 2007, 142-143)

The view that identity in teachers is concerned with their understanding of their profession or their seeing themselves as professionals is only one part of teacher identity. Lennon speaks from the Irish context when he states that:

Implicit to our understanding of teacher professionalism is the specialist knowledge of teachers acquired after a prolonged period of training, the focus on the client/student as distinct from the pursuit of self-interest, a high degree of autonomy in their work, the ability to contribute their own knowledge base and skills at both an individual and occupational level, and the fostering of student and community well-being. (Lennon 1999, 45)

Within this description, three particular points are of interest: the acquiring of ‘specialist knowledge’ in the narrow term of religious education, the high degree of autonomy and the ability to contribute their own knowledge. If this defines what it is to be a good teacher, can these particular factors be used to define what it might be to be a good religious education teacher. I would hope to return to Lennon’s understanding of teacher professionalism as a way to understand how the student teachers’ religious identity has an influence of the teaching of religious education. MacLure (1993) refers to the growing interest in teachers’ personal and professional lives in the literature. McClure uses the phrase ‘biographical attitude’ with regard to this and the work of

Connolly and Clandinin (1990) ties in with this. It also ties in with narrative identity as viewed in the writing of Ricoeur and others. There are a number of reasons for this interest in biography. Firstly, it ties in with teacher development from an 'holistic' approach, as all areas of the life and career of a teacher should form the basis for their development. Secondly, biography is also useful to qualitative research as it gives the project authenticity and validity.

By striving to remain faithful to subjects' own values and experiences, or letting them speak in their 'own' voices, researchers can appeal against the charge of interpretive 'theft' of other people's subjectivity. (MacLure 1993, 312)

Olsen, who views teacher identity in sociocultural terms ties in with this:

This sociocultural model of identity considers that people are both products of their social histories, and – through things like hope, desperation, imaging, and mindfulness – move themselves from one subjectivity to the next, from one facet of their identity to another, and can in some limited sense choose to act in certain ways considered by them to be coherent with their own self-understandings. Applied to teachers, this view highlights both the constraints/opportunities on a teacher deriving from personal histories and also the actual agency any teacher possesses. (Olsen 2008a, 24)

An example of this use of biography is in the research of Søreide (2006), where she explains multiple teacher identities in terms of 'ontological narratives' from Somers & Gibson (1994), and what she refers to as 'narrative positioning' (Søreide 2006, 529; 533-534). These identities have been gleaned from the narratives and statements of teachers: the caring and kind teacher; the creative and innovative teacher; the professional teacher; the typical teacher. Her methodology confirms this use of biography:

During the interviews the teachers were encouraged to talk about their everyday life as teachers, their relationships with colleagues, pupils and parents and what they considered to be good, difficult and important in their job. The teachers contributed willingly with stories and their perspective on the themes in question, and the interviews developed more into conversations in which the teachers talked most of the time. (Søreide 2006, 530)

She refers to some of the other authors in the area of gender and job identity within

similar theoretical frameworks (Weber & Mitchell, 1995; Weedon, 1997; Zembylas, 2003; Holland, 2004), who she says:

...argue that such awareness increases the ability to recognize and understand systems of power within institutions and discourses. A recognition and understanding of structures and how practices, assumptions, beliefs and images are embedded in these is a presupposition, if one wishes to make changes with practical consequences. To give explicit descriptions of the narrative resources teachers have access to is, therefore, important. (Søreide 2006, 544)

The idea of using personal teaching narratives is limited in terms of these student teachers, but even their limited experience of teaching practice in the case of the third years and the full-time teaching for the fourth years may yield some interesting narrative.

With the fluidity of this sociocultural model there is the opportunity to explore many different facets of identity, especially from the internal reflective method of identity and the important role of agency in the developing of identity. Sugrue & Furlong (2002) are useful at this point. They speak from an Irish perspective in discussing the cosmologies of Irish primary principals. They situate their study in the Heideggerian concept of being-in-the-world and the Bourdieu concept of *habitus*. For them the ‘habitus’ is the Irish primary school and identity,

...is at once robust and fragile. It is fashioned continuously between chaos and order, between neurotic attachment to the ‘certainties’ of the past, and a creative risk-oriented leap of imagination beyond slavish adherence to routines as previously enacted. (Sugrue & Furlong 2002, 191-192)

The idea of ‘fashioning continuously’ is similar to what was spoken about earlier with regard to identity as being something that is fluid and dynamic and is something that would be crucial for a student teacher to understand, as they enter the classroom and being to form their identity as a primary teacher.

One final point to be mentioned here is the relationship between the personal beliefs of a teacher and their professionalism. As suggested by Pohan and Aguilar: “...educators’

beliefs serve as filters for their knowledge bases and will ultimately affect their actions. Richardson (1996) advanced this theoretical notion by suggesting that prior beliefs are well established by the time a student enters college and that these beliefs are shaped by personal experience, schooling and instruction, and formal knowledge” (Pohan & Aguilar 2001, 160). This implies that personal belief received prior to college may ultimately have an influence on how a future teacher might teach, and beliefs which are at odds with the particular religious ethos or denomination of a school might create a tension with a teacher’s professionalism. IN other words, can a student who wants to be a good teacher act with professionalism, by either keeping personal opinions to themselves and teach what is prescribed, or do they remain steadfast to their religious beliefs and only teach that part of a programme which does not come into conflict with these beliefs.

3.2.1 The Emerging Identity in the Student Teacher

In terms of social identity, a student’s entry into college or university is point of departure in observing emerging identity in student teachers:

Social construction of identity occurs in different contexts on campus such as in how student organizations are created and which students are drawn to them, or in the social identities among those in leadership positions and those not, as well as in issues of institutional fit within access and retention. (Torres et al 2009, 577)

In Colleges of Education which are considerably smaller than Universities, students are required to ‘pitch in’ and be involved far more than they if they were in a larger institution. The creation of a sense of community in the Colleges of Education can be essential to a student’s good experience of college. As the student settles into their years in college the interaction with other people, the expectations of those around them, all have a part to play in identity construction (Jones, 1997; McEwen, 2003; Torres, 2003; Weber, 1998).

...the college as an arena of social interaction in which the individual comes in

contact with a multitude of actors in a variety of settings, emphasizing that through these social interactions and other social influences the identities of individuals are, in part, constituted. (Kaufman & Feldman, 2004, 464)

Kaufman and Feldman use the terms ‘felt identities’, which encompass both personal traits and roles and they see this sociological approach as far more useful to understanding the construction of their identity by college students than the psychological approach. Torres *et al* go on to describe the approach of social psychology. Adams and Marshall (1996) write that the positivity that students feel by being part of the group contributes to personal well-being. For Côté and Levine (2002), identity is the product of both culture and individual action. As stated by Torres *et al*:

The personality and social structure perspective relies on three levels of analysis to examine social behavior: personality, interaction with others, and broader social structure. Day-to-day interactions filter expectations, socialization, and social control to the individual, who in turn broadcasts his or her presentation of self into a socially constructed reality. (Torres *et al* 2009, 580)

Added to this, the student is required to do this without the immediate presence of parental support and the familiarity of friends and relationship from home and secondary school. Indeed in the period of emerging adulthood, family relationship are also in a state of flux, and young adults seek to create a relationship that is different in nature from their time as adolescents (Arnett, 2000). For students at college, returning home either at weekends or for the holidays is both important and stressful. Johnson *et al* (2010) state that students coming from a cohesive background find the transition to college less stressful than students from less cohesive backgrounds:

We found support for the hypothesis that college students’ perceptions of their family environment—namely family cohesion, family expressiveness, and family conflict—are linked to their academic, social, and emotional well-being when making the transition to college. (Johnson *et al* 2010, 618)

Often they are returning to a world which knows little or nothing of college life. They want to assert their independence, but may rely on their parents for financial support. They may find themselves becoming distant with friends from home or secondary

school. They may also have made choices or initiated patterns of behaviour with regard to religious observance, sexual identity, morality, and/or drinking habits, which may not be acceptable in the home environment. In Irish life, the family mores may also extend to the wider community and this may be a source of conflict for the student.

New college students struggle with the tangible task of separation and individuation as they leave their parents' home to live at their new college or university. This task often takes the form of a psychological struggle between family connection and independence and occurs regardless of the physical location of the child's home. (Johnson *et al* 2010, 608)

Torres, Jones & Renn (2009) state that the concepts of 'emerging adulthood' and 'possible selves' have not been considered much by sociologists, but in the context of this research they will be considered as both having a contribution to the emerging identity of student teachers. Emerging adulthood is considered that period between the end of secondary school and the development of a full adult identity, (Arnett, 2004) and the period of college is often seen as a buffer to the reality of the outside world (Baxter Magolda, 2001). 'Possible selves' is what a person hopes or fears they may be in the future (Markus & Nurius, 1986). Torres, Jones and Renn (2009) state that with regard to student identity development, the following are common among identity theorists: the move from a simple self-understanding of identity to a more complex understanding; that identity is constructed and reconstructed; the importance of the student's environment in the construction of this identity.

Sexton says that, "Teacher education is charged with moving student teachers from their largely personal, incoming understandings of teaching to a more balanced, professional view of their roles as teachers" (Sexton 2008, 86). As can be seen from the literature above, students are developing their identities as adult as they arrive at college, and in the case of colleges of education, are about to give birth to a new identity which will be part of the rest of their lives – teacher identity. The literature

here begins with why a person wants to be a teacher, which might be the first indication of what this identity might be. Sugrue writes about the role of ‘lay-theories’ and embedded archetypes in student teachers. ‘Lay theories’ are,

(t)he personal experiences of student teachers, their apprenticeship of observation and the embedded cultural archetypes of teaching collectively yield both the form (sociohistorical situatedness) and the content (beliefs, attitudes, dispositions and behaviours) of their teaching identities. (Sugrue 1998, 214)

In Ireland the place of the primary school is still central in the life of a community or parish and student teachers would be aware of this importance, even without any need for this to be asserted. Holt-Reynolds defines ‘lay theories’ as:

...beliefs developed naturally over time without the influence of instruction. Student teachers do not consciously learn them at an announced, recognised moment from a formal teaching/learning episode. Rather, lay theories represent tacit knowledge lying dormant and unexamined by the student (Barclay & Wellman, 1986). Developed over long years of participation in and observation of classrooms (Lortie, 1975) and teaching/learning incidents occurring in schools, homes or the larger community (Measor, 1985; Sikes, 1987), lay theories are based on untutored interpretations of personal lived experiences. (Holt-Reynolds 1993, 326)

In the Irish context the influence of parents, siblings and other relatives who are teachers should also be taken into account. These lay theories, along with cultural archetypes of teachers and teaching can be in place before the student ever arrives at the college of education. However, while writing positively about lay theories, Holt Reynolds does strike a note of caution:

It is altogether possible that these personal history-based lay theories could indeed act as helpful schemata that student teachers can expand as they pursue their formal studies of teaching. There are, however, times when students' lay concepts are not quite contextualizing, illuminating, and helpful so much as they are powerful, potentially misleading, and unproductive as resources for learning the principles we hope to teach. (Holt-Reynolds 1993, 327)

While Sugrue goes on to mention a number of cultural archetypes such as the ‘master/mistress’ nomenclature for teachers, and offers examples from Irish literature, the basic point of lay theories and cultural archetypes in terms of the identity of Irish

primary school student teachers is useful to explore at the interrogative stage, not only in terms of teacher archetypes, but also religious archetypes – their experience of being taught religion and the teacher who did so. This is also extended to the student experience of being taught or lectured in religious education at college and some of the lecturers who taught them. The attitude of lecturers and teachers to religious education and its importance in the primary school classroom may have an effect on their own attitudes towards the same both in the present, while on teaching practice and in their future teaching careers.

Coll (2009) has considered the relationship between the theory and practice in the experiences of what she refers to as ‘probationary teachers’ and suggests:

In an era dominated by performance constructions of the teacher as a competence driven profession, it is vital to maintain a focus on the deeper motivations and dispositions of the classroom practitioner. The place of *faith* and *spirituality* within this conception of teacher identity has received much less attention. (Coll 2009, 141)

Within the interrogative stage, I hope to ask about ‘deeper motivations and dispositions’, which may include an understanding of faith and spirituality in the student teachers. According to Britzman, “learning to teach – like teaching itself – is always the process of becoming: a time of formation and transformation, of scrutiny into what one is doing, and who one can become” (Britzman, 1991, 8). Again the place of faith and spirituality in this formation should not be forgotten, especially in the case of student teachers who may go on to teach in denominational primary schools. Sumara & Luce-Kapler have suggested three identities that a beginning teacher must negotiate: “those they bring with them into teacher education, those they develop while doing university course work, and those they develop during student teaching practicums” (Sumara & Luce-Kapler 1996, 65). The first of these relates to the previous section concerning ‘lay-theories’. Many students find the course-work easy and the teaching

difficult, or vice-versa. In the smaller environment of the colleges of education in Ireland, students may find themselves competing against each other with regard to teaching practice folders, grades earned in exams, participation in class and the other issues mentioned above. The attitudes of mentor teachers, teaching supervisors and the whole school community may have a considerable effect on the student teacher as they begin teaching practice. All three of these ‘negotiated identities’ will form part of the interrogative stage of the research at a foundational level. Before the students have to contend with their religious identity and teaching religion, they have to contend with their emerging identities and teaching in general. Sumura & Luce-Kapler also define the notion of ‘fictive identity’, which:

...like characters in literary fictions, is composed not only of elements of the student teacher’s already-experienced world of understanding, but also of the various cultural myths associated with the idea of ‘teacher’. (Sumura & Luce-Kapler 1996, 67)

Danielewicz suggests that “‘becoming a teacher’ is an identity forming process whereby individuals define themselves and are viewed by others as teachers” (Danielewicz 2001, 4) and she suggests that the construction of this self, both as professional self and collective self is done when learning to teach. Lamonte and Engels see the development of student teachers’ professional identity as something akin to formation – “an ongoing process of interpretation and re-interpretation of experiences. It is dynamic and subject to an ongoing learning process” (Lamonte & Engels 2010, 4-5). As with general identity theory, teacher identity and professional identity formation is something that is not static. For Olsen, the structure of teacher development can be viewed as a continuum rather than possessing a linear structure:

That is to say that teacher recruitment, student preparation, inservice professional development, and teacher retention may be chronologically sequenced but, epistemologically, they are intertwined and continually loop back and forth to influence each other in mutually constitutive ways. Teacher development is circular even as it is also forward-moving: a teacher is always collapsing the past,

present, and future into a complex melange of professional beliefs, goals, memories, and predictions while enacting practice. (Olsen 2008a, 23-24)

Teacher education does not end upon graduation. In the course of identity understanding and interpretation, the ability to remain flexible, open to change, may enrich the life and career of the teacher. MacLure's view is that "(i)identity is always deferred and in the process of becoming – never really, never yet, never 'absolutely there'" (MacLure, 2003, 131) Finally and as stated by Sumura & Luce-Kapler (1996):

For many students "becoming a teacher" entails not enriching their lives with a wider repertoire of abilities and insights but, rather, discarding and excluding various identities and experiences that do not conform to the constricting cultural myths and practices conditioning the teacher education curriculum. (Sumura & Luce-Kapler 1996, 81)

The role of mentoring/supervision in teacher education warrants mention because of its role in teacher education. An older teacher, who is committed to the teaching and role of religion in their class and who guides a younger teacher through the teaching of religious education may have an effect on how that younger teacher views the teaching and role of religion in their own classroom. The opposite may also be true. A supervisor who has no interest on the way a student teacher prepares or teaches a religion lesson may have a bearing on how that student teacher views religion when finally out of college and in a school proper. Furthermore, the fact that religion is not the responsibility of the Schools Inspectorate may also have a bearing on how student teachers and teachers in general might view it.

In Walkington (2005) the term supervision has been associated with that of socialization: helping the student teacher in 'settling in' to school, making them feel welcome, and also initiating them into the particular school community.

It emphasizes evaluating beliefs and practices, questioning personal views and theorizing more about practice. These happen in university discussion as part of reflecting on and learning from professional experience periods in schools. What is suggested here are that these characteristics of mentoring happen in school experience too, bridging and complementing the learning in both places.

(Walkington 2005, 56)

This has a resonance with religious identity: how mentoring teachers handed on something of their personal religious identity to student teachers and how some of the ethos of the school as a religiously conscious community was passed on either directly or indirectly to the student teachers.

The concept of 'becoming a teacher' fits in with the idea of emerging identity.

According to Chong & Low (2009),

Teacher identity must begin, then by exploring student teachers' motivations to teach and the perceptions they have of the profession. (Chong & Low 2009, 60)

Cooper & Olsen (1996) have made the point that professional identity is multifaceted.

In the profession of teaching this is also true with aspects of historical, sociological, psychological and cultural factors all having an influence on the professional identity and the teacher understanding of themselves. Mayer (1999) makes a distinction between role and identity:

A teaching role encapsulates the things the teacher does in performing the functions required of her/him as a teacher, whereas a teaching identity is a more personal thing and indicates how one identifies with being a teacher and how one feels as a teacher. (Mayer, 1999, 6-7)

Sexton wrote about the interaction between role and identity in that:

...individual student teachers understood, mediated, and transformed shared understandings of teaching to connect with their own interests, experiences, and goals, but this was not a straightforward process that completely negated the influence(s) of teacher education. These student teachers worked at attending to their individual needs and goals, while maintaining a certain coherence between who they are (teacher identity) and who they wanted--or were expected-to be (teacher role). (Sexton 2008, 83)

The word 'role' tends to be used with regard to the external functional day-to-day factors of teaching, whereas the term 'identity' is about the deeper, internal, philosophical and life-long factors of being a teacher. It is never the case of either/or, but always the case of both/and. There is a balance that is maintained when a teacher

understands the two sides at work in their life. It is often the case that the interests of a particular teacher had an effect of their pupils; interest in sport, arts, music, or literature can often be the one thing that is remembered of a particular teacher. This might also be true for a teacher's interest in religion and their personal religious devotion which then permeated the classroom. This interest has more to do with the internal life of the teacher than with the daily function of teaching. This is mentioned by Walkington (2005):

Teacher identity is based on the core beliefs one has about teaching and being a teacher; beliefs that are continuously formed and reformed through experience...Such a view promotes the teacher as a flexible, lifelong learner, able to participate in ongoing change—confident in him/herself. (Walkington 2005, 54)

Walkington quotes from Mayer: “It is possible to become an expert practitioner by actually doing the job, by performing the skills, but true professional teaching involved another dimension, an intellectual dimension” (Mayer 1999, 8), and while agreeing, suggests that the function and identity aspects are “not mutually exclusive, but rather intertwined aspects of the developing professional” (Walkington 2005, 54).

There is no dualism in this external/internal attitude, but it does beg the question: how a teacher who, in terms of their identity sees no place for a religious element to that internal identity, can still function as a good religious education teacher, because it is part of the external, functioning element of her role as a teacher.

To conclude this section, there is a great deal of theory on which to base the interrogative section of the research, and mostly around the concepts of emergence, becoming, and negotiating new identities with those multiple identities and preconceived ‘lay-theories’ which a student arrives at college with: the idea of identity construction and the importance of role and professionalism in teacher identity: how teachers/student teachers see their identity either as a construction or as something that

they acquire.

Finally salience has a relevance to the research: student teachers negotiating their multiple identities depending on situations and circumstances. What will be interesting if this is the case is how much, if at all the religious identity is called on, or how it might be ignored by a person except on a few occasions and in limited circumstances.

3.3. Religious Identity – Public and Private

Religious Identity is treated here in two sections – the public and the private. The reason for this is to make the distinction between the notions of religious identity which are private and personal to the student, and the public trends and patterns of religious identity which have emerged over the last number of years in Ireland and the wider world. This requires delving into the area of sociology of religion and, in particular, writing around secularization. The reason for the importance of both is that although a student teacher had particular personal ideas of faith and religious identity, they are not immune to the national and global trends in religion, and they may have opinions about and attitudes towards religion as a phenomenon.

Of all social phenomena, none is perhaps as protean and, consequently, least susceptible to binary classification as religion. Of all dichotomous pairs of relational terms, few are as ambiguous, multivocal, and open to discursive contestation as the private/public distinction. Yet the private/public distinction is crucial to all conceptions of the modern social order, and religion itself is intrinsically connected with the modern historical differentiation of private and public spheres. (Casanova 1992, 19)

Casanova makes the distinction between the two: “(t)hey appear as the distinction between "individual" and "group" religiosity at the interaction level of analysis; as the distinction between "community cult" and "religious community" at the organizational level of analysis...” (Casanova 1992, 43) He sees the distinction as represented by William James as “the feelings, acts and experiences of individual men in their

solitude” (James 2010, 27), and “worship and sacrifice, procedures for working on the dispositions of the deity, theology and ceremony and ecclesiastical organization” (James 2010, 25). For James the former is primary and the latter, secondary. For Durkheim religion does not exist without “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden – beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them” (Durkheim 2001, 46).

The public section will focus on the sociology of religion, in particular the changing nature of religion in society and the rise of secularization. Casanova thinks that it is better to see religions as cultural systems rather than religious markets (Casanova 2001, 427). This distinction is very relevant to Ireland for three reasons: the long history of Christianity in Ireland; the cultural distinctions that exist between the Catholic and Protestant Churches in the Republic of Ireland; the Catholic Church’s system of churches and parishes, schools, hospitals and other institutions created a particular culture, which in the last number of years is beginning to breakdown and in many cases be taken over by the State. Coupled with this is the relevance of globalisation to the rise of secularization.

It is obvious that people living in contemporary society experience a wide variety of influences from other parts of the world. People’s scope is no longer limited to their immediate surroundings but has expanded worldwide. (Halman & Petersson 2003, 184)

Awareness of the global context has impact on the way some view their religious identity, and in the case of student teachers the desired context and content of their religion classes in primary school.

Global markets, global media and information systems, global subcultures and identities (youth, indigenous people), global movements and organizations (Amnesty International and human rights, feminism, Greenpeace, Doctors without Borders) of a global civil society, all proliferate and become increasingly more relevant traversing national borders and transcending national territories (Castells

1997). (Casanova 2001, 429)

Having examined public religion, the private will then be discussed and will focus on personal religious identity and the ideas and theories relevant to this study. There is a great deal of overlapping between these two areas, but the general picture of public religion needs to be established before discussing what is personal to the individual religious believer/practitioner.

3.3.1 Public Religion

Religion as a universal phenomenon is based on a belief in a supernatural being, in both the transcendent and immanent in the human being. It is mediated through word/story, sign/symbol and ritual/gesture. Bauman states that religion “belongs to the family of curious, and often embarrassing concepts, which one perfectly understands until one wants to define them” (Bauman 1998, 55). For Demerath, religious belief is “...less a matter of intellectual conviction than a form of social affiliation and cultural identification...” (Demerath 2001, 9) Religion is faith in a particular belief system, and the identification with a particular culture through which that faith is mediated. Word/story, signs/symbols and ritual/gestures are essential to a religious culture. As McMullan states,

Much sociological literature sees religion as the dependent variable, yet that is not how people in society experience religion in everyday life. For religious people, beliefs, traditions, practices, symbols, and religious organizations form the basis of how they experience and relate to the rest of society. (McMullan 2010, 9)

They can be any object, event or experience, becoming a vehicle for a concept or a sign. They are the products of a society, the components through which a society understands and orients itself to life in the world (Shorter, 1988; 34). Hervieu-Léger sees it not just as a system of beliefs, “which are the supreme objects of individual and collective convictions, but the practices, behaviour and institutions in which these beliefs find expression” (Hervieu-Léger 2000, 3). She goes on to define it “as the mechanism of

meaning which enables humanity to transcend the deceptions uncertainties and frustrations of everyday life” (Hervieu-Léger 2000, 34).

There has been a great deal of literature concerning the shift both in Ireland and throughout the world, from an age of defined and secure religious practice to, what some have called, an age or culture of disbelief, a culture of choice, a secular age (Bellah, 1991; Moran 1997; Guardini 1998; Williams 2000; Groome 2002; Twomey, 2003; Clarke, 2006; Williams 2005; Rausch 2006; Ratzinger 2006; Taylor 2007).

3.3.1.1 Secularization

Casanova suggests avoiding a single theory of secularization and seeing it as three particular and different concepts: “as differentiation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms, secularization as decline of religious beliefs and practices, and secularization as marginalization of religion to a privatized sphere” (Casanova 1994, 211). Later Casanova defines it as “actual or alleged empirical-historical patterns of transformation and differentiation of the institutional spheres of ‘the religious’ (ecclesiastical institutions and churches) and ‘the secular’ (state, economy, science, art, entertainment, health and welfare, etc.) from early modern to contemporary societies” (Casanova 2009, 1051). He makes the distinction between secularization and secularism, which refers to “a whole range of modern secular worldviews and ideologies” (Casanova 2009, 1051). The religious is concerned with the sacred, the collective and the not every day, whereas the secular is the profane, the individual and the everyday (Goldstein 2009, 137). This distinction between the two is relevant to the Irish experience. As a phenomenon, Ireland is experiencing a time of ‘transformation’ and ‘differentiation’ in the relationship between the Churches and the State, and this is sometimes manifested through the ‘secularist’ opinions of commentators. The dominance of either the Protestant or Catholic Churches in Ireland

over the centuries is no longer there. In the past, as stated by Bruce, “religious adherence remained strong as an expression of protest and of rejection of alien values and domination, and as an expression of cultural and social integrity” (Bruce 1999, 23). He cites both the Catholic Church in Ireland and Poland as examples of this, stating later that the Catholic Church in Ireland acted as guarantor of group identity (Bruce 1999, 25). Martin cites Ireland as an example of social differentiation:

Nowhere can the Church assume that loyal identification is permanent or that it can be translated into obedience to Catholic norms or support for their embodiment in secular law. That is all part of the distancing of the Church from the state, Catholic morality from the law, and ecclesiastical élites from social élites and it illustrates what is meant by secularisation in the limited sense of social differentiation. Italians voted for divorce in 1975, while in Ireland, insensitive assumptions about automatic respect crumbled at the touch of moral scandal. (Martin 2005, 152)

In this case then, the Irish experience of secularization encompasses each of the particular concepts: while the Churches still have something of a role with regard to education, health care, this role is continuing to decline; there has been a decline in religious practice; and there has been decline in the influence of religion in society.

...the long-term trend of declining levels of church adherence and practice in Europe is just one manifestation of this process. Secularization also refers to the process in which religion gradually loses its once strong and encompassing determining impact on human life. (Halman & Petersson, 2003 49)

The privatisation of religion is not just a matter of differentiation. “To say that ‘religion is a private affair’ not only describes a historical process of institutional differentiation but actually prescribes the proper place for religion in social life. The place which modernity assigns to religion is ‘home’ understood not as the household but as ‘the abiding place of one's affections’” (Casanova 1992, 33). According to Goldstein, the origin of secularization theory goes back to Durkheim’s ‘differentiation’ and Weber’s ‘rationalization’:

Differentiation results in secularization; religion becomes differentiated from other spheres. Religion goes through a process of rationalization; it develops in a

secular direction, shifting its focus from an emphasis on the other world to life in this world. Religious rationalization is a process of secularization. (Goldstein, 2009, 137)

Lambert (2004) uses the European Values Studies for 1981, 1990, 1999 to outline the religious trends in Europe. He states that Europe is at a turning point: “the tendency of religious decline that was clearly dominant, particularly among young people, is brought into question by the development of Christian renewal and autonomous spirituality” (Lambert 2004, 42). There is a greater diversification in religious evolution, which Lambert states confirms Beyer’s theory that “globalisation entails religious diversification (Beyer 1994) Lambert also notes three trends: internal Christian renewal, “Young people who declare themselves as Christian appear more religious in 1999 than in 1990 regardless of whether the indicators are of personal religiosity...or of institutional religiosity” (Lambert 2004, 37); the development of believing without belonging, “this autonomous, diffused, ‘off-piste’ religiosity is illustrated mainly through variables that are less typically Christian” (Lambert 2004, 38); and the growth in the number of young people who “have never belonged” to a particular religious denomination during their lives. Bruce and Glendinning (2010) writing about the situation in Britain state that:

Churches decline because they lose members faster than they recruit. Members may be lost by death or defection. The main source of compensating recruitment in the twentieth century is the socialization of children. (Bruce and Glendinning 2010, 116)

The decline comes down to two factors: the failure to recruit children and the importance of the religious identity of parents in the successful transmission of religious identity and commitment from one generation to the next. In Ireland, the recruitment of children still happens because Baptism is still important to Irish parents and there is a religious education programme at primary school level to sustain that recruitment. However, the lack of interest on the part of some parents in being part of the

transmission of religious identity and commitment is eroding the ability to pass religious identity on to another generation.

Some parents have very little involvement in the child's religious education and leave almost all the preparation for the sacraments to the school. Many parents do not bring children to church in the time approaching sacraments. Other parents are very supportive and, while the parents may not practice themselves, they want the children to be involved. (INTO 2003, 15)

Voas and Crockett (2005) make the same assertion in that there is a relationship between secularization and the religiosity transmitted from parent to child:

For both active participation and (potentially passive) affiliation, then, the story is the same: young British adults are half as religious as their parents. What about belief, though? If it is true that Britain is characterized by believing even in the absence of belonging, we might expect to find that children are not so different from their parents in this respect. In fact the conclusion for belief seems to be much the same as for attendance and affiliation. Two non-religious parents successfully transmit their lack of religion. Two religious parents have roughly a 50/50 chance of passing on the faith. One religious parent does only half as well as two together. (Voas & Crockett 2005, 22)

McMullin (2010) cites a number of definitions of secularization: Lechner (1997) who explains it in terms of the decline in the individual involvement and social significance of religion; Phillips (2004) who explains it in terms of a loss of religious authority even without decline in individual religious participation; and in Pollack (2002), it is the decline of membership and religious belief. Of these three, the definition of Phillips is the most relevant. The decline of the moral authority of the Catholic Church in Ireland as a result of a number of factors (personal choice on moral issues; decline of the presence of religious in aspects for civic life; child abuse scandals) has not yet led to as dramatic a decline in religious observance in Ireland as might be expected, in particular, in rural areas.

According to Demerath, "Secularization refers to the process by which the sacred is either taken for granted or is no longer taken at all. Secularized religion declines through the demystification and disenchantment of its message and the disengagement

and displacement of its social standing” (Demerath 2001, 6). Certainly two of the elements of this definition could be related to Ireland. Religion no longer has the social standing it once enjoyed and for many people the ‘sacred’ is something that ‘is no longer taken at all’.

Before the end of the Millennium, Berger stated it was false to assume that we live in a secular world:

The world today ...is as furiously religious as it ever was, and in some places more so than ever. This means that a whole body of literature by historians and social scientists loosely labelled ‘secularization theory’ is essentially mistaken. (Berger 1999, 2)

I think that anyone attempting to construct a global/universal theory of secularization would end up agreeing with Berger, but I think that should not warrant the blanket dismissal of secularization theory, at a local level it still has validity, especially as defined by Casanova. While this may be considered ‘God’s Century’, (Toft, Philpott & Shah 2011) it is precisely so not just for evidence of religious fundamentalism and conflict in some places around the world, but also for evidence of the attempt to place God at the margins of society in other places, including Ireland.

Berger (2005) subsequently replaced the term ‘secularization’ with pluralism as the phenomenon which seems to be at work today:

Both the Catholic and Protestant churches are in deep trouble in Europe. Attendance at services has declined sharply for many years, there is a shortage of clergy because of lagging recruitment, finances are in bad shape, and the churches have largely lost their former importance in public life. Western and central Europe is the most secularized area in the world. This has become so much a part of European culture that the term ‘Eurosecularity’ seems appropriate. (Berger 2005, 113)

What was true of Europe was not always true of Ireland, but in the last number of years, Ireland has certainly caught up with the rest of the continent. One could also add to this, the part that the child abuse scandals had contributed to the decline of the moral authority the Catholic Church in Ireland, as mentioned previously. Furthermore

Berger's emphasis on the change in the sociological make-up of communities is relevant to Ireland. The decline of a homogenous Irish culture, environment and society as a result of the economic boom at the beginning of this century was helped by the influx of economic migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers giving rise to a more diverse Irish society. Berger cites modernity as the cause of the demise of a homogenous community; a demise which leads on to pluralism. While this work has been, according to Berger, underway for many centuries, it has been speeded up by globalisation.

Charles Taylor talks about the public spheres being emptied of God, and mentions the three facets of the secular: the retreat of religion in public life; the decline of belief and practice; the change in the conditions of belief being the new norm.

The shift to secularity in this sense consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others. (Taylor, 2007; 3)

In addition to that statement, 'modern unbelief' is not just about an absence of or indifference to belief, but the "condition of 'having overcome' the irrationality of belief" (Taylor 2007, 269).

So what happens to religion when there has been a decline in belief and practices, when it has been pushed to the margins and the public spheres have been emptied of God? Grace Davie's definition of 'vicarious religion' might offer a suggestion. It is the idea that people like to think the church is there and of use to some people and relevant at certain times in civic life, but it is not something that they themselves wish to participate in or be in any way a part of:

It was a way of describing the continuing attachment of large sections of the European population to their historic churches, whether or not they attended these institutions on a regular basis. (Davie 2010, 262)

She defined it as, "the notion of religion performed by an active minority but on behalf

of a much larger number, who (implicitly at least) not only understand, but, quite clearly, approve of what the minority is doing” (Davie 2006, 22). This is the part that religion now plays in many countries in Europe, and is gradually playing in Ireland. A phrase often used by the media on the occasions of some tragedy is that “special prayers are being said in churches”, as if prayer (special or otherwise) were the responsibility of a small group of Church attending people. Bruce and Voas critique Davie’s theory:

It would include a situation where the audience rejects the beliefs that underpin the actions of those apparently serving their interests, but none the less thinks those actions sufficiently harmless and well-intentioned not to wish to prevent them. (Bruce & Voas 2010, 244)

Davie counter-argued the significance of Churches in the history of European culture and people’s attachment to these Churches, whether or not they are practicing members of these Churches. Another aspect of this is what Martin refers to as Churches acting as ‘national chaplains, but within certain limitations

...the Church can retain a role as chaplain to the nation, provided it does not openly attempt to exercise political power in its own favour. All that is as true of mainstream Protestant churches in Europe as it is of the Catholic Church. For all churches, loyal identification does not entail agreement with ecclesiastical pronouncements and lay Christians make their decisions in terms of what makes moral sense in the life-world. Christians (and Catholics in particular of course) mostly respect the charisma of the Pope and his office, but if they agree with the critique of narcissism and consumer hedonism at the expense of justice, it is because the critique awakes an answering response and accords with conscience. (Martin 2005, 156)

Voas and Crockett (2005) challenge Davie’s ‘believing and belonging’, suggesting that the decline in belief is happening at the same rate as the decline in belonging, and not as Davie asserts that belonging is declining, while belief remains. Therefore they suggest that the situation in Britain is one of neither believing nor belonging. Even the word ‘belong’ can hold different meanings for people, which could range from regular church going to a “rather passive kind of religious self-identification” (Voas & Crockett 2005, 15). Their contention is that belief is often not of the orthodox variety and the

‘spiritual, but not religious’ cohort can have an affinity to a wide and diverse range of spiritual practices (Glendinning & Bruce 2006). The net of what might be defined as belief can also be cast over topics such as ecology and the environment. Therefore someone can stand up and say that I believe but do not belong, but the content of that belief may be at a distance from what might be perceived as traditional and orthodox Christian beliefs. They go on to suggest that even beliefs are questionable if they are not back up with some element of practice, a dilemma that they liken to fox-hunting:

The basic problem with evidence of residual religiosity is that it is easy to forget that such beliefs often have little personal, let alone social, significance. In a passage quoted earlier, Davie comments that people want to believe without putting those beliefs into practice. Just what sort of practice should one expect, though? Many people in Britain have beliefs about the rights and wrongs of fox hunting, but comparatively few are either participants or protestors. It is not enough to find that people accept one statement of belief or another; unless these beliefs make a substantial difference in their lives, religion may consist of little more than opinions to be gathered by pollsters. (Voas & Crockett 2005, 14)

Voas & Crockett’s research begins with three elements, which are useful to the research here: affiliation, participation, and significance of beliefs. So the notion of both belief and belong are fluid and changeable, they suggest that the only form of ‘believing without belonging’ that is as pervasive as Davie suggests is a vague willingness to suppose that ‘there’s something out there’, accompanied by an unsurprising disinclination to spend any time and effort worshipping whatever that might be” (Voas & Crockett 2005, 24).

Bruce (2002) mentions Putnam (1995, 2000) as the basis for his exploration and challenge of Davie’s (1994, 2001) and Brierley’s (1999, 2000) ideas regarding believing and not belonging, which suggests that religious decline has as much to do with a general reluctance to be involved with voluntary organisations.

This decline-of-associating thesis ...has recently been popularised in a wider context by Putnam’s *Bowling Alone* (2000). This remarkably popular book, based on extensive empirical data, argues that there has been a serious decline in ‘social capital’ in the USA since the 1960s. Putnam’s interest lies not in any one

form of associating, but in the importance of associating for the health of civil society (and in turn for individuals). (Bruce 2002, 318)

It warrants mention that the Putman theory was critiqued for overlooking new forms of civic engagement and affiliation (Ladd, 1999) and he followed his *Bowling Alone* with another book a few years later entitled *Better Together* (2003), in which he describes pockets of social capital in various place and situations in America.

3.3.1.2 Secularization and Ireland

Casanova cites the historic nature of the Irish Church which, similar to Poland, functioned “as community cults of the nation in the absence of a secular nation-state, and have maintained their ability to function also as religions of individual salvation” (Casanova 2001, 427). This view is accurate of the past, but the change in the Church over the last number of years brings it into line with what Casanova says about the rest of Europe. Citing Davie, he asks the question as to why “once the secular nation takes over their function as community cults, churches tend also to decline as religions of individual salvation (Davie 2000)” (Casanova 2001, 427). While the State will ‘include’ the Catholic Church on State occasions (Presidential Inaugurations, State Banquets, Memorial Services), it is one Church among many also represented; the Catholic Church no longer having the prestige it once enjoyed. Ireland no longer has what Berger refers to as the ‘sacred canopy’, the overarching influence of religion in all aspects of the life of a society (Berger, 1967). Casanova uses the example of the Catholic culture in Quebec, which began to decline with the rise of a Quebecois secular nationalism. Once the Catholic Church ceased to be a point of community in Quebec, people stopped going and furthermore did not look for any alternatives (Casanova 2001, 427).

Inglis suggests that the shift towards secularity has less to do with people becoming less religious and more to do with them, “finding new ways of fulfilling their spiritual and

moral interests” (Inglis 2003, 43). He identifies three dimensions of the modern Irish Catholic *habitus*: magical/devotional; legalistic/orthodox; and individually-principled (Inglis 1998, 24-38). He offers that Bourdieu,

...emphasised the importance of collective consciousness – what he referred to as *habitus* – in influencing practices within any particular field. Attaining capital in any field necessitates embodying the particular *habitus* of that field. The religious *habitus* is based upon an inherited disposition to being spiritual and moral which is embodied through socialisation. (Inglis 2005, 62)

The field of religion in Ireland was a field of power and was marked by a struggle for position, survival and dominance. The growing gap between what the various Christian Churches teach and what people actually practice will also be important to examine.

This gap between Church theology and teaching and everyday belief and practice can be seen in terms in what Bourdieu calls *habitus*. Like other social fields, the religious field produces a particular *habitus*. It is a religious framework, a way of spiritually and morally reading, understanding and being in the world. It is an orientation to the transcendental and supernatural that is acquired during socialisation and so-to-speak, becomes embodied in the individual’s soul. In other words, it is not simply a mental framework. It becomes part of one’s being that is generally not subjected to conscious decision or reflection. The religious *habitus* frames and interprets events, but is, at the same time, flexible and adaptable, so that individuals can react to events autonomously and creatively. (Inglis 2003, 50)

Inglis sees this change in Ireland as a process of ‘de-institutionalisation’ – the demise of the institution of the Church in various areas of public life, most notably the absence of religious Sisters and Brothers in Irish schools and hospitals.

Being Catholic no longer permeates everyday life as it did a generation ago. To what extent are young Catholics being taught to say Catholic prayers and engage in Catholic rituals? To what extent has there been a decline in religious iconography, particularly the display of holy pictures and statues? In becoming less involved in the institutional Church, Irish Catholics have become more like their counterparts elsewhere in Europe. In so far as they see themselves as belonging to a religious heritage without embodying institutional beliefs and practices, they have are becoming more like their Protestant counterparts. (Inglis 2007, 217-218)

3.3.2 Religious Identity

3.3.2.1 Spirituality versus Religion - The Mind of the Individual Self

Zinnbauer *et al* (1997) make the distinction between religiousness and spirituality: the former, subscription to institutionalized beliefs and doctrines; the latter a personal relationship with God” (Zinnbauer 1999, 892), and cautions against the distinction because of the implication of seeing the ‘religious as ‘bad’ and the spiritual as ‘good’ (Zinnbauer *et al* 1999, 904). However in much of the writing the separation of the spiritual from the religious has been a method in explaining the phenomenon of religion today.

On both continents, there has occurred a proliferation of ‘spirituality’ in recent years. People will say: ‘I am not religious. But I am spiritual.’ The meaning of such statements is not fixed. Quite often they indicate some sort of New Age faith or practice – believing in a continuity of personal and cosmic reality, reaching that reality by means of meditational exercises, finding one’s true self by discovering the ‘child within.’ But quite often the meaning is simpler: ‘I am religious, but I cannot identify with any existing church or religious tradition.’ Needless to say, if such an act of non-identification has material advantages – no financial obligations to churches, no demands for volunteer services – this makes it all the more attractive. (Berger 2005, 115)

In a similar manner, Bellah mentions ‘Sheilaism’, the response of one particular interviewee (Sheila) who had basically established her own religion, “I believe in God. I’m not a religious fanatic. I can’t remember the last time I went to church. My faith has carried me a long way. It’s Sheilaism. Just my own little voice” (Bellah 1985, 221). Religion becomes a private matter, which is usually created by the individual using a number of different sources. Arnett and Jensen (2002) refer to ‘a congregation of one’ among emerging adults, referring to the departure from the childhood religious socialization and religious practice, as a result of the desire to form their own beliefs, to differentiate from the beliefs of their parents, and their scepticism towards religious institutions. Rose (2009) asks the question as to whether Mass attendance is a requirement to call oneself ‘Christian’: “I believe in God, but that has nothing to do with my churchgoing”; “I don’t think you have to go to Church to be a Christian”; The God I relate to is a Christian one – but I certainly would not say I belong to a church”.

(Rose 2009, 106-107). It is what Walker *et al* refer to as “de-institutionalized faith”

(Walker *et al* 2010, 320). Queen offers another perspective in two particular factors:

The first of these is the fact that religious identity has become a matter of choice, albeit often the default option. Second this chosen identity operates in a context where overt and explicit hostility to other “options” is socially unacceptable and only rarely occurs. (Queen 1996, 491)

The question of a matter of choice becomes relevant in a system where a teacher is obliged to teach the prescribed programme of a religion which they have ‘chosen’ to reject. This shift in religious identity may not be as easy for teachers teaching it in the class or learning to teach it in college. It prompts the questions: to what extent a teacher feels the need to maintain this privacy and how difficult would an overtly religious identity be in the community of the modern primary school staffroom? In faith, community is important and as has been shown in identity, community is important.

Just as individuals require clear psychological boundaries to maintain an enduring sense of self, religious identity is nurtured in communities whose members share a common sense of identity and purpose, however differently interpreted. (Veverke 2004, 42)

Hoge *et al* make the distinction between the ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ of American Catholic values and because this is relevant to a similar group of young Irish Catholics in this research, I have included it here.

A big problem for young Catholics is knowing what to accept and what to ignore. Nowhere in our education are there guidelines for this! Nobody teaches us how to do this. We are on our own, and many people drop out of church due to confusion or guilt—guilt for birth control, guilt for cohabitation, or guilt for homosexual acts. Why doesn’t the Church teach us what is core and what isn’t? The Church merely says that we need to follow all the rules. But we can’t, and many people are alienated. (Hoge *et al* 2001, 198)

‘Core’ and ‘periphery’ relates to what exactly these Catholics see as important to them from the “vast collection of teachings, rituals, devotions, and practices” of Catholic tradition (Hoge *et al* 2001, 195). In the context of young Catholics, or indeed members of any religious denomination, lacking the skills and the ability to distinguish what is

traditionally called the 'hierarchy of truths' leads to the possibility of confusion and outright rejection of all Church teaching. This is one explanation for the 'spiritual, not religious' dichotomy. Hoge refers to the oft-cited moniker, 'cafeteria Catholic' which he utterly rejects because of the negative connotations it has for Catholics who have a strong affiliation to certain parts of their religious identity and not to others. Hoge and his colleagues' interviews with adults show these adults as having made the distinction:

...between (a) faith in God and (b) obedience to church rules. We commonly hear young people say something like this: 'Well, I was raised Catholic and was baptized as a child, but now I don't practice it.' Or 'I am officially a Catholic, but now I am not active, and I'm into spiritual things.' A common formula is 'I'm spiritual, but not religious'. (Hoge *et al* 2002, 295)

In the same way, Dinges sees identity in the post-modern context as a self-centred concept and as a matter of choice; what Durkheim refers to as the "cult of the individual" (Durkheim 2001, 319-320).

In the context of pluralism and the radical openness of social life, the synthesis of global culture, and the eclectic mixing and diversity of various 'authorities', achievement and autonomy become primary determinants of identity. (Dinges 2006, 30)

This ties in with the phenomenon of 'makeovers', where, for example and in the case of religious identity, I can choose the parts that suit me and in the manner of the cafeteria, graciously decline that which is of no interest or relevance to me. This might lead to something which has no solid foundation, and no direction of 'ultimate concern'. It begins to mean being spiritual without the connection to an historical tradition or a disciplined community of faith (Dinges 2006, 34). Religion is then seen as a private affair. In fact society would rather that it be confined to the privacy of one's own home or church, and not be found in the public sphere, and this withdrawal from the public sphere makes religion 'impotent' (Gallagher 2002, 7). As Carter suggests "it is perfectly all right to *believe* that stuff" (Carter 1993, 22) as long as it is something private to you, but that it is not 'really a fit activity for intelligent, public-spirited

adults” (Carter 1993, 44). Griffiths states: “The members of Generation Y have been taught by entertainers, advertisers, and educators that branding itself is important, indeed that it is the only thing of real importance, and that all their desires should be bent toward it because from it all else flows” (Griffiths 2006, 52-53). This is a thoroughly branded generation, the market telling you that you can be anything you want to be. This attitude stands in contrast to the notion that human beings are created, loved and saved by God. Nonetheless, as a prevailing ideology it deserves consideration and exploration. Griffiths sees two particular strands in modern notions of identity, *the trope of invention*, characterised by phrases such as, “Life isn’t about finding yourself. It’s about creating yourself” (Griffiths 2006, 52), and “you can be anything you want to be” (Griffiths 2006, 53). Secondly he talks about *the trope of discovery*, characterised by the phrase, “Be Who You Are” where identity is perceived as difference (Griffiths 2006, 54-55), which gives rise to “I always knew that I was...” To know oneself according to this model is to brand oneself: to make oneself a particular kind of human being (trademark) and also as a creature of a particular community (ownership).

Using the ‘believing/belonging’ trope and with the findings of the 2001 Scottish Social Attitudes Survey, Glendinning and Bruce (2006) have mapped the substitution of spirituality for religion, typically within two distinct groups: concerns with personal well-being (alternative/complimentary medicine, homeopathy, yoga, meditation) and interest in divination (horoscopes, divination, fortune tellers, tarot cards). They found that those interested in the former tended to be better educated women and the latter less well educated women. Those who were concerned with personal well-being were more likely to attend Church or at least had stopped but might return against those who were interested in practice of divination, and there was a more likely salience between

regular religious practice and well-being practices, than is likely with the divination group (Glendinning & Bruce 2006).

It is what Hervieu Léger refers to as *bricolage* and Wuthnow as *patchwork religion*.

In one study after another in America... one finds people who put together an individualized religion, taking bits and pieces from different traditions and coming up with a religious profile that does not fit easily into any of the organized denominations. Many of them assert that they are not "religious" at all, but are pursuing a quest for "spirituality. Very similar data came up in European research. Hervieu-Léger uses Claude Levi-Strauss' term "bricolage" to describe this form of religiosity – people putting together a religion of their own like children tinkering with a Lego-set, picking and choosing from the available religious material. (Berger 2001, 448)

As mentioned by Casanova (1992, 26), it is what Ernst Troeltsch referred to as 'spiritual religion' or 'individual mysticism', which was one of the three forms of Christian institution in the world, along with 'church' and 'sect'. It is often tempered by what MacIntyre refers to as emotivism, "to appeal to impersonal criteria of the validity of which each rational agent must be his or her own judge" (MacIntyre 1981, 23-24). In other words, 'it's right, because I feel it's right'. Likening it to the Pantheon of the ancient world, Casanova refers to the mind of the individual self:

...modern individuals do not believe generally in the existence of various gods. On the contrary, they then to believe that all religions worship the same god under different names and languages, only they reserve to themselves the right to denominate this god and to worship him/her/it in their own peculiar language. (Casanova 1992, 27)

He quotes two not too recent examples of his thinking: "my mind is my church" (Thomas Paine); "I am a sect to myself" (Thomas Jefferson) (Casanova 1992, 27)

Religion is, after all, centrally concerned with beliefs and convictions [and] with the ways in which meaning and purpose are constructed . . . To avoid focus on these aspects of religion would be like trying to understand apple pie without paying attention to apples. (Wuthnow 1997, 253)

Taking the idea of the 'spiritual person' as mentioned above, it warrants mention as to what is meant by this. Rose suggests it as a 'neat catch-all', "intimating a certain something without necessarily revealing much about what it entails; which is a little

like saying, for example, this is a box, without giving any further information. What I want to find out is what, if anything is inside the box” (Rose 2001, 193). Principe (1983) points out that many writers on the subject have no difficulty in the inclusion in spirituality from religious sources other than Christianity. The result of Rose’s research reveals two concepts which were common among respondents when referring to spirituality: ‘connection’ and ‘awareness’. Connection represents “keeping in touch with, relating with, being filled with, engaging with, coming closer with, moving towards, and union with the Divine, in whatever way the Divine was envisaged—theistically or non-theistically” (Rose 2001, 198). Awareness “this was used in terms of: another dimension, deeper issues, of a divine being, the full dimension of our humanity, the eternal within us, God’s presence, the world as a unity of God, and recognition of the Divine” (Rose 2001, 198). Rose points out that neither concept requires any particular religious affiliation. Rose found that his respondents could, for the most part, contemplate a person being ‘religious’ but without any particular affiliation. Rose himself was unhappy with this:

I find this description unsatisfactory, because it would mean that a very substantial percentage of people (all those who believe in God, but do not necessarily follow any related practice) could be thought to be religious. This is not my understanding of the meaning implied by the term ‘religious’, nor of that for the term ‘spirituality’—for both, as many respondents pointed out, some form of practice or activity seems to be necessary. (Rose 2001, 202)

Rose concludes while a religious affiliation is not a requisite for spirituality, there are three things that are necessary: “Firstly, even though many respondents pointed out that particular kinds of spirituality do not have to be religious, some form of continued reverential experience, that is, experience of (or relating to) the numinous or matters of ultimate concern; secondly, some type of maintained effort regarding practice, for example, living in accord with a particular convention, such as the Ten Commandments... lastly, a life imbued with love, that is, filled with altruistic activities

and loving kindness” (Rose 2001, 204).

Garelli’s (2007) research with regard to the Italian religious landscape is noteworthy here because the, “peculiarity of the Italian case, characterized by a comparative monopoly on part of the Catholic religion and by a connotation of "cultural belonging" to Catholicism, highlights how the category of spirituality cannot be employed, as some authors do, in opposition to the concept of religion” (Garelli 2007, 318). With regard to the notion of ‘cultural belonging’, this term could be used with regard to Ireland. Although Irish and Italian Catholicism are very different, there is the sense in both cases that until recently they had a religious monopoly. In his research Garelli finds that the majority of respondents see themselves as very religious (34.1%) and that spiritual life is more than just a simple interest or sentiment (30.6%) and of the seven categories of religiosity and spirituality, the largest group saw themselves as *Weak Believer* (average religiosity and average spirituality) (23.0%), followed by *Integrated Religiosity* (high religiosity and high spirituality) (18.8%). These results lead Garelli to suggest that the Italian experience differs from other national experiences.

Most obvious among Italians is the propensity to consider religion as an important part of social and personal identity, rather than the need to interpret life in spiritual terms. The need to feel part of a collective religious expression prevails over an existence characterized by spiritual criteria. (Garelli 2007, 324)

3.3.2.3 Investigating Religious Identity

Watts and Williams (1988; 10) discuss five facets of religion: ideological, ritualistic, experiential, intellectual, and consequential. These can be understood by saying that the ideological is concerned with beliefs, the ritualistic with practices, the experiential with feelings, the intellectual with knowledge, and the consequential with effects. These facets broaden out the concept of a religious identity to more than attendance at Church on a Sunday morning:

Church attendance has been the most common index of interest in religion.

However, many researchers have wished to develop a more subtle measure of 'religiosity' than participation in institutional religion. The reasons for this are obvious. For example, there may be large differences in religious attitudes and experience between denominations and between different people within a denomination despite the fact they average attendance figures maybe equivalent, and a method of assessing such differences is needed. (Watts & Williams, 1988; 11)

I think that in trying to establish the religiosity of a person, there is a tendency to equate it with two of the above – the ideological and the ritualistic: a good Catholic/Christian is one who follows the Church teaching and goes to Church on Sunday. However, a diverse group of people sit in the pews on a Sunday morning, with varying views on what their religious identity consists of. Watts and Williams' facets will give a more comprehensive view of religious identity, and it is important when considering the religious identity of the student teachers. In the course of this study therefore, looking at religious identity and practice will be seen in a wider context than merely a simplistic habit of prayer and Church attendance. Arnett Jensen and Jensen Arnett (2002) use four typologies to describe emerging adults' religious identity in America. As this study deals with student teachers, this typological spectrum is useful.

Agnostic/Atheist	Person explicitly rejects any belief in religion or declares that he or she is unsure about own beliefs, and/or says it is not possible to know anything about God.
Deist	Person declares a general belief in God or 'spirituality', but only in a general sense not in the context of any religious tradition. Person may refer to self as 'Christian', but beliefs do not reflect traditional Christian dogma and may even explicitly reject parts of the Christian dogma (e.g., that Jesus was the son of God). Person may also reject organized religion generally and may include idiosyncratic personal elements drawn from various sources, such as Eastern religions, witchcraft, and popular culture.
Liberal Christian	Person describes self as Christian (or as adherent of particular denomination, e.g., Methodist, Lutheran, Catholic). However, person may express skepticism about the institution of the church and/or about some aspects of Christian dogma, such as the idea that Christianity is the only true faith. Person may express favorable or at least tolerant view of other (non-Christian) faiths.

Conservative Christian	Person expresses belief in traditional Christian dogma, for example, that Jesus is the son of God and the only way to salvation. Person may mention being saved or refer to afterlife of heaven and hell. Person may mention that Christianity is the only true faith.
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Table 3 - Arnett Jensen & Jensen Arnett Typologies

The typologies developed by Inglis (2007) are also useful as he was writing specifically about the Irish situation.

Individualist Catholics	...would identify themselves as Catholic, but with no affiliation to the institutional Church and with a personal fulfillment motivation rather than seeing themselves as part of a community
Cultural Catholics	...identify less with the institutional Church and more with Catholic heritage. While critical of the institution, they are not willing to leave the institution. They bring up their children as Catholics and send them to Catholic schools and are attenders for Sacramental celebrations etc.
Creative Catholics	...choose which beliefs, teachings and practices they wish to observe. They are practising on a regular basis but distance themselves from Church teaching on certain matters. In this group he also includes those who mix in the religious practises of other faiths: New Age, Yoga alongside their Catholic practise – giving rise to ‘smorgasbord’ Catholicism
Orthodox Catholics	...are loyal and practising members of the Church. They are proud of their Catholic identity and it permeates other aspects of their lives.

Table 4 - Inglis Typologies

Finally in this section is a survey of some of the literature which explores the consequences of secularization. Carter (2009) outlines the social values in a secular age, in effect, a good moral life without a religious life:

These then are some of the social values which animate two groups of young people in this secular age. There is a restless curiosity and impatience, tempered with a sense of "can do" and a moral responsibility to act in co-operation with, and showing respect for, others, and to make the best use of opportunities. Perhaps the key concepts are community, solidarity and respect...There is, however, very little, if any, mention of God, faith or religion in these discussions. (Carter 2009, 298)

Walker et al (2010) used three criteria on churchgoers at harvest thanksgiving services in the Diocese of Worcester to establish patterns of church attendance: belief in

Christianity; frequency in church attendance; frequency of prayer. The affirmative answer to the statement, “You don’t have to go to church to be a good Christian” was the majority across all age cohorts, with the largest (81%) in the ‘under 20’ and ‘20-29’ age groups, eventually leading to 58% in the ‘60-69’ and ‘70 plus’ groups. Francis et al (2008) studied the relationship between conventional religious practice, implicit religion (Bailey 1997, 1998, 2002) and alternative spirituality (in terms of belief in luck). They found that among non-church-goers there was a correlation between Christianity and belief in luck, and among church-goers there was no such correlation. This implies the ability to believe and trust in anything, with the absence of a physical and regular link with a particular Christian denomination. Francis et al (2008) define implicit religion “in the sense of persisting Christian beliefs and values, unsupported by church attendance”. A wider definition would describe it as various elements of everyday life which might be thought to have some implicit religious element, regardless of whether they are expressed in a traditionally religious way, by virtue of Bailey’s tripartite definition of commitment, integrating foci, and intensive concerns with extensive effects (Bailey 1998, 22-23). This definition might cover everything from civil religion and the cult of the nation to the devotion of soccer fans on a Saturday afternoon.

3.3.2.4 Religious (In)Congruence

Chaves (2010) offers a number of examples; the most startling of which concerns:

...the Divinity School student who told me not long ago that she was having second thoughts about becoming an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ because she didn’t believe in God. She also mentioned that, when she confided this to several UCC ministers, they told her not to worry about it since not believing in God wouldn’t make her unusual among UCC clergy. (Chaves 2010, 1)

The notion of religious congruence is rare, that a person has a unified and integrated system of beliefs from which follows other practices and actions and which are

universally applicable across different situations and circumstances, “it can mean that religious ideas hang together, that religious beliefs and actions hang together, or that religious beliefs and values indicate stable and chronically accessible dispositions in people” (Chaves 2010, 2). Therefore the story above is an example of religious incongruence, which Chaves claims is far more common and ubiquitous than religious congruence, and this incongruence should not be viewed in any sense as hypocrisy. Chaves cites Dennett (2006) who suggests that people “do not act according to their professed religious beliefs, and people who talk about their religion differently in a ritual context than they do in casual conversation act as though they do not really believe in God, even though they say they do” (Chaves 2010, 9-10).

Read and Eagle (2011) take religious incongruence a step further by attempting to find the source of this incongruence from intersecting identities, “the idea that individuals possess multiple, competing group identities that shape their life chances and attitudes and behaviors—as a mechanism for locating where incongruence emerges” (Read & Eagle 2011, 117). They begin with religion as one of a number of identity categories which can produce mixed and at time contradictory results (Calhoun 1994; Stryker and Burke 2000; Wuthnow and Lewis 2008). They draw from two theoretical perspective: social identity theory gives the idea that individuals gain a sense of identity from groups to whom they belong, and as individuals belong to many groups, they are most likely to have multiple social identities; Read and Eagle use the term ‘intersectionality’, “a perspective that contends that multiple social inequalities, particularly those based on race, class, and gender, interact to create the social location and life chances of groups and individuals” (Read & Eagle 2011, 118). Coming from the writings of Baca Zinn and Dill (1996) and Collins (1990, 2005), it shows the ability of individuals to choose the groups and contexts throughout the course of their lives, which then in turn shapes

part of their identity. In this case then, “(i)ncongruence can arise when ideas and beliefs grounded in one identity are trumped by behaviors seen as more pragmatic in another” (Read & Eagle 2011, 118).

3.4 Conclusion

As stated at the beginning, the purpose of this chapter was to outline three areas of identity, so as to create a basis for the interrogative stage of the research and assist in the task of creating a thick description of student teachers. In the area of identity theory the personal and social aspects of identity were outlined and I included literature on identity and narrative and identity salience. The first is relevant because I hope the interviews will draw from the narrative of these student teachers’ lives and the identity salience is relevant because of the need to establish a point of intersection across the multiple identities which are part of the human condition.

The focus in teacher identity was two-fold: firstly, the place of role and professionalism as it begins to be formed in the student teacher and secondly, the emerging identity of the teacher. The section on religious identity was divided into public religion and religious identity. The public religion covers literature on secularization in general and secularization in Ireland. This ties into some of the writing from the historical and social context chapter and will be relevant in formulating questions regarding religion in Ireland at the data collection stage. The section on religious identity covered separation of the spiritual from the religious, and I hope to explore this with the students in their interviews. In the section on investigating religious identity, I have explored a number of typologies and descriptions of religious identity with the intention of creating a set of typologies which will form the basis of the answer to the second research question, concerning the students’ understanding of their religious identity.

There is a number of overarching themes regarding identity which are common to all these aspects of identity. Identity in all its forms has both an internal and external component. Regardless of any specifics, it has a dimension which is visible, which is obvious to everyone and which we attempt to cultivate, to develop, and to view as part of who a person is. There is also an internal aspect of identity, which is bound up in an understanding of self and self as concept. Human existence is the constant ebb and flow of these two aspects of life, whether as part of teacher identity, or religious identity. Identity is about the individual and the relational. Again there is the undulation back and forward between an understanding of the personal side and the social side of identity, regardless of which type of identity it is. These two points will be valuable in applying the various ideas in the literature review to the generation of the interview questions later, and the analysis of the data coming from the interviews later. Identity is dynamic and is changing and changeable across the various situations and circumstances of life and career; identity is reflexive and requires examination and reflection. I will outline these common themes in greater details in the section on methodology.

The following chapter will place another layer to the research by introducing the writing of Karl Rahner in the areas of theological anthropology, epistemology and pastoral theology, which will give the depth to the description of religious identity sought in this research.

Chapter 4 – Karl Rahner

4.0 Introduction

The aim of this section is to present Rahner's anthropology, epistemology and some elements of his pastoral theology, which will be used subsequently in chapter 5 as part of the analytical framework for the research and enquiry into the religious identity of primary school student teachers. This section is divided into three sub-sections. The first will explore the nature of the human being as person and subject and how Rahner describes this. The second is an introduction to Rahner's epistemology, i.e. how the human being knows these aspects of person and subject in knowledge and experience. The final part expands on why Rahner's pastoral theology is relevant to this study.

4.1 The Human Being as Person and Subject

There are five aspects of Rahner's anthropology that provide a categorical and interpretative instrument for the examination of religious identity: the turn to the subject; the human being as existential unity; the human being as transcendent; the human being as responsible and free; the human being as dependent.

Before tackling these categories, it would be important to say something about what Rahner means by anthropology. He defines it as:

...man's explanation of himself, the reflection of his own being, a being that is never simply at hand as a given datum, but has always presented itself as a question, and (whether this is explicitly realised or not) has always had its existence merely as its own answer at any given time to that question. Here is not a matter of the content of this answer, or the 'object' of question and answer; the point of concern is rather the theoretical, scientific reflection on the different ways in which this question and answer have found historical expression. (Rahner 1969, 358-9)

So from the beginning, Rahner introduces the idea of the questioning human being. From the very beginning the human being has been a being of enquiry – even from the time before the human being was aware of questioning, there has been a reaching

beyond the limits of humanity towards expression in ritual and in myth, until later when human beings (in the person of the Greeks) began to enquire about the nature of human existence. In the Judeo-Christian tradition that questioning brought the human being into a relationship with God and towards salvation. Therefore throughout the history of humanity, anthropology for Rahner has been about the question and the ability or facility of the human being to question, rather than a concern about the content of the answer. In this way, Rahner links anthropology and philosophy. He also draws connections between anthropology and the other sciences; however he is concerned that anthropology is neither reduced to a rationalistic point of view, nor becomes merely the science that interprets the historical, social and cultural elements of the human being.

It must rather be built up as a unity, which being itself independent and irreducible, must be accepted as historical, although the acceptance of this historicity does not imply the renunciation of critical reflection on it, nor of knowledge and truth. (Rahner 1969, 360)

It must be stated here also that Rahner's anthropology neither cannot nor should not be seen apart from his theology. He argues for the centrality of the human being (anthropocentricity) in theology. The human being is not just one among many themes under consideration in theology. As the ultimate orientation of the human being is towards God, then the centrality of that human being is fundamental to theology.

As soon as man is understood as the being who is absolutely transcendent in respect of God, 'anthropocentricity' and 'theocentricity' in theology are not opposites but strictly one and the same thing, seen from two sides. Neither of the two aspects can be comprehended at all without the other. (Rahner 1972, 1)

For Rahner, the theologian and the priest, a person's orientation ultimately is towards God. Hence his argument is always towards the circumstances within human existence that will support revelation.

My theology has often been described as transcendental. I have nothing against this description as long as it is correctly understood and is not meant to suggest that my theology as a whole can quite clearly and unambiguously be characterized in this way. As I understand the term, it simply means that, with

reference to all statements of faith and theology (if they are to be justified) the question must be asked how and why man, in virtue of his own nature (which is concrete anyway and thus from the outset irrevocably under the influence of the grace of God's self-communication), is the one with whom these statements can and must actually be concerned. The description does not mean that in my theology man is a subject of faith and religion only in his abstract transcendental and not in his historicity and his history. For me, he is a subject of faith as a historical being in his concrete history. This, however, is the very thing that is not obvious but must be shown to be possible in a transcendental reflection. (Rahner 1984a, 8)

The human being is a transcendent being, orientated ultimately towards God and whose being in the world, whose anthropology is grounded in that ultimate orientation. He states further:

This gracious self-communication of God as the radical orientation of human transcendental to the immediacy of God (so that this transcendental does not always merely point to God, while forever remaining at a distance, but also actually attains him in himself) is not something that happens to man as an isolated event in space and time. It is a permanent existential of man, present always and everywhere, even though in man as inarticulate it takes the form merely of an offer and a precondition for his freedom and in man as historically mature in the form of free acceptance or in the form of free rejection. (Rahner 1984a, 9)

4.1.1 The Turn to the Subject

Rahner stands firmly in the tradition of the Kantian idea of the *turn to the subject*. For Kant, philosophy needed to concern itself not only with the way an object is known by a subject, but also how the subject knows in the first place.

This turn to the subject is also known as the 'transcendental turn' (because what Kant thought we should pay attention to in the subject, in the knower, is not any old information we can find, but what he called the 'transcendental conditions of the possibility of experience'). (Kilby 2007, 56)

The field of transcendental philosophy is a shift away from the Aristotelian philosophy of 'first principles'.

From Aristotle to Aquinas, the subject matter of first philosophy was everything real – whatever is in being, whatever is not nothing – in a word *ens*. And the formal aspect under which first philosophy studied *ens* was its very condition of being real, its state of having being. (Sheehan 2005, 32)

The 'turn to the subject' was also a turn to the 'subject-in-relation'. The subject is

related to the object of its knowing even if just at the level that the subject asks questions in order to know, to comprehend the object.

Transcendental philosophy is the study of the meaningful in light of how it gets its meaning...nothing short of a Copernican Revolution in Catholic thought. *Geist im Welt* marks his radical and permanent shift from an object-focused theory of being to a correlation-focussed theory of meaning, from an objectivist study of the real in terms of its mind-independent realness, to a transcendental study of the meaningful in terms of the constitution of its meaning. (Sheehan 2005, 32)

The transcendental turn was towards meaning, cementing further the notion of relatedness between the subject and the object.

Rahner's philosophical anthropology should be seen in the context of his contact with Martin Heidegger, with whom he studied at Freiburg. Heidegger focuses on the idea of *being-in-the-world*, a phenomenological-ontological analysis of a human being. Heidegger uses the word *Dasein*, which could be translated as *existence*; as 'being present there'.

Looking at something, understanding and conceiving it, choosing, access to it – all these ways of behaving are constitutive for our inquiry, and therefore are modes of Being for those particular entities which we, the inquirers, are ourselves. Thus to work out the question of Being adequately, we must take an entity – the inquirer – transparent in his own Being. The very asking of this question is an entity's mode of *Being*; and as such it gets its essential character from what is enquired about – namely Being. This entity which each of us is himself and which includes inquiring as one of the possibilities of its Being, we shall denote by the term "*Dasein*." (Heidegger 1973, 69)

He uses the term instead of words like, ego or subject, because subject does not exist by itself, but is always in-the-world, what Heidegger calls a *unitary phenomenon*. Rahner has the idea of *spirit-in-the world* or 'the human experience of the world.' For Heidegger these terms forget that someone is always in-the-world, there is no subject by itself. *Dasein* is the being that is there and for which existence is a question. Unlike Kant, where *Dasein* can refer to an entity, for Heidegger the use refers to the human being only. For,

...in determining itself as an entity, Dasein always does so in the light of a possibility which it is itself and which, in its very Being, it somehow understands. This is the formal meaning of Dasein's existential constitution. (Heidegger 1973, 69)

Heidegger asks “*who*” *Dasein* is in its everydayness (Heidegger 1973, 116). This leads on to the relatedness of Being, in that it is always Being-in-the-World and Being-with-Others. There is always ‘relatedness’. Being cannot be without it: considering some object in a certain way, is considering the subject in a certain way also. Dasein cannot be seen as an entity in and of itself but only in and of the other.

An understanding of Rahner's theological anthropology is well suited as the foundation on which to build a rich and detailed understanding of the human being, which will lead to theories of religious identity of primary school student teachers and these categories will be of significance later. As I mentioned already, Rahner postulates that the human being as subject is the point of intersection between anthropology and theology...

...as a personal being of transcendence and of freedom is also and at the same time a being in this world, in time and in history. This assertion is fundamental in describing the presuppositions which the message of Christianity ascribe to man. (Rahner 1978, 40)

He categorises the human being: as Transcendent Being; as Responsible and Free; as Dependent. For the purpose of this study, a model of the human being will be constructed from these topics. In the three subsequent chapters in the *Foundations* he further defines the human being: as in the Presence of Absolute Mystery; as Threatened Radically by Guilt; as the event of God's Free and Forgiving Self-Communication.

Rahner talks about the human being as a ‘whole’– in that childhood is as important to the human as a whole, as is adolescence, adulthood, and the other stages of life. He uses the term empirical anthropologies to explain how the human being is understood by the empirical sciences.

Both as an individual and in humanity as a whole, man certainly experiences himself in a great variety of ways as the product of that which is not himself. We

could even say that basically all the empirical sciences about man are aimed methodologically at explaining him and deriving him. (Rahner 1978, 27)

The role of differing empirical anthropologies (the sciences explaining various parts of the human being) that he calls particular or ‘regional’ are important. The province of the sciences like biology, palaeontology, chemistry, sociology etc. will have a *particular* angle or niche that will be used to explain the human being in a limited way. These ‘regional’ anthropologies are not divisions, but aspects. Each of these anthropologies has something to say about the human being ‘as a single whole’, and this is only right and proper; “for man is a being whose origins lie within the world, that is, who has his roots in empirical realities” (Rahner, 1978; 28). However, these particular anthropologies have the objective of analysis and by association the intention to control the human person...but,

the fact that man raises analytical questions about himself and opens himself to the unlimited horizons of such questioning, he has already transcended himself and every conceivable element of such an analysis or of an empirical reconstruction of himself. (Rahner 1978, 29)

4.1.2 Human Being as Existential Unity

For Rahner the human person is an existential unity, that which is both historical and transcendental. By historical Rahner means connected to the world by actual experiences that happen in time and in place; human beings, as mortal and limited. By transcendent he means that humans are beings of unlimited horizons.

It is only in the horizons of transcendence that we are really able to know ourselves, and thus assume responsibility for ourselves as persons. Only in this horizon do we recognise what Pascal so vividly described: our greatness as transcendent spirit and our smallness as finite, limited, receptive beings. The paradoxical union of both elements is the meaning of human personhood. (O’Donovan 1995, 22)

Important in Rahner’s writing, and indeed in the scope of this research is the unity of the historical and the transcendent. There is no experience of that which is transcendent independent of that which is historical. The experience of our transcendence is always

situated in time and place.

Thus man encounters himself when he finds himself in the world and when he asks about God; and when he asks about his essence, he always finds himself already in the world and on the way to God. He is both of these at once, and cannot be one without the other. (Rahner 1968, 406)

He refers to an oscillation between the transcendent and the historical –

...in turning out to the world we have turned back to ourselves. But then the horizon of the possible experience of world necessarily becomes a theme itself, metaphysics becomes necessary in man's existence. Insofar as we ask about the world known by man, the world and the man asking are already placed in question all the way back to their absolute ground, to a ground which always lies beyond the boundaries within man's grasp, beyond the world... Thus man is the mid-point suspended between the world and God, between time and eternity, and this boundary line is the point of his definition and his destiny: "as a certain horizon and border between the corporeal and incorporeal. (Rahner 1968; 407)

The human being is situated in the world as a being in time with all that entails – the human being is a 'being-in-the-world' as Heidegger said. This has resonances in the way that the student teacher will be studied in the later section of this research. Human beings rely on knowledge of the world from the experience of that which is around them. It is only from understanding these horizons that they can move beyond them towards an understanding of the point of ultimate horizon which is the transcendent.

4.1.3 Human Being as Transcendent

The human being is a being which constantly questions everything that is around him/her. This questioning implies openness to the unlimited horizons of meaning. The transcendent human being questions and as he/she does, he/she moves beyond the horizon of the particular question to the horizon of still more and more questions. In the grasping and understanding of everything in experience, the human being is constantly negotiating the tension between the limited, termed 'categorical' by Rahner, and the transcendent. An understanding of what student teachers can know about God will be interpreted as possible only in the experiential world; the world around them which they experience, contains in it something of the infinite and the unlimited. From

Heidegger, Rahner took the notion of the ‘pre-apprehension of being’ or *Vorgriff auf* *esse*, which is central to the idea of the relationship between God and human beings. Aquinas uses the idea of *Vorgriff* as the light that illuminates individual objects in order that our intellect can understand them. “In technical Kantian terms, the *Vorgriff auf* *Esse* is a transcendental condition of the possibility of all our knowing and willing. And Rahner maintains that in reaching towards, in pre-apprehending, the whole of being we also reach towards God” (Kilby 2007a, 244).

Man is a transcendent being insofar as all of his knowledge and all of his conscious activity is grounded in a pre-apprehension (*Vorgriff*) of ‘being’ as such, in an unthematic but ever-present knowledge of the infinity of reality. (Rahner, 1978, 33)

This pre-apprehension evokes words like ‘pre-reflective’, preconceptual, which indicates something that is both constantly present but not consciously realised. The human being is open to ‘something ineffable’ (Rahner 1978; 21), which is outside the realm of conceptual language. Rahner also allows that our,

transcendental experience of God is an *a posteriori* knowledge insofar as man’s transcendental experience of his free subjectivity takes place only in his encounter with the world and especially with other people. (Rahner 1978, 51-52)

There is no access to God, other than through our knowledge of that which is around us – material and human. To put this in the context of contemporary philosophical hermeneutics, this idea of ‘pre-understanding’ has echoes in both Ricoeur and Gadamer:

For both Gadamer and Ricoeur, human understanding has a dialectical structure, which means that the sense of the world is mediated, not something directly given to subjective consciousness. This means that the interpreter should continually try to take into account the ‘pre-understandings’ that already underlie and colour her experience of the world. The problem is that such pre-understanding very often has an unconscious character, so the interpreter (i.e. the person who is trying to understand), must make a great effort to detect its presence and influence. (Godoń 2004, 595)

4.1.4 Human Being as Responsible and Free

Rahner states,

As human we are beings who, as finite spirits who inquire and must inquire about being, stand before the free God, affirm our freedom in the way we raise the question about being, and must therefore take this divine freedom into account. (Rahner 1994, 76)

In the same way that he dismisses ‘regional anthropologies’, he also questions empirical psychology’s desire to say one thing or another about freedom.

By the fact that man in his transcendence exists as open and indetermined, he is at the same time responsible for himself. He is left to himself and placed in his own hands not only in his knowledge, but also in his actions. (Rahner 1978, 35)

His is a transcendental experience of freedom, and without this transcendental experience there can be no categorical experience.

It is only through this that I know that I am free and responsible for myself, even when I have doubts about it, raise questions about it and cannot discover it as an individual datum of my categorical experience in time and space. (Rahner 1978, 36)

The human being as person and subject mediates an understanding of freedom and responsibility through ordinary everyday experience, but never actually fully comprehends it as transcendental.

Our individual acts of freedom, from the most insignificant choices to important decisions about vocation, career, marriage, and family are truly free inasmuch as they mediate and concretise our transcendental freedom. (O’Donovan 1995, 25)

Rahner distinguishes between what he calls ‘originating freedom’ (at its origin) and ‘originated freedom’ (in its concrete incarnation in the world). While the distinction is made, he again sees a unity between these two distinctions, which form ‘a single act of freedom’.

Insofar as man as a free subject is responsible and accountable for himself, insofar as he is in his own hands as the object of an act of his real freedom, an act which is one in its origin and touches the whole of his human existence... (Rahner 1978, 39)

4.1.5 Human Being as Dependent

The human being at the disposal of other things and his transcendentality is also at the disposal of another. It is “grounded in the abyss of ineffable mystery” (Rahner, 1978, 42).

What he experiences of himself is always a synthesis: of possibilities presented to his freedom and his free disposition of self, of what is himself and what is the other, of acting and suffering, of knowing and doing, and these elements are synthesised in a unity which cannot be completely and objectively synthesised...He comes to the real truth about himself precisely by the fact that he patiently endures and accepts this knowledge that his own reality is not in his own hands. (Rahner 1978, 43)

This quotation seems a perfect explanation of the life of the human being. There is the gradual emergence of the notion that our existence is not of our own making and even though we are conscious of how we grow and change and ‘make something of ourselves’, that fundamentally what lies underneath this thin veneer is the presence of the ineffable mystery, in which “we move and live and have our being” (Acts 17:28). Coming to Christian maturity is a coming to the realisation of this fact and coming to an understanding of how we exist within the profound dependence on God.

There is one final aspect of the human being that I want to mention at this point. As I have already said, the human person is proposed as a being in the world; in time, in space, in history, and with all the implications pursuant to that state. The human being, as *spirit in the world*, cannot exist outside that world of which it is spirit.

Whatever operations human beings consciously perform – whether working, eating, speaking, enjoying thinking, or whatever – those actions always take some form of *relatedness*, and that relatedness always has a bivalent structure: (1) relatedness-to-another (2) as relatedness-to-oneself. (Sheehan 2005, 30)

If the human person lives in history – the human being must also live among other human persons – they are defined as *self-related otheredness*.

‘Self-relatedness’ means self-awareness and self-responsibility – in a word, spirit. ‘Otheredness’ means that human beings *need* to be affected by others – but are limited to being affected only by this-worldly corporeal others. (Sheehan 2005,

There is always relatedness to someone or something, because everything that is encountered is other.

To be a human person is essentially to be one among many of our kind, with whom we are together in space and time on account of our inner essence, we say nothing but: We are historical, in the concrete sense of a human history. (Rahner 1994, 112)

Finally, there is the relatedness to God...

On Rahner's account we are, whether we realise it or not, *already* related to God. Furthermore, this relatedness is absolutely essential to us. It is so deeply built into us, so absolutely critical in making us what we are, that nothing we do would be possible without it. Being related to God is so much a part of our structure, if Rahner is to be believed, that it is not possible properly to describe what it is to love, or what it is to will or even think, in the perfectly ordinary, human way, without bringing God into the description. (Kilby 2007, 2)

The term that Rahner uses for this relationship is the *supernatural existential*,

offered to everyone as light and as the promise of eternal life, working freely and graciously in every man, welling up from the origin of his existence and – even though perhaps not named as such – appearing everywhere where in the history of man courage, love, faithfulness to the light of conscience, endurance of darkness by faith in the light, or any other witness to the ground of his being is at work and is made plain as the holy mystery of the loving nearness of God. That history which reveals more and more clearly God's pledge of himself in radical self-communication to man, accepted in faith, hope and love, we call salvation and revelation-history. It is the 'categorical' historical form in which God's self-communication, 'transcendentally' given from the very beginning in the ground of man's being (by virtue of the deification of man through grace, effected by this self-communication), becomes more and more apparent. (Rahner 1972, 123)

These categories that Rahner has laid out are the basis for exploring a number of things in the lives of student teachers. Firstly the acknowledgement of both the historical and the transcendent in the human being is an acknowledgement that we are grounded in our existence as human beings but always drawn towards the transcendent which is at the ground of our being. Every thought and action about existence, every question about our lives is a move towards the thoughts and questions about God. The historical draws us to the transcendent.

4.2 Knowledge and Experience

This sub-section outlines Rahner's epistemology, since while a metaphysical anthropology is used, it is important to examine what can be known about the aspects of the previous sub-section.

The nature of being is to know and to be known in an original unity. We have called this the self-presence or the luminosity of being. On the other hand, the first statement of a metaphysical anthropology: To our fundamental human makeup belongs the *a priori* absolute transcendence towards being pure and simple. That is why a human person is called a spirit. (Rahner 1994, 55)

For Rahner, the transcendental philosophy of human being and knowing establishes the *a priori* possibilities and limits of all human experience, and that includes religious experience. Rahner took as his theme, question 84, article 7 from Aquinas' *Summa Theologiae*,

Can the intellect actually know anything through the intelligible species which it possesses, without turning to phantasms? (Rahner 1968, 3)

The word, *phantasm* in Aquinas means sense images – implying that knowledge comes from the senses and not from that which is innate in the human being.

The imagination is called *phantasia*: it is capacity to produce *phantasms*. There are many passages in Aquinas where the word 'phantasm' would naturally be translated 'sense-appearance' or 'sense-impression'. But in other places it seems, as one would expect, that phantasms are produced by the imagination or fancy. The fancy is the locus of forms which have been received from the senses... (Kenny 1993, 37)

Thomas Aquinas stated that all our knowledge is rooted in our experience of the world around us, and not based on any ideas that human beings were born with (the intelligible species). In the third of the 'Answers to Objections', Aquinas states:

We know the incorporeal (non-worldly), of which there are no phantasms, through a comparison with the sensible corporeal world of which there are phantasms. Thus we know what truth is by considering the thing about which we perceive a truth. (Rahner 1968, 11)

Rahner's quest for the *a priori* follows both the scholastic axiom: *Qualis modus essendi talis modus operandi* (an entity's way of being determines its way of acting) and, in

particular, the converse of that axiom: *Operari sequitur esse* (an entity's operation follows from and discloses its nature). Again knowledge that is *a priori* is independent of experience and gained independently of experience.

The relevance of this section to the entire research is such that it situates the subjects of the study in the realm of gaining knowledge through their experiences, and avoids the necessity of reliance on *a priori* knowledge, as the interrogative stage of the study continues, "since natures are revealed by actions, we discover what human being is by analysing what human beings *do*" (Sheehan 2005, 30).

Rahner constantly uses the word 'experience', which is at the heart of the understanding of the human as 'Hearer of the Word'.

Christianity exists in the individual person, in his concrete, historically conditioned finiteness only if this person accepts it with at least a minimum of knowledge that he has personally acquired and that is encompassed by faith, and, on the other hand, this knowledge is what is understood of Christianity as something that is in principle accessible to everyone and can be grasped by everyone. (Rahner 1978, 15)

He refers to categorical experiences, which are *a posteriori*, i.e. dependent on experience. By transcendental, he means that knowledge that is *a priori*, i.e. independent of experience, orientated towards God and open to the self-revelation and the mystery of God. Rahner later defines it as 'open to Holy Mystery'. He uses the term *mystery* because, "we experience it as that which cannot be encompassed by a pre-apprehension which reaches beyond it, and hence cannot be defined" (Rahner, 1978, 65). God is both known and unknown. He calls it *holy* because,

what else would we call that which is nameless, that at whose disposal we exist and from which we are distanced in our finiteness, but which nevertheless we affirm in our transcendence through freedom and love. (Rahner 1978, 66)

With the wealth of the experience of a life lived, human beings are in something of a position to contemplate themselves as beings that, as will be seen, are historical and transcendent. This 'experiential knowledge' is our point of departure at this stage.

Experience and his acknowledgment of its place in theology was one of the key factors for Rahner's involvement in the Second Vatican Council.

Human existence is not a thing which we have, or an object which we observe, but a process which we do and are; experiential knowledge is the knowledge we have of ourselves related to a world of persons and things in the actual living of this relationship. (O'Donovan 1995,4)

This knowledge is also defined as 'preconceptual' or 'unthematic' and is referred to by Rahner as 'original knowledge', in that it comes from the "origins or depths of our own selves in our lived interaction with the world" (O'Donovan 1995, 4). From original knowledge human beings move onto transcendental experience. For Rahner, knowledge has two aspects: knowledge of the object, and knowledge of ourselves in the act of knowing that particular object. It is this knowledge of ourselves, our self-awareness that makes our human existence something more.

This experience of self-presence in the midst of being present to a thousand other things is part of our experience of subjectivity, of being a conscious subject in the midst of the world of objects around us. Secondly, we must notice in this experience of subjectivity or personhood that the self we experience is not entirely determined by the world in which it exists. We are, indeed, part of the world and determined by it genetically, environmentally, and in countless other ways; we are very much the product of what is not ourselves. (O'Donovan, 1995, 5-6)

But knowledge of God cannot be a knowledge based on knowing an object that one can grasp. This knowledge is 'transcendental experience',

the subjective, unthematic, necessary and unfailing consciousness of the knowing subject that is co-present in every spiritual act of knowledge, and the subject's openness to the unlimited expanse of all possible reality. (Rahner, 1978, 20)

The transcendental is orientation towards an ultimate horizon, found at the heart of all human questioning. People living in a city or at the edge of a desert, men and women in their cultural worlds of language and clothes and entertainment – each is seeking something more of life. Rahner states,

...man's questionableness is revealed and his answer sought for, in the entire process of his living (especially in the religious act) as well as in theoretical

reflection in anthropology. (Rahner 1969, 360)

Every religion reveals and serves the meeting of two persons: one Infinite, and one fragile and limited. A simpler way of describing what Rahner has to say of the human being is from St. Augustine: “*You have made us for yourselves, O Lord; and our hearts will not rest until they rest in you*” (McCabe 2005, 47).

4.3 Rahner as Pastoral Theologian

In the final sub-section I want to offer some elements of Rahner’s pastoral theology, so as to place the anthropological and epistemological exposition of the previous sections into the reality of the religious identity of student teachers. Rahner saw himself primarily as a pastoral theologian, motivated by pastoral concerns.

...ultimately my theological work was really not motivated by scholarship and erudition as such, but by pastoral concerns. This explains why a large part of my published work is filled with immediately religious, spiritual and pastoral concerns. (Rahner *et al* 1986, 256)

In terms of this research, it is important to say something about the spiritual, beginning with what Rahner meant by the term. It is important as a basis from which the anthropology and epistemology of the previous sub-sections find a response to that orientation towards God. In volume 20 of the *Theological Investigations* he states:

Our theme is ‘spirituality’, not an easy topic for discussion. The term itself is not by any means clear, but ‘piety’ or ‘devotion’ is even less apt to express the reality. Spirituality is a mysterious and tender thing, about which we can speak only with difficulty. As intense self-realization of the Christian reality in the individual person as individual, it is inevitably very different in every Christian, according the natural disposition, age, life-history, cultural and sociological milieu, the ultimate free and never wholly comprehensible uniqueness of the individual. (Rahner 1981, 143)

Johann Baptist Metz stated that Rahner,

...held himself accountable to everyday believers, particularly those beset by the doubts engendered by the precarious existence of Christian faith in the secularised, scientific-industrial societies of European modernity. (Metz & Ashley 1998, 13)

In his concern and love for the Church, he was often critical, especially with regard to the authoritarianism of neo-scholasticism and the perceived slip or return into a pre-Conciliar thinking within the Church. Finally, he was constantly concerned with the issues facing young people as can be seen in his collection of letters where he took time to reply to their questions (Rahner, 1984). The numerous volumes of his *Theological Investigations* contain many essays on issues of concern to young people and his approach was always an attempt to reconcile what was taught by the Church and what people actually believed. “His unheroic, quiet, hard-working life is somehow in keeping with his theology and its insistence on the encounter with God in the day-to-day duties and experiences of life” (Kilby 2007, 95). Most of the essays were originally lectures given at schools, universities, dioceses.

His theology entered in a particular way into people’s lives... In his own way he let the ordinariness of human life meet the Christian mystery so that every aspect of life could be penetrated by that mystery. Above all he recalled forcefully the clarity of what is Christian, of what contribution Christian faith could make to an age that often did not get beyond the problematics and frameworks of questions. (O’Meara 2007, 3)

As a priest and pastoral theologian he put the issues affecting the Catholic Church at the centre of his writing. Rahner (1963, 23-26) outlines what happens when a Christian has to live their Christianity among a large number of non-Christians: 1) faith is constantly threatened from without and received no support from institutional morality, custom, civil law, tradition, or public opinion. It is no longer a matter of family inheritance, but of conscious, personal choice; 2) a considerable part of the riches of culture is no longer specifically Christian and may even exert a negative influence on a Christian’s moral life; 3) the Church will be a Church of the laity, where they will assume increasingly important roles and will take over many of the duties previously reserved to the clergy; 4) the clergy will no longer belong to the upper privileged levels of society; 5) the

conflict will occur not so much between the Church and the State but in the conscience of the individual who is asked to make a choice between the values of the gospel and the dominant cultural mores. (Rahner 1963, 23-26) While this was written in 1963, the words might be considered prophetic, or at least timely for the current situation of Christians living nearly fifty years after it was first written, and I think these challenges may be some of the challenges that face the subjects of this research today, and for this reason, have a particular relevance to this study. As a pastoral theologian Rahner was particularly concerned for young people. The issues that face them were those that he addressed as both priest and theologian.

I do not intend, on the *one* hand, simply to repeat what Christianity proclaims after the manner of a catechism and in the traditional formulations, but rather...I shall try to reach a renewed understanding of this message and to arrive at an 'idea' of Christianity. Without prejudice to its uniqueness and its incomparability, I shall try as far as possible to situate Christianity within the intellectual horizon of people today. (Rahner 1978, xi)

Schüssler Fiorenza indicates some of the criticism of Rahner: the challenge to the anthropological starting point for his theological method, referring to it as *reductive anthropocentrism*; his dependence on philosophical foundations for his theology; on his neglect of the Christ event and the death of Christ; and in his failure to expand his theology to embrace a wider political sphere (Schüssler Fiorenza 2005, 66-67). Kilby finds fault with Rahner in terms of the philosophical foundation for his theology, but maintains that his philosophy and theology may be read side by side in a manner that is *nonfoundationalist* (Kilby, 2004; 70-99). Kilby also maintains that many of the ideas gleaned from other thinkers are misdefined when used by Rahner and that his argument for *Vorgriff auf Esse*, the supernatural existential, does not work. However, while acknowledging these criticisms the use of Rahner here – to provide a richer depth of description for the religious identity of student teachers - is valid.

4.4 Conclusion

Rahner's Theological Anthropology is the central element here to provide richness to the description of the student teachers' religious identity. It takes what has been described in the Literature Review and adds a distinctive layer. It situates personal identity in the setting of existential unity of both the historical and the transcendent. It takes the ideas of social identity and places it in the context of the *other* and of the human being as dependent. It advances the dynamism of identity in writers such as Baumann and Taylor and positions it towards the point of ultimate orientation – God. The section on Rahner's Epistemology gives a philosophical basis to the reasons for using case study, in that it grounds the knowledge and experience of the student teachers in his argument that we discover what human beings are by analysing what human beings do. The Pastoral Theology is because it situates any philosophical discussion and analysis in the lived reality of the student. While my point of interest is academic, it has always also been pastoral because of the nature of my particular work. This research will contribute to the field of teacher education and curriculum development, but I hope it will be of benefit to student teachers in the future. Having now completed the literature review and the writing on Rahner, the following chapters will contain the theoretical framework and the methodology of the project, before going on to the data.

Chapter 5 –Theoretical Framework and Research Questions

5.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to act as a bridge between the literature chapters and the methodology and data chapters which are to follow. The chapter is divided into two sections – theoretical framework and research questions.

5.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework will synthesise the concepts and ideas from the literature which will be used in data collection. When I mention literature here I am referring to the literature review and Rahner chapters as well as the historical and context chapter. I begin with a number of overarching concepts which are common to all the aspects of identity reviewed. This is followed with a treatment of each section in the literature and some concepts particular to them.

Having established and explained the framework, I will then deal with each of the three research questions. This section will also include many of the secondary questions based on the research questions.

The aim of the literature review is to form a thick description of the religious identity of primary school student teachers. This description is built on four themes. The first relates to identity theory in general, which feeds into the next two themes: teacher identity and religious identity. The teacher identity theme deals mostly with emerging and beginning teacher identity. The religious identity theme sits at the intersection of a number of different disciplines, and it is not sufficient to provide the description required. The fourth theme is Karl Rahner's writing on Theological Anthropology, Epistemology and Pastoral Theology. Rahner's writing completes the thick description, by situating all notions of human beings as beings orientated towards God. Each of these sections will be discussed shortly. Having created the thick description, a new

theme is introduced, which comes from a number of external sources and are not of the student teachers' making, (secularization; factors from the Historical and Social Context chapter). The final theme to be introduced is the student teacher teaching religious education in the primary school. Each of the following sections will outline the concepts from each of the themes which will be brought to the data collection stage and which will be used to create the interview questions (Appendix 6) and will be used in the data analysis.

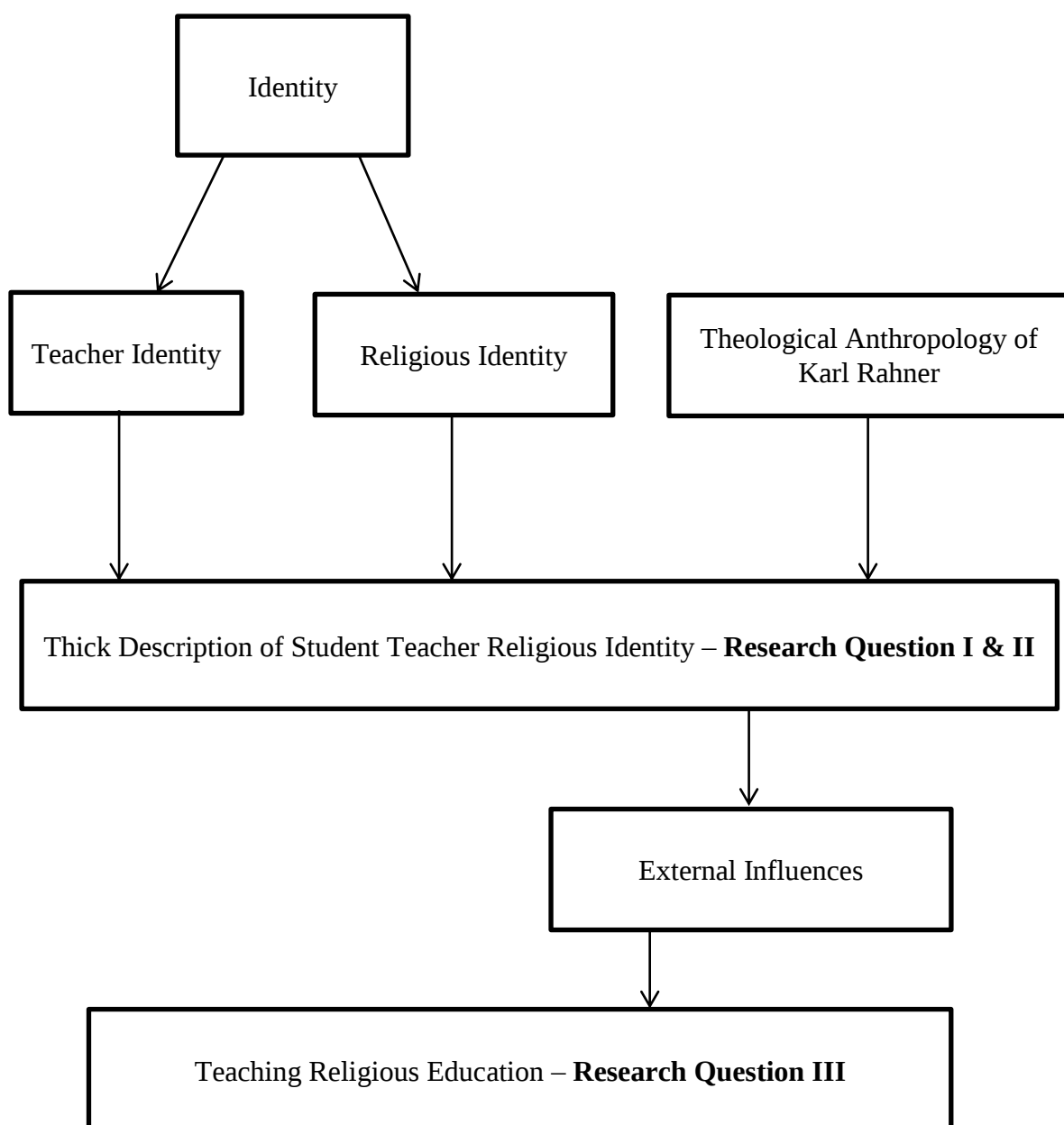


Figure 1 - Theoretical Framework

5.1.1 The Identity Metanarrative

A number of overarching ideas come to the fore when reviewing the material in the literature review and which are common in identity theory, and in exploring the concepts in religious and teacher identity. The first is that identity is both an *internal* and an *external* concept. This is true for example with regard to religious identity, in terms of how one comprehends the idea of God in terms of a personal relationship and also in terms of the external manifestations of that relationship. Therefore I will be asking the students about both the internal and external aspects of their religious identity and their teacher identity

Secondly that identity is about both *relation* and the *individual*. This can also be described as *sameness* and *differentiation*. To take this time the example of teaching – a student teacher is educated for a particular profession but makes the profession his/her own. Within the school community, the teacher is a *being-in-relation* to everyone else in the school, and is at the same time an individual with the responsibilities for a particular class. Therefore questions concerning family, home community, parish, college community, friends etc. will be important here, not just in establishing whether the students sees themselves as people with a wide network of relationships, but also how they understand these people in terms of their identity. Coupled with this are questions about them as individuals and how they differ from the people around them and begin to emerge as an individual with opinions, attitudes, ideas about teaching and religion which are both important to them and also different from their family, friends and community.

Thirdly, identity is something that is not static. The curriculum of a life is the desire and motivation to seek to deepen how one understands identity. I will be asking about how things have changed and/or stayed the same for these students over the transition

from home to college and from college to teaching practice. In terms of the religious identity I will be asking about the transition from a home and parish community where Church attendance may have been obligatory to their lives now where the obligation is no longer enforced and choice takes over. Another aspect of this changing and changeable identity is with regards to ideas about teaching. Some students may have come to college with idealistic attitudes to teaching which might no longer be the case. Through the course of their college education their attitudes and ideas about a wide range of subjects may have changed, or established attitudes may have been reinforced. This may be particularly true with regard to the idea of *role*. A primary teacher has a particular role in the school, and this role, in the case of this study may be tempered by a particular religious identity or viewpoint. Two other concepts that are part of a fluid notion identity here are *assimilation* and *accommodation*, and this is especially true of teacher and religious identity. During the interviews the student teachers might be asked about the role that religious identity plays in their emerging identity as a teacher, a number of questions might emerge: if any aspect of a religious identity is something that will enrich their identity; will it be something that is placed among their ‘multiple identities’; or will it be something that they will discard.

The fourth and final overarching concept has to do with the examined identity. In a way it is a return to the internal aspect of identity, but it is more than that. It means that identity is not just something that is acquired and worn like a piece of clothing or the jersey of the local sports team. Identity has to be examined and interpreted for the individual themselves. Whether it is a part of a religious identity or the emerging teacher identity it is something that must be made personal to the individual whether through narrative or through reflection on one’s experiences.

5.1.2 Identity Theory

This component of the framework focuses on social identity, personal identity and self-concept. As mentioned already the social identity is relevant to an understanding of how a person views themselves in terms of the people around them. At every part of the interview the role of the social will be talked about: friends, family parish, community college, etc. Brewer's (2001) taxonomy of social based identity is relevant when discussing either a religious identity or a teacher identity: self-concept and reflection are integral to both; both are connected to the idea of a community – be it church or school; both have an interpersonal dynamic; and both have collective identities. This taxonomy will help explain the individual in terms of the immediate groups (friends and family) to bigger groups (Irish primary school education, college community, and parish) to bigger and more generic groups (the profession of primary teacher, member of a particular religious denomination).

In terms of personal identity theory, the literature review covered Taylor's *malaises of modernity*. The intention in the interrogative stage is not to necessarily ask if anyone is experiencing any of the malaises! The intention is to look out for any sign of individualism, instrumental reason or political apathy during the interviews. This is also true of Gallagher's (2005) wounds of post-modernity which are mentioned in the section on identity. Narrative was also discussed in the literature review and it may figure prominently in the interviews, as student might be willing to interpret their emerging identity through the narrative of their life and experiences. The final theme in personal identity theory was identity salience. Towards the end of the interview the students will be asked about the way that they view their religious identity in terms of other aspects of their identity, so as to see if salience is something that occurs in terms of the student teachers' 'multiple identities'.

The final part of the personal identity section deals with *self-concept*, which again returns to the *internal* and *external* dimensions of identity, mentioned already.

5.1.3 Student Teacher Identity

Apart from the concepts already mentioned and which are relevant to teacher identity (narrative and teacher identity, the dynamic nature of teacher identity, the social nature of teaching), the literature says a great deal about *professionalism* and the *role* of teaching, and again the teachers' understanding of this in terms of their own lives and work. In the section on the emerging teacher the role of the community comes to the fore in the literature – the separation from the family and home community and the emergence into a college community with new friends and new surroundings. The literature also talks about the problems of differentiation between these two different communities and the student negotiating a path between the two. With regard to teacher education the literature is concerned with moving the student away from idealistic notions of teaching (lay-theories and embedded archetypes) to a more professional model of teaching. The student will be asked about their time in college and their 'becoming a teacher'.

5.1.4 Religious Identity

The religious identity literature is divided into two parts: public and private. This is to make a distinction between the public and private aspects of religious identity. Religious identity here covers three aspects: identity, beliefs and practices. These three have both a public and a private dimension in terms of the student teachers: what does a religious identity mean for them; what do they believe in; and how do they practice that belief.

In terms of the public side of religion, the first theory that warrants mention in the interrogative stage is secularization and pluralism in terms of the decline of religious

beliefs and practices and the marginalisation of religion. The literature mentions secularization in general and it is followed by literature concerning Ireland. The student will be asked their opinion on the role of religion in Ireland. In the case of both secularization and Ireland, I am looking for evidence in the data of the ideas mentioned: personal understanding about the decline of beliefs and practices and the marginalisation and privatisation of religion; the 'shift to secularity'; vicarious religion; de-institutionalization.

The personal side of religious identity is divided into three areas – the mind of the individual self; investigating religious identity; and religious (in)congruence. The individual is concerned with the separation of religion from the spiritual - the former comprising the component parts of a specific denominational identity and the latter a self-constructed and interpreted reality – a de-institutionalized faith.

The next section mentions Church attendance, but the interrogative will attempt to scope a wider understanding of religious identity than one that is limited to Sunday morning Church. Astin, Astin & Lindholm (2011) provide a more comprehensive model of investigating spiritual and religious qualities, which is aimed specifically at undergraduate students. This was coming off research which saw the decline in the value of 'developing a meaningful philosophy in life' and the rise of the value of 'being very well off financially' (Astin, Oseguera, Sax, & Korn, 2002). They begin by acknowledging all other attempts to define the difference between the religious and the spiritual (Strohl, 2001; Tanyi, 2002; Testerman, 1997; Zinnbauer et al., 1997; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999) and offer their own definition:

...“spiritual development” is defined in very broad terms: How students make meaning of their education and their lives, how they develop a sense of purpose, the value and belief dilemmas they experience, as well as the role of religion, the sacred, and the mystical in their lives. Spirituality also involves aspects of our students' experience that are not easy to define, such as intuition, inspiration, creativity, and their sense of connectedness to others and the world.

Religiousness, on the other hand, is seen as involving adherence to set of faith-based beliefs (and related practices) concerning both the origins of the world and the nature of the entity(ies) or being(s) that created and/ or govern the world. (Astin, Astin, & Lindholm 2011, 40)

They developed initial content areas or ‘domains’: spiritual/religious outlook/orientation/ worldview; spiritual well-being; spiritual/religious behaviour/practice; self-assessments (of religiousness, spirituality, and related traits); compassionate behaviour; sense of connectedness to others and the world; spiritual quest; spiritual/mystical experiences; facilitators/inhibitors of spiritual development; theological/metaphysical beliefs; attitudes toward religion/spirituality; and religious affiliation/identity. This led to two groups with their own sub-headings: Internal (values, beliefs, and perceptions) and External (behaviours, experiences, and actions) which brought them to three scales of Spirituality (Spiritual Identification, Spiritual Quest and Equanimity); five scales of Religiousness (Religious Commitment, Religious Engagement, Religious/Social Conservatism, Religious Scepticism, and Religious Struggle); and four scales of Spiritually Related Qualities (Charitable Involvement, Compassionate Self-Concept, Ethic of Caring and Ecumenical Worldview). Again the internal and the external are mentioned here. Each of the other scales might be used to interpret the data from the interviews, i.e. are any students aware of spirituality as a quest or the place of scepticism in religion.

The final section is about religious (in)congruence. This could be said to relate to identity salience in that people have the ability to hold views, beliefs or opinions that seem to be diametrically opposed – beliefs which might come from the multiple identities within a person and which should clash. Again, the interest is finding evidence of the incongruence in the data rather than merely asking them about it.

5.1.5 Karl Rahner

The section includes three aspects of Rahner’s writing: anthropology, epistemology,

and pastoral theology. The reason for these particular aspects is to show that an understanding of the religious identity of teachers can be based on a philosophical foundation, which in turn enriches the theories coming from religious identity and teacher identity. The result is a thick description of religious identity. The concepts from Rahner are also a way of interpreting the data collected during the interviews.

From his anthropology, the first thing is the ‘turn to the subject’. The human being is at the heart of the research and it is only right to begin there. For Rahner the human being is capable of reflecting on themselves. The human being is the questioning human being and that questioning human being, for Rahner is always directed towards God. The human being is a unity of both the historical and the transcendent. Inasmuch as the human being lives out their life in the world and is orientated towards God, the point of ultimate horizon, then there is a unity in the human being – a unity of the human and the divine. The turn to the subject is a turn to the subject in relation. The human being cannot exist without the other. There is a relatedness to the other, and ultimately a relatedness to God. This self-relatedness is seen as self-awareness and self-responsibility, which compliments and enriches the discussion regarding narrative identity and human being as self-concept.

Having established the human being as an existential unity, the next logical step to contemplate how the human being knows this. The place of Rahner’s epistemology is important. He begins with Aquinas and the idea that all knowledge is rooted in the experience of the world. Throughout his writing he maintains this view and this experiential knowledge will be the basis for the entire interrogative stage. It will hopefully draw us towards the type of knowledge about teachers that cannot necessarily be established *a posteriori*. I would hope that it would lead to the *a priori* knowledge of God – how the teacher is open to the self-revelation and mystery of God.

Having now discussed the human being as subject, with the capacity to know through experience, I want to situate this within the pastoral sphere of Rahner's writing. Rahner grounded his work constantly in the realm of the everyday lives of those whom he himself taught and experienced. Some of the issues that faced people of faith and religion in Rahner's day are still the same issues today and I will use many of these issues to formulate some of the interrogative stage of the writing – faith as personal choice, the role of the laity, and the role of the Christian in the culture of the day. I see these as a way of looking at a personal understanding of God and its connection to the practice of the classroom. It is important to point out finally that this is an analytical framework and not the presentation of a set of theories that will be tested on teachers. If as I have said, Rahner was always interested in the person, then that is the point of departure. I will provide the opportunity for teachers to explore their religious identity, and from there see how the results relate to Rahner's ideas.

5.1.6 External Influences

This study began with an historical and contextual chapter, the aim of which was to situate the research in the context of Ireland over the last twenty years and to give some background to the particular primary education system that exists in Ireland today. While I am not intending to ask questions about the historical background, I will study the data to see if the students mention any part of the historical context in their responses. With regard to the current primary education system, I will study the data for evidence of opinions or attitudes regarding Irish primary school patronage and management. It is a topic that is very current and may appear in the interviews. The final section was an brief introduction to religious education in Irish primary schools, and I will be asking the students about this from three angles – their experience of religious education in their own primary and secondary education; the experience of

religious education at college; the experience of teaching religion either during teaching practice or as one of the fourth years teachers who are teaching full time.

5.2 Research Questions

The section is structured according to Punch's hierarchy of concepts (Punch 2005, 33).

Research Area
Research Topic
General Research Questions
Specific Research Questions
Data Collection Questions

Figure 2 - Punch's Hierarchy of Concepts

The research area is religion, education and identity and the topic is the religious identity of primary school student teachers. The general research questions are as follows: how does a person identify, interpret, encourage, develop, ignore, or negotiate religious identity; how does a person view the aspect of the religious in respect of the other aspects of their identity; how does a person integrate their religious identity into the wider sphere of their personal identity; what makes a religious identity or the religious aspect of identity different to other aspects of identity; what symbols, images, aspects of imagination are used today to define religious identity; how is religious identity related to spirituality, religious practice, tradition, culture, and/or doctrine; how is religious identity negotiated in terms of morality and/or sexual identity; what is the relationship between religious identity and the personal and religious identity and the community, either as a faith community or as society in general.

There are three research questions:

- What characterises the religious identity of a Primary School Student Teacher?
- How does a Primary School Teacher understand their
- How does their religious identity influence their teaching religion in Primary Schools?

5.2.1 Thick Description and Research Questions I & II

Religious Identity is composed of three elements: identity, beliefs, and practices. I will take ideas from general theories of identity, theories of teacher identity and theories of religious identity. The rationale behind this is to try to construct a model of identity that is both broad enough and open enough to allow for a faith dimension, and to situate that within the context of a religious identity. These theories will help in beginning to construct a thick description of the religious identity of a primary school teacher. The value of a ‘thick description’ is that “it creates verisimilitude, statements that produce for the readers the feeling that they have experienced, or could experience, the events being described in a study. Thus, credibility is established through the lens of readers who read a narrative account and are transported into a setting or situation” (Creswell & Miller 2000, 129). Having established this, I will then survey the Theological Anthropology, Epistemology and Pastoral Theology of Karl Rahner. The reason for this is that I believe that within Rahner’s writing there is the potential for a thicker and more comprehensive description of the religious identity of a primary school teacher. Rahner presents a model of the human being that is richer than can be found in theories of teacher and religious identity.

5.2.2 Teaching Religion and Research Question III

The third research question is: How does their religious identity influence their teaching religion in Primary Schools? Those teaching in a primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Church or the Church of Ireland are required to teach a certain amount of religion each day. This is a responsibility which may come into conflict with the

religious identity of a particular teacher and the research question explores this relationship between identity and the reality of the classroom. The student teacher may not have a sufficient experience of teaching religion in school, but even their initial thoughts and experiences will be significant in responding to the research question.

In the context of the interrogative stage, I will be exploring the diverse communities that the student teacher is beginning to inhabit, communities that have an influence on their identity and on their teaching, even life-long influences on teaching.

Chapter 6 - Methodology

6.0 Introduction

At this stage the features arising from Rahner's Theological Anthropology and from the Literature Review have been placed in a theoretical framework. Having established this framework, it is possible to reformulate the research questions and then proceed with data generation, collation and analysis. Before that begins and because methods should follow from questions (Punch 2005, 4), this chapter will investigate the methodological issues and considerations of the research including all that is pertinent to the research assumptions and paradigms and the philosophical positioning. To enable a clear understanding of the background, methods and procedure behind this research, the chapter is in three sections. Each section combines the theory and literature for the stages in the research process as well as the experience and narrative for this particular research.

The first section is concerned with the philosophical basis for the methodology and includes details regarding the research strategy and research paradigm, and the theoretical assumptions. The second section deals with case study and it explains why it was used for this particular project. The final section gives an outline of how the research was undertaken, including research methods, ethical considerations and researcher positioning.

6.1 Philosophical Underpinnings

This particular research is concerned with the religious identity of primary school student teachers and this makes it primarily a piece of social research (Blaikie 2000, 2007) and not an educational one: concerned with answering research questions and addressing exploration, description, understanding, explanation etc. (Blaikie 2000, 9). Punch states that "description is a first step towards explanation. If we want to know

why something happens, it is important to have a good description of exactly what happens” (Punch 2005, 15). The research is concerned with identity, but as it is manifested in two different ways: as a student teacher and as a religious person. It is research that is positioned at the point of intersection of a number of disciplines – education, philosophy, theology, spirituality and sociology of religion. This has made the choice of a methodology complex, which in turn means that some of the research seems to span a number of paradigms and strategies.

The method of empirical analysis will be qualitative, which is “to discover patterns which emerge after close observation, careful documentation, and thoughtful analysis of the research topic” (Maycut & Moorehouse 1994, 21). This research can be summed up as follows: through the use of interview and the construction of a case study as an empirical tool, the world that student teachers inhabit and make sense of will be observed and interpreted. Punch emphasises the political nature of social research, “the recognition that social research, like other things that people do, is a human construction, framed and presented within a particular set of discourses (and sometimes ideologies), and conducted in a social context with certain sorts of social arrangements...” (Punch 2005, 135)

The research project is *basic research* in that it is concerned with “advancing fundamental knowledge about the social world” (Blaikie, 2000, 49). It is not concerned with the development and testing of theories, but will explore, describe, explain, and understand (Blaikie 2000, 72). Blaikie also suggests that basic research predicts, but this is not part of this research.

6.1.1 An Abductive Research Strategy

Blaikie outlines four research strategies – inductive, deductive, retroductive and abductive (Blaikie 2000, 9). Of the four the last – abductive – is the strategy that suits

this research best.

The starting-point is the social world of the social actors being investigated: their construction of reality, their way of conceptualizing and giving meaning to their social world, their tacit knowledge. This can only be discovered from the accounts which social actors provide. Their reality, the way they have constructed and interpreted their activities together, is embedded in their language. Hence the researcher has to enter their world in order to discover the motives, and reason that accompany social activities. (Blaikie 2000, 25)

The social world here being investigated is the religious identity of the student teachers and how they construct and give meaning to their religious identity. Their understanding of these activities and the language they use to describe their religious world will be crucial in understanding their social world. It is not a world that exists on its own, but must compete and intersect with the other worlds of the student teacher – at college, at home, with friends and family and their emerging teacher identity. The only drawback in Blaikie regarding the abductive strategy is where he sees the finish – which is in developing a theory. As it is not the aim of this research to move towards theory generation, the finish is more likely to “produce a technical account from lay accounts” (Blaikie 2007, 68), and what Blaikie sees as the finish for the inductive research strategy, which is “relate these to the research questions”. This begs the question as to why the *inductive strategy* is not chosen in the first place. The reason is that the *abductive* related much better to the hermeneutic nature of the research, which will be mentioned in the following section.

6.1.2 A Social Constructivism/Interpretivism Research Paradigm

The general research paradigm, “a basic set of beliefs that guide action” (Guba 1990, 17) will be social constructivism, which is often combined with interpretivism (Creswell 2007, 20; Patton 2002, 132-3; Mertens 1998). Crotty (1998, 58) makes a distinction between the collective meaning of constructionism and individual meaning of constructivism. While this research could use the former as the research paradigm as

it concerns religious identity, the latter is what is relevant because of the wish to understand the individual meaning making of the student teachers. Patton (2002) does not list religion among the disciplinary roots of any of the theoretical traditions he explains, but the disciplinary root for constructivism is sociology which is relevant here. He mentions that “social groups such as street gangs or religious adherents construct their own realities” (Patton 2002, 99), and this has a long history in sociology.

Social constructivism/interpretivism is concerned with the actual perspectives of a group of practitioners and in this research it will be concerned with elucidating patterns in the student teachers’ perspectives of their religious identity and with the construction of some typologies. In this paradigm, “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell 2007, 20). This paradigm allows for open-ended questioning so that the interviewee can speak about and interpret their life and situation. It is an approach that “emphasizes social interaction as the basis for knowledge” (O’Donoghue 2007, 9). The paradigm also recognizes that the researcher’s “own background shapes their interpretation, and they ‘position themselves; in the research to acknowledge how their interpretation flows from their own personal, cultural, and historical experiences” (Creswell 2007, 21). It is the “unique experience of each of us. It suggests that each one’s way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other, thereby tending to scotch any hint of a critical spirit” (Crotty 1998, 58). Furthermore Patton also mentions the “consequences of their constructions for their behaviours and for those with whom they interact” (Patton 2002, 132) as also relevant. In other words, “social worlds are already interpreted before social scientists arrive” (Blaikie 2007, 124).

Interpretivism also fits in with the abductive research strategy. Blaikie states that Interpretivists “are concerned with understanding the social world people have

produced and which they reproduce through their continuing activities” (Blaikie 2000, 115). However “qualitative research is multidimensional and pluralistic with respect to paradigms” (Punch 2005, 134), and there is overlap in the paradigm. The abductive research strategy points towards another research paradigm, which has some validity in this research – hermeneutic. As the abductive is concerned with the social world of the subject and how that world is interpreted, then the hermeneutic must be mentioned. The hermeneutic tradition can be defined as describing or understanding any social phenomenon (i.e. technical concepts) in terms of the language of the social actors (lay theories) (Blaikie 2000, 138). It is a ‘bottom up’ method, which leads the researcher to adopt the stance of a learner, rather than an expert (Blaikie 2000, 139). Interpretivism has its origins in hermeneutics and phenomenology (Blaikie 2007, 124), and so elements of the hermeneutic paradigm can be found – the fundamental difference that exists between the subject matter of the natural and social science world require a language to understand and link both. The lay theories, the interpretation of a lived experience are themselves interpreted according to social science. This is the double hermeneutic, the interpretation of the ‘thick description’ (Giddens, 1984). As well as the hermeneutic, there are two other features which feed into the interpretivist character of this research - phenomenology and narrative. These are not research paradigms in themselves, but ways in which the interpretivist paradigm is realised.

6.1.2.1 Phenomenological Interpretation

With regard to the data generation in this research, the descriptions of their lives and religious identity given by the interviewees will form the basis for the ‘thick description’. In this way the term ‘phenomenology’ is used here in the philosophical sense and not as a research strategy. The human being is a *being-in-the-world*, in dialogue with the world; and that dialogue with the world and all its constituent parts,

attributes and experiences implies a reference to a transcendent world. Perception of the transcendent cannot be analysed by scientific method. “The very experience of transcendent things is possible only provided that their project is borne, and discovered, within myself” (Merleau-Ponty 2002, 430). Furthermore even the phenomenological study of human beings is different from all other types of study, as implied by the phenomenological doctrine of *Verstehen*, which asserts that “human being can and must be understood in a manner different from other objects of study because human beings have purpose and emotions; they make plans, construct cultures, and hold values that affect behaviour” (Patton 2002, 52).

Two phenomenological areas are of interest here: the importance of the ‘life of the living human subject’ as mentioned by Merleau-Ponty and the importance of ‘the other’ as spoken about by Levinas.

Merleau-Ponty writes about the wish to return to a pre-reflective experience, i.e. to return to a point where our perception of things is not mediated by the categories that have become part of our reflection...

to return to that world which precedes knowledge, of which knowledge always speaks, and in relation to which every scientific schematization is an abstract and derivative sign-language, as is geography in relation to the countryside in which we have learned beforehand what a forest, a prairie or a river is. (Merleau-Ponty 2002, x)

Levinas points out an important aspect of ‘the other’ – the ethic. He defines the encounter with the other, *face-to-face*: “The Other precisely reveals himself in his alterity not in a shock negating the I, but as the primordial phenomenon of gentleness” (Levinas 1969, 21). In this way the transcendence of the Other is seen. What this leads to is ‘ethics as first philosophy’, that philosophy is first a pursuit of knowledge and secondly the duty to the Other.

There in the relation with the face – the ethical relation – the rectitude of an orientation or sense is traced. The consciousness of philosophy is essentially

reflective. Or at least consciousness is grasped by philosophers in the moment of its return, which is taken as its birth. In its spontaneous pre-reflective movements it already casts a sidelong glance, they believe, toward its origin, and measures the path covered. (Levinas 1972, 34)

Levinas sees this as an ethics based on an understanding of myself, and not an understanding as my 'responsibility to the other'. For Levinas, ethics is never an egocentric mode of behaving, nor the construction of theories, but involves the effort to constrain one's freedom and spontaneity in order to be open to the other person, or more precisely to all oneself to be constrained by the other" (Moran 2000, 321).

One further point requires mention here - the phenomenology of religion. Its function is to, "provide a relatively straightforward account of religious phenomena along descriptive lines, uncoloured by conscious apologetic or polemical assumptions. Quite simply, the deliberate intention is to allow religious believers to speak for themselves and to record and categorize what they say. The focus is chiefly on contemporary or living religion rather than the historical development or origins of religion" (Barnes 2001, 449). There are a number of points here: description of religious phenomena and the wish to let the students speak for themselves. This honest approach will give the students an opportunity to speak about their 'living religion'.

6.1.2.2 Narrative Interpretation

Narrative is mentioned in the literature review as part of theory. In narrative, "a speaker connects events into a sequence that is consequential for later action and for the meanings that the speaker wants listeners to take away from the story" (Reissman 2008, 3). The purpose of self-narrative is existential; it is to "extract meaning from experience rather than to depict experience exactly as it was lived. (Bochner 2000, 270) We give an account of various episodes in our lives so as to both impart knowledge, but also to transmit a certain meaning by way of the story.

Living our identities is much like breathing. We don't have to ask ourselves each

morning who we are. We simply are...Identity is never fixed; it continually evolves. But something in it stays constant; even when we change, we are recognizably who we have always been. Identity links the past, the present and the social world into a narrative that makes sense. It embodies both change and continuity. (Josselson, 1996, p. 29)

The use of narrative is a challenge, in the attempt to narrate both the change and the continuity. Therefore there needs to be a certain ‘easing in’ to the narrative: asking about easier areas of life history (background, schooling, family, etc.) which will place the interviewee at ease and begin to assist in the unfolding of a more complex narrative. Narrative may be seen as “both phenomena under study *and* method of study” (Clandinin & Connelly 2000, 4). Like phenomenology, narrative here is not seen as a research tradition, but the way in which the student teachers answer the questions in the interviews. In the case of interviews as a narrative event the traditional question and answer session “model of a ‘facilitating’ interviewer... and a vessel like ‘respondent’ who gives answers, is replaced by two active *participants* who jointly construct narrative and meaning” (Reissman 2008, 23). Reissman sees narrative research as a form of case-centred inquiry (Reissman 2008, 193), and in summing Flyvbjerg’s five arguments of generalizability, mentions one particular aspects of narrative which might be pertinent to this research. The ability to “focus attention on narrative detail (the ‘little things’)...Rather than trying to appeal to readers with an abstract rule or proposition, cases reveal facets, each attracting different readers who can decide the meaning of the case, and interrogate actors’ and narrators’ interpretations in relation to categorical questions (what is this a case of?)” (Reissman 2008, 194). Finally and according to Bochner: “The call of narrative is the inspiration to find language that is adequate to the obscurity and darkness of experience. We narrate to make sense of experience over the course of time. Thus narrative is our means of fashioning experience in language” (Bochner 2000, 270).

6.1.3 Theoretical Assumptions

6.1.3.1 Axiological Assumptions

Axiology refers to beliefs and values that the researcher brings to the research project, coming from the branch of philosophy concerned with ethics, aesthetics and religion. The axiological assumptions which are brought to this research are significant in terms firstly of researcher positioning. As a Catholic priest I have values which cannot but be acknowledged and brought to the research, and in particular to the interview process. With regard to this research, these values are concerned with the nature of what defines religious identity with regard to membership of a particular denomination. It also extends to the importance that I place on religious education in the classroom and the quality of the teaching of that subject. My beliefs and values also extend to the continuance and strengthening of the religious character of some of the primary schools in Ireland. I am firmly committed to the variety of management models for Irish primary school and for the persistence of denominational management of some of the primary schools in Ireland.

I find some qualitative researchers apologizing for their beliefs and talking about how they try to keep their beliefs out of the study. (Lichtman 2006, 17)

I do not apologise for these beliefs, and I am sure that my opinions may arise in the course of the interviews, but as with any conversation regarding these beliefs and values, I would be respectful of the opinions of the student teachers. In light of this, I suspect that my values and beliefs may come into conflict with those of the interviewees. This brings me on to the second point concerning axiological assumptions – the values and beliefs of the student teachers. “As participants, what level of involvement can and should they have in the research and how do you protect them?” (Lichtman 2006, 17) All I can do is to be aware of this issue and to try and avoid anything in the interviews which will compromise the students’ beliefs and

values.

6.1.3.2 Ontological Assumptions

The ontological assumption is concerned with the “nature of reality and its characteristics” (Creswell 2007, 16). The researcher “uses quotes and themes in words of participants and provides evidence of different perspectives” (Creswell 2007, 17). As I am interested in what the students have to say about their lives and the characteristics of their religious identity as they perceive it, it is their perspective on that reality that will form the answers to my questions. The particular ontology that I am assuming here, Blaikie calls *idealist*.

Whatever is regarded as being real is real only because we think it is real; it is simply an idea that has taken on the impression of being real. Reality is what human beings make or construct; it is activities of creative subjects that constitute the world of objects. (Blaikie 2007, 16)

This ontology fits neatly with the constructivism paradigm mentioned earlier.

6.1.3.3 Epistemological Assumptions

An epistemology is a “theory of knowledge” (Blaikie 2007, 18). The epistemological assumptions here are that of *constructionism*,

...that knowledge is neither discovered from an external reality nor produced by reason independently of such a reality. It is the outcome of people having to make sense of their encounters with the physical world and with other people. (Blaikie 2007, 22)

The diagram that follows outlines the research and the various points that have been discussed in this section of the Methodology chapter.

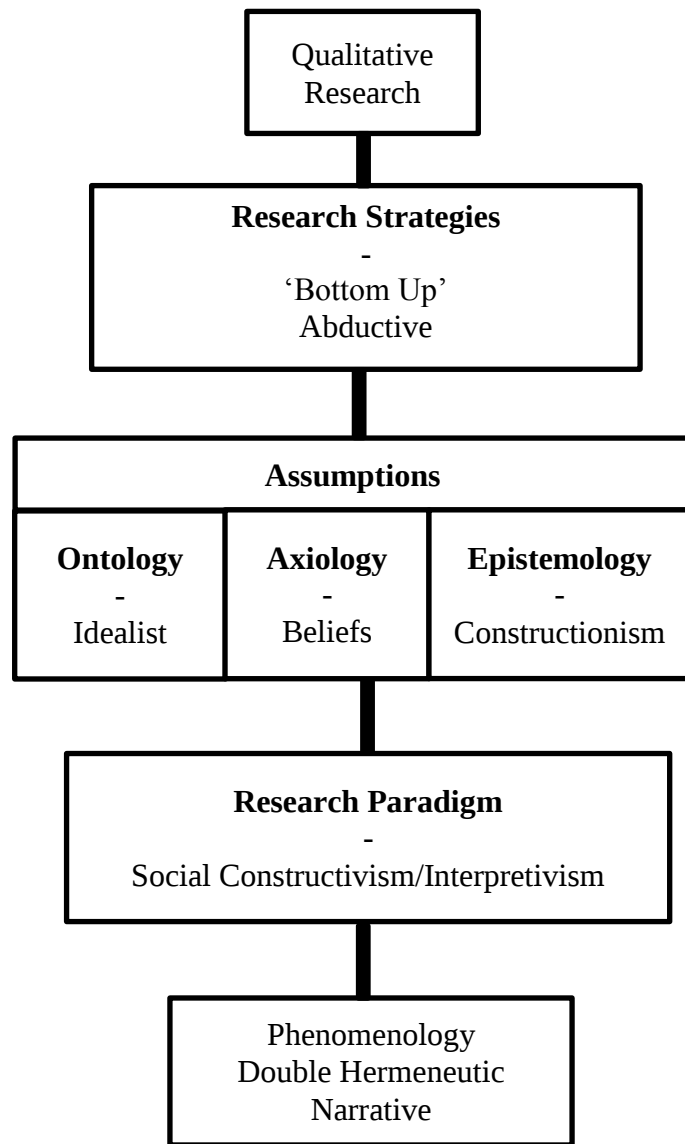


Figure 3 - Research Methodology Structure

6.2 Case Study

Qualitative case studies share with other forms of qualitative research the search for meaning and understanding, the researcher as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis, an inductive investigative strategy, and the end product being richly descriptive. (Merriam 2002, 178-179)

The term *case study* arose out of its use in various fields – the medical profession, social work, the police etc. (Gomm, Hammersley & Foster 2000, 1), and its use in research is in no way uniform. Yin (2009) uses it to mean doing a case study and for

Stake (2000) it means the choice of what is to be studied, not a methodological choice. The ‘heart’ or focus (Miles & Huberman 1994, 25) of the research is student teachers and the phenomenon is their preparing to teach in Irish Primary Schools. The study of these thirty students is a single case, although they can be grouped into four sub-units (Yin 2009): the third years from each of the three colleges participating and the group of fourth years.

6.2.1 Definition

This is a case study because it is a “phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (Miles & Huberman 1994, 25). A case study can be a particular unit of social life: students, teachers, parents, schools, etc. and in this case it is student teachers. It can also be defined as a unit of analysis. “The distinctive need for case studies arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomena” (Yin 2009, 4), In terms of the scope of a case study it is,

...an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. (Yin 2009, 18)

The phenomenon is the student teachers’ religious identity and the context is their lived experience as well as their teaching in primary schools. He goes on to add, among a number of other elements of a technical definition, the desirability for “prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis” (Yin 2009, 18). The chapter on Rahner and the Literature will have fulfilled this. Not only will the analysis be based on the theoretical framework which comes from this chapter, but before that, the questions that form the interrogative stage of the research will have been gleaned from these two sources. Stake (1995) outlines three types of case study: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. This case study is intrinsic because “we are interested in it, not because by studying it we learn about other cases or about some

general problem, but because we need to learn about that particular case” (Stake 1995, 3). Silverman critiques this particular type because “(i)f all you aim to do is simply to ‘describe the case’, you may rightly get the response” ‘so what?’” (Silverman 2005, 127) Yin (2009) outlines a number of single-case designs: critical, extreme or unique, representative or typical, revelatory, longitudinal. The decision as to how to classify this case-study is difficult. There is an inclination to think that it is a representative or typical case-study, capturing “the circumstances and conditions of an everyday or commonplace situation” (Yin 2009, 48). Investigating student teachers is not necessarily a new phenomenon. However it could also be seen as a revelatory case-study, “when the investigator has an opportunity to observe and analyse a phenomenon previously inaccessible to social inquiry” (Yin 2009, 48). Investigating the religious identity of student teachers has not been undertaken in this country, and with the changes in religious affiliation and practice, with the social context in which these student teachers live, and with the changes in education management and curriculum which is currently happening, the results of this research may very well be revelatory. In Eckstein (1975) five way classification of case study, the research here can be classified as *configurative-ideographic*. Blaikie explains:

The configurative element depicts the overall gestalt of the unit under investigation. The ideographic element either allows facts to speak for themselves or for intuitive interpretation. The intensity of such studies and the empathetic feeling that they can produce is their claim to validity. The major weakness of this type of case study is that the understanding or insight produced by each study cannot be used to generate theory. (Blaikie 2000, 219)

Within the configurative-ideographic class are three factors which are important to the process of this particular research: depicting the *gestalt*; allowing the facts to speak for themselves; and no theory generation.

6.2.2 Bounded

This research is bounded in a number of ways: geographically – it includes students

from both urban and rural backgrounds; chronologically – the interviews with the students were conducted from November 2010 to March 2011; demographically – I interviewed twenty two third year students and eight fourth year students; and subject – I am concerned with their understanding of their religious identity. A case study is a “bounded system” (Stake 1995, 2), which “can be a combination of spatial, temporal and social dimensions” (Loxley et al, 2010 15), which is created by the researcher and which is based on criteria such as setting, concepts and sampling (Miles & Huberman 1994, 25). It is,

...the phenomenon (located in space/time) about which data are collected and/or analysed and that corresponds to the type of phenomena to which the main claims of the study relate. (Hammersley 1992, 184)

The case study is also an “integrated system” (Stake 1995, 2), in that “the parts do not have to be working well, the purpose may be irrational, but it is a system. Thus people and programmes clearly are prospective cases” (Stake 1995, 2).

6.2.3 Reason for Use

The case study suits this research for the following reasons:

- There is a unity in case study. “There is an explicit attempt to preserve the wholeness, unity and integrity of the case” (Punch 2005, 145). The interviewees in this case study are all student teachers and while there may be diversity in their experiences and narratives, they are all still student teachers. As stated by Loxley, “...there is an attempt to capture some essence of holism in whatever is being studied. But also implicit within this is a perspective that the case is *not* about fracturing the social world into constituent parts, which is discernible in experimental or survey approaches, but in keeping it ‘all together’” (Loxley 2010, 6).
- The single case study allows for ‘in-depth’ study of the case. Rather than spreading the description and analysis thinly over a number of cases, this case study can take the religious identity of just a group of student teachers and describe as deeply as the material will allow. The aim of the research has been

to obtain a thick description of student teachers and a single case study allows for this. The term ‘thick description’, which combined with ‘diagnosis’ was used by Geertz in the anthropological field as “setting down the meaning particular social actions have for the actors whose actions they are, and stating, as explicitly as we can manage, what the knowledge thus attained demonstrates about the society in which it is found and, beyond that, about social life as such” (Geertz 1993, 27).

- It is highly inclusive. There is a singularity of understanding from the multiplicity of meanings in the variety of experiences of the interviewees within the case study. Therefore what a student from a rural area has to offer can be combined with the narrative of an urban student.
- This research is primarily about description, which is the first step towards explanation (Punch 2005, 15), because if “we want to know why something happens, it is important to have a good description of exactly what happens” (Punch 2005, 15). This then leads to interpretation: “we emphasize placing an interpreter in the field to observe the workings of the case, one who records objectively what is happening but simultaneously examines its meaning and directs observation to refine or substantiate those meanings” (Stake 1995, 8).
- The observations in this case are the interviews. As these are student teachers it was not possible to observe them in the classroom and so I was relying on what they told me about teaching religion in class.
- Because of its emphasis on the observation of the events being studied, and the people involved, the case study’s preference is in the examination of contemporary events (Yin 2009). The religious identity of student teachers is current and contemporary for two reasons. Firstly the students are engaged in teaching practice where they may have to teach religion and secondly the religious landscape is changing rapidly in Ireland and the students may have a reaction to and opinion on that change.
- The data analysis in case study allows for description of the case without the necessity of theory generation. In this research, the phenomena of student teachers religious identity will be described based on the answers given in interviews. While commonalities and generalizations might be gained from these descriptions, it is not the intention to generate theory from this.

6.4 The Design of this Project

6.4.1 Initial Work

What I intended for this work is a balance between a tight and loose design; “tight means prespecified, and loose means unfolding” (Punch 2005, 22), which according to Miles and Huberman is where most qualitative research lies.

The researcher has an idea about the parts of the phenomenon that are not well understood and knows where to look for these things – in which settings, among which actors. And the researcher usually has some initial ideas about how to gather the information. At the outset, then, we usually have at least a rudimentary conceptual framework, a set of general research questions, some notions about sampling, and some initial data-gathering devices. (Miles & Huberman 1994, 17)

The combination with the tight and loose suited the nature of the research as it is descriptive and not about theory generation. At the outset, I had a theoretical framework, but was open to where the interview process might go.

In September 2009 I began the process of Data Collection. This data is primary (Blaikie 2000, 184), as it is collected by the researcher. There was a suggestion early on to involve another person in data collection, due to the volume of interviews that would be required, but I thought that in terms of ‘hearing’ the answers of the student teachers, it would be preferable for me to undertake all the interviews.

6.4.1.1 Ethical Considerations

Tracy (2010) cites four distinct areas of ethics in qualitative research – procedural, situational, relational and exiting. In terms of procedural ethics, I began with preparing the relevant documents and letters that would be necessary – letters to gate-keepers, notices to students, ethics statements, and informed interview consent forms. As my research involved “intervention in some aspects of social life” (Blaikie 2000, 19), I began with the construction of an Ethic Statement (Appendix 2), and along with the Informed Interview Consent Form (Appendix 4), covered *informed consent*, *anonymity/confidentiality*, *voluntary participation and withdrawal*, and *data storage*.

While anonymity cannot be guaranteed absolutely, confidentiality can, and “it is critical for researchers to understand the limits of confidentiality before it is guaranteed and that publishing fieldwork observations and interviews could have harmful effects on individuals involved even when fieldworkers disguise identities” (Magolda & Weems 2002, 499). The way I found best to try and maintain confidentiality was constant vigilance during and after the data collection stage, and when conducting data analysis. In terms of situational ethics and guided by the principal of “do no harm”, I informed the prospective student that I did not perceive any risks. However no-one “can know, in advance, and sometimes even after the fact, what impact an interviewing experience will have or has had” (Patton 2002, 405). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) see this type of research as creating a “stage where the subject is free and safe to talk of private events recorded for later public use. This again requires a delicate balance between the interviewer’s concern for pursuing interesting knowledge and ethical respect for the integrity of the interview subject” (Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, 16). The relationship between the researcher and participant in qualitative research is a different one to that of quantitative research (Magolda & Weems 2002, 493). Reinharz (1979) likens it to a ‘lover model’ based on face-to-face contact, mutual respect, trust and negotiation. Therefore the greater the relationship, the greater the potential for harm. The issue of power should be mentioned. Wolf (1996) states that:

Power is discernible in three interrelated dimensions: (1) power differences stemming from different positionalities of the researcher and the researched; (2) power exerted during the research process, such as defining the research relationship, unequal exchange, and exploitation; and (3) power exerted during the post-fieldwork period – writing and representing. (Wolf 1996, 2)

In terms of relational ethics, I was very cautious about the differences between the interviewees and me with regard to them seeing me as a priest. I was anxious that they may have felt pressure to respond to questions in a manner that they might think I might

like to hear. I was also cautious in the data analysis that there would be any denigration on the answers of the participants because I did not agree with them.

In terms of exiting ethics, ethical considerations that continue beyond the data collection phase (Tracy 2010, 847), I was anxious that the data would not portray student teachers in a bad light, because “qualitative studies take place in a real social world, and can have real consequences in people’s lives” (Miles & Huberman 1994, 277). I was conscious that the thick description would be an accurate and faithful presentation of the data, so that it would not be unwittingly used as a source of negative comment.

6.4.1.2 Research Partners, Gatekeepers, and Sampling

I contacted the five Colleges of Education in the Republic of Ireland requesting permission to talk initially to students about the research and asking for volunteers. Of the five colleges, two asked me to complete Research Ethics Committee Application Forms. Of these two colleges, one declined permission for me to interview students. At the time, I thought I would have plenty of other students to interview and decided not to appeal the ethics committee’s decision. The other College ethics committee consented to my talking to students and I was given the name of a faculty member to facilitate arrangements. Despite repeated e-mails, phone calls and promises to contact me, this staff member never contacted me and in the end I gave up on the participation of that College also. This left me with three colleges – one of which brought my request before their Ethics Committee.

All three of these Colleges were very helpful in arranging opportunities to talk to students. Due to time constraints and the part-time nature of the research, I found it easier to deal with each college separately, before moving on to the next. Having spoken to a class of twenty-nine students in the first college, four students were willing

to participate. There were sixty-four third-year students in the next college and twenty agreed to be interviewed. Of these twenty, six subsequently declined to be interviewed and I interviewed fourteen students. In the third college, which was one of the larger colleges, I confined myself to speaking to students in one particular religion elective class comprising of twenty two students, of which six agreed to be interviewed. Of these six, two changed their minds and four were interviewed. This meant that by March 2011, I had interviewed twenty-two students. At this point three fourth-year students at one of the colleges who were aware of the research said that they were interested and willing to be interviewed, and would ask other students about being interviewed. Three of the Colleges of Education offer a fourth year which combines full time teaching with a certain amount of course work, leading to an honours degree. I had taught some of the fourth years and had talked on and off about the research and so these students would have been aware of the work. This may have led to their willingness to be participants. It was at this point that I felt the notion of the participant as ally (Witz 2006). Witz states that for the participant to become an ally, the researcher has to communicate “from the very beginning the thrust of the research and the larger societal disciplinary, or human concerns that motivate it” (Witz 2006, 248). The interaction with these fourth-year students was the only instance where the research might have been seen as relationship (Ceglowski 2000). Apart from some casual banter before and after the interviews, there was no opportunity to build or sustain a research relationship. I interviewed eight fourth-year students, which brought me to the number of interviews I required, which was thirty.

Due to the constraints of time (Maykut & Moorehouse 1994, 65) it was decided that the research would proceed with a fixed number of interviewees rather than operate sampling, and so the research was *non-emergent* where the focus of inquiry will be

pursued “with qualitative methods of data collection and data analysis, but that you will collect data, *then* analyse it” (Maykut & Moorehouse 1994, 64). Miles & Huberman call this *convenience* sampling, “which saves time, money and effort, but at the expense of information and credibility” (Miles & Huberman 1994, 28). The only place where it might be said that there was purposeful sampling was in my pursuit of the fourth year students to take part. While they did volunteer, I had an inkling that their responses would be substantive.

6.4.1.3 Researcher Positioning

The next concern was whether I would do the interviews or not, (Lichtman 2006, 12) because of researcher bias (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Bias is an issue that can affect this stage of the research and also the presentation and analysis of the data later on. Bias can be both passive (gender, ethnicity, and clothing) and active (statement made by the research, mannerisms). Furthermore, there was the issue of prior knowledge of some of the participants. These concerns lead to the broader issue of the researcher in two particular areas – the voice of the researcher and researcher positioning.

Writing about the positioning of cultural/religious researchers, Court (2008) states that “passion motivates creative work and springs from the whole being of the researcher. Work and life become intertwined; career and biography inform on another. This world of researchers’ personal experience, beliefs, and values may be more fully revealed in qualitative work” (Court 2008, 410). Therefore there is a need to acknowledge that my own personal beliefs and values will have an effect on the data analysis, but there was a desire to minimise the impact of my profession at the initial data collection stage. Creswell (2007) states that all writing is positioned and within a stance. “No longer is it acceptable to be the omniscient, distanced qualitative writer” (Cresswell 2007, 178).

In consideration of the theoretical assumptions and the research paradigm, I perceive my role as researcher as a *mediator of languages* (Blaikie 2000, 53). In the double hermeneutic principle, the researcher acts as the mediator between the lay theories, worlds, languages and realities of the participants and the social science theories, worlds, languages and realities. If this was to be done successfully then it was necessary to conduct all the interviews. However there was still concern for a number of reasons. First of all, I explained at the information meeting with prospective interviewees that I was a Catholic priest and I was concerned about how the students would feel being interviewed by a priest. Secondly, I had taught a number of the students in one of the colleges, and I was concerned that being a member of staff (albeit part-time) might be unhelpful in the interview process. Thirdly, I was concerned that I might become defensive should the answers given be negative towards religious education, the Catholic Church, etc. I had been part of the consultation group for the re-presentation of the *Children of God* series (*Alive-O*) from 2002-2005 and was concerned that I might become defensive should the programme be criticised. In the end, I felt that there was wisdom in conducting each interview which outweighed any concern that I might have, and although the process took a great deal of time, it was worth doing it myself.

How we write is a reflection of our own interpretation based on the cultural, social, gender, class, and personal politics that we bring to research. All writing is 'positioned' and within a stance. All researchers shape the writing that emerges, and qualitative researchers need to accept this interpretation and be open about it in their writings. (Creswell 2007, 179)

Barnes (2001) goes on to mention two methodological principles which are of considerable use here: epoché and eidetic vision. These are both terms that have their origins in Husserl. The first, coming from the Greek, *epecho*, meaning "I hold firm", means to suspend judgement and to exclude presuppositions from one's minds. Barnes

describes it as methodological neutrality or objectivity. Coming as I do from a particular background or standpoint, i.e. being a Catholic priest, this neutrality and objectivity is something that I will need to carefully consider and monitor. It may even be the case that the structure of the interrogative section might need to be modified so that those being interviewed feel they need to provide me with the answers that I want to or expect to hear.

Ideally, according to phenomenologists of religion, all prior beliefs, commitments, and value judgments should be bracketed out when the subject matter of religion is concerned. One simply observes, describes, and reports. (Barnes 2001, 450)

The second, eidetic vision, again comes from the Greek, *eidōs*, meaning ‘that which is seen’, and it is the capacity to empathise and intuit what the interviewee is saying, and to put oneself in the mind of that person, again without any value judgement on their thoughts or ideas.

The final issue to tackle and which comes logically after the discussion on hermeneutics and researcher positioning is the question of whether I am an insider or an outsider in the research? It is a difficult question to answer. If I am writing about religion and religious identity, then I might be seen as an insider researcher, “by virtue of...shared *value orientation*” (Loxley & Seery, 2006, 6). However, as I am writing about the religious lives of a particular cohort of people, of which I am not a member, I can state that I am engaging in outsider research, defined as research “undertaken by someone who is not a member of that group and *de facto* is in ‘possession’ of a different set of characteristics” (Loxley & Seery 2006, 3). To paraphrase from the Nagel question mentioned in Loxley & Seery (2006, 22): I may be a bat, but I’m not that particular type of bat.

6.4.3 Interview Questions

The process to come up with interview questions began with the literature review, the

research questions, and the theoretical framework, which gave me a number of topics for questions. Then I began to group the topics into categories of questions, attempting to follow the concepts in the Theoretical Framework and I was guided by Patton's categories of question types: experience/behaviour; opinion/belief; feeling; knowledge; sensory; and demographic /background (Patton 2002, 348ff.).

I was left with more questions than were necessary or possible in an hour long interview, so I began to refine the questions, eventually leaving me with what Patton refers to as *The Standardized Open-Ended Interview*, consisting of "a set of questions carefully worded and arranged with the intention of taking each respondent through the same sequence and asking each respondent the same questions with essentially the same words" (Patton 2002, 342). The actual questions themselves were opened ended for the most part, with a small number of closed questions, in the interest of clarity or singular information – urban/rural; any teachers/religious in the family etc. Questions were followed in many cases by probing questions, "to deepen the response to a question, increase the richness and depth of responses, and to give cues to the interviewee about the level of response that is desired" (Patton 2002, 372).

I then conducted a number of practice interviews with a number of teachers. I interviewed them and when the interview was over, they commented on the questions – what was easy to answer, what was hard to understand, questions that prompted long narrative answers and ones that allowed for monosyllabic answers. From this then I refined and modified the questions again. After the first set of four interviews I asked my supervisor to listen to one of the interviews (to make sure I was doing it right) and accordingly I modified the questions again, not in any way that made the subsequent questions were different, but I changed around the order of the questions. The interview questions are found in Appendix 6.

6.4.4 Interviewing

Each subject was interviewed in a way that facilitates the notion of their being the interpreter of their experience, knowledge, and personal prejudice, and all the cultural contexts of their diverse situations in life, and the various points of personal, psychological, spiritual, and historical departure. Interviewing is a craft, a knowledge-producing activity, and a social practice (Kavle & Brinkmann 2009, 17). Johnson's ideas concerning *teachers' personal practical knowledge* are pertinent,

the way teachers understand their world, insofar as this understanding affects the way they structure classroom experience and interact with their students, students' parents, colleagues, and administrators. (Johnson 1989; 36)

With regard to *teacher conversation* what Yonemura suggests is of particular interest:

Because professionals are engaged in work which influences the lives of others in significant ways, their professional development ought to be an essential component of their work lives. Part of this development involves an increasing awareness of the values and beliefs that underpin their practice and the congruence of these with those they espouse. (Yonemura 1982, 239)

I began the interviews in November 2010 and they were completed by March 2011, and I followed Punch's checklist for interview management (Punch 2005, 174-175). The interviews took place in the respective Colleges of Education that the students attended and at a variety of times suitable to the student. Each of the colleges assigned me a room that was away from the main college building and offered some privacy and the opportunity not to be disturbed. A sign was also placed on the door, which did not indicate the nature of what was happening in the room, so as to maintain confidentiality. When possible I tried to meet the interviewee in the evening to enable the least amount of disturbance and the most amount of confidentiality.

At the beginning of each interview I made a number of points to the interviewee concerning the interview and they are contained in Appendix 5. Once the interviewee was happy for the interview to proceed I got them to sign the informed interview

consent form and the interview began.

Five interviews took between 30-40 minutes; seventeen took 40-60 minutes, and the remaining eight took in excess of an hour. The purpose of the semi-structured interview and the type of questions asked was to give the student the best possible facility to talk at length, which many of the interviewees did. I was careful to avoid interviews going on too long. Firstly, because both interviewer and interviewee can become tired during lengthy interviews and this can lead to a lack of focus. Secondly, there is the risk of 'losing control' of the interview with excessive or lengthy narrative.

Although we have particular paths we want to cover related to the substantive and theoretical foci of our studies, narrative interviewing necessitates following participants down *their* trails. (Reissman 2008, 24)

Early in the interview process, interview seven spoke for ninety-three minutes. I allowed this, fearful that I would not get sufficient material that was useful and this led to the longest interview. However in later interviews, I curbed narrative and tried to keep the focus.

One particular aspect that was conscious of during the interview was the bi-directional nature of the process. While it is easy to suggest that I would not be influenced by what I heard the students talking about, the reality might be a little different. I was shocked on one or two occasions about what I was being told in the interview. The notion of a student who declared atheism teaching religious education in the classroom, regardless of their level of professionalism did make me a little concerned. Having the list of questions in front of me helped to avoid going down a particular path towards a confrontation with the student and their opinions. Only on one occasion did I leave the schedule of questions to explore what exactly a student meant by the comment that, 'religion was a joke'. Some students were very enthusiastic about being interviewed and brought a positive attitude to the interview and I certainly picked up on that. I think

that many of the answers from the interviews had an influence on me, and while I didn't undertake analysis of an interview before proceeding with the next, some of the answers of previous interview remained in my head while I was conducting the next and subsequent interviews, and I did mentally compare answers during the interview process.

The interviews were digitally recorded and I made notes during the interview, a point that I made the interviewee aware of before we started. The notes were usually reminders to return to a point later in the interview, or an alternative probing question, or to point to something that I thought interesting and/or profound during the interview (Patton 2002, 382). Upon completion of the thirty interviews, I employed a number of typists to transcribe the interviews. The likelihood of any of the typists knowing any of the students was minimal, and in the end no typist did. Each typist was fully aware of the confidential nature of the interviews, and I asked them not to talk about what they heard on the recordings or to talk about them to anyone.

6.4.5 Data Analysis

6.4.5.1 Coding

The interviews were coded manually in June-July 2011, having reviewed the interviews on a number of occasions. In other words, the coding took place after all interviews had taken place and all transcripts were prepared (Miles & Huberman 1994, 65; Rubin & Rubin 2005, 201). Originally I had intended to use a computer programme, but in the end the process was done manually over the course of a number of weeks. As coding “involves systematically labelling concepts, themes, events, and topical markers so that you can readily retrieve and examine all of the data units that refer to the same subject across all your interviews” (Rubin & Rubin 2005, 207), I was content to do it manually to ensure thoroughness. There was a certain satisfaction in the manual process, in that I

was sure it was a careful coding, having surveyed the transcribed interview material on a number of occasions during the coding process, while simultaneously listening to the recordings. The codes were based on the section headings of the interview questions and on the section headings of the literature review and on the research questions (Miles & Huberman 1994, 58). There were 88 subject headings in the codes, which are contained in Appendix 7. They were then combined to produce 1055 different pieces of code. These pieces were then placed in pattern codes, which were sets, themes, and concepts. The reason for this was to reduce the “large amounts of data into a smaller number of analytic units” (Miles & Huberman 1994, 69). This also helped to “discover variation, portray shades of meaning, and examine complexity” (Rubin & Rubin 2005, 202). These sets often referred back to the theoretical framework and the literature review. The groupings are in Appendix 8.

6.4.5.2 Analysis

Patton defines this as “any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies” (Patton 2002, 452). While on-going data analysis would have been preferable, the part-time nature of the research project did not lend itself to this method and all analysis was left until all the interviews were completed. As the interview questions had been based on the literature review and the theoretical framework, I placed the groups of codes in the headings according to the criteria of the question review and framework. Following this, I began *inductive analysis* (Patton 2002, 453; Merriam 1998, 160) to look for patterns and themes in these categories, which would refer back to other aspects of the literature review, and which might add to the theoretical framework as factors which had an influence on some of the independent and intermediate themes. At the back of my mind at all times was the fact that this was descriptive and while I was looking for

patterns and generalizations, and even typologies, there was no theory generation in operation.

6.5 Validity & Reliability

“In our hearts, if not in our minds, we know that the phenomena we study are messy, complicated, uncertain and soft” (Bochner 2000, 267), because in qualitative research, reality is seen as “holistic, multidimensional, and ever-changing; it is not a single, fixed, objective phenomenon waiting to be discovered, observed, and measured” (Merriam 1998, 202). It is against this background that issues of validity and reliability warrant consideration before beginning the data analysis. Onwuegbuzie and Leech stress that,

...qualitative study cannot be assessed for validity (e.g., truth value, credibility, legitimation, dependability, trustworthiness, generalizability). Rather, validity is ‘relative to purposes and circumstances’ (Brinbeg & McGrath, 1987, 13). Moreover, assessing legitimation does not lead to a dichotomous outcome (i.e., valid vs. invalid), but represents an issue of level or degree. (Onwuegbuzie and Leech 2007, 239)

Validity is “truth: interpreted as the extent to which an account accurately represents the social phenomena to which it refers” (Hammersley, 1990, 57). It is the “isomorphism between the reality studied and the reality reported” (Punch, 2005, 29).

In Creswell and Miller, “the choice of validity procedures is governed by two perspectives: the lens researchers choose to validate their studies and researchers’ paradigm assumptions” (Creswell & Miller 2000, 124). In this research two particular researcher lenses are employed, researcher reflexivity and disconfirming evidence. Firstly the subject of self-reflexivity, defined as “honesty and authenticity with one’s self, one’s research, and one’s audience” (Tracy 2010, 842). I have already mentioned in the section on researcher positioning, I am conscious of the particular and personal lens that I bring to the research by virtue of my background and experiences. However I am also conscious of keeping personal opinions in check especially when it comes

into conflict with the views and opinions of the interviewees. The research is sincere (Tracy 2010), in that it is “marked by honesty and transparency about the researcher’s biases, goals, and foibles as well as about how these played a role in the methods, joys, and mistakes of the research” (Tracy 2010, 841). Secondly, having established areas and topics that were of interest to the research and finding evidence of this in the interviews, I also searched for disconfirming or negative evidence (Miles & Huberman 1994) and reported on it both in the data analysis and the overall findings and conclusions. Creswell & Miller also suggest that the second lens can be used by qualitative researchers – that of the participants – “checking how accurately participants’ realities have been represented in the final account” (Creswell & Miller 2000, 125). I have been careful to report accurately what the student teachers told me and to transcribe passages from interviews. I have reported accurately the whole spectrum of opinion regarding religious identity in the interests of accuracy and validity. With regard to the paradigm assumptions, I have mentioned that the interpretivist/constructivist paradigm was used here which relied on a double hermeneutic, and which led to a thick description. The use of the ‘thick description’ allows the use of “as much details as possible. It may involve describing a small slice of interaction, experience, or action” (Creswell & Miller 2000, 129). In terms of validity the use of this type of description is essential. The validity of the claims made in this research will be based on a sufficient use of the data:

I recognise that we can never know with certainty whether (or the extent to which) an account is true; for the obvious reason that we have no independent, immediate and utterly reliable access to reality. Given that this is the situation, we must judge the validity of claims on the basis of the adequacy of the evidence offered in support of them. (Hammersley 1992, 69)

With regard to the interviews themselves, “how well do these data represent the phenomena for which they stand?” (Punch 2005, 29) I am of the opinion that there was

a sufficient amount of material that was common and different in the interviews to assert that interviewees had not contrived answers beforehand or were making up answers either to scupper the quality of the research or to give me answers that they thought I might like to hear. While “conventional field studies tend to have an anecdotal quality” (Silverman 2005, 211), there is no reason to think that an interviewee was either making up what he or she told me, or that they were engaging in excessive *anecdotalism*, to the point where the veracity of the interview was compromised.

In terms of the reliability of the research, it is impossible to say if the exercise was repeated in the future if some of the same findings would be extracted. Across the range of the thirty interviews there was a sufficient consistency to think that repeating the interview process with another thirty interviews next year or in a few years’ time would not yield the same or at least similar descriptions of religious identity. The caveat here, as mentioned by Merriam, is that “human behaviour is not static...Reliability in a research design is based on the assumption that there is a single reality and that studying it repeatedly will yield the same results” (Merriam 1998, 205). What is provided in the data presentation and analysis “is a reasonable view of ‘what happened’ in any particular situation (including what has believed, interpreted, etc.) and that we who render accounts of it can do so well or poorly, and should not consider our work unjudgable” (Miles and Huberman 1994, 277).

Chapter 7 – Data Generation, Collation and Discussion

7.0 Introduction

This chapter was collated into five sections. The first section covers answers to questions about identity, and refers to the first part of the theoretical framework – identity theory. These questions were about their understanding of ‘identity’; the traits and characteristics that the students mentioned as part of their own identity; external influences on that identity; the personal construction of identity; how that identity has changed over the years; and identity salience.

The next two sections contain the data which answer the first research question – what characterises the religious identity of a primary school student teacher. It begins with the answers to questions regarding their emerging identity as teachers. Then there are answers to questions about their religious identity.

The fourth section contains their responses to the second research question – how does a primary school teacher understand their religious identity. This section includes answers to questions regarding the role of religion and its importance to them; if they say themselves as religious people; was religion a good or bad thing; what had replaced religion in Ireland today. Included here are their answers to questions regarding the Church in Ireland, and include comments regarding the role of women, morality and the issue of child sexual abuse.

The fifth and final section is based on the third research question - how does their religious identity influence their teaching religion in primary schools? It begins with answers regarding teaching in general and then moves on to teaching religion in the primary school.

7.1 Identity Theory

This section refers to the first theme in the theoretical framework. The focus is on

personal identity, social identity and self-concept. It begins with asking them for a definition of the word 'identity' and then moves on to personal traits and characteristics.

7.1.1 Definition of Identity

In an attempt to settle the student into the interview I asked them what they might think the word 'identity' meant. Some students found it a difficult question to answer and there were a varying array of answers. For one student I had to substitute the word 'personality' for identity to help him (Interview 26.2). Beginning the interview by talking about identity was meant to ease the students into talking about religious identity, but for the most part they could latch onto the idea of religious identity quicker and with more ease than trying to define identity: "the person that you are" (Interview 4.6). Another student had a more comprehensive, but no less brief version: "who you are and what makes you who you are...what has influenced you and what things have happened that makes you who you are...where you've come from" (Interview 19.2). This description covers influences, background and experiences in identity construction. Student 12 had the most comprehensive definition:

I think you can't describe identity in one word. It is more like an influence of a lot of things. I think culture would certainly come into it, your experience, family influences would definitely come into it but also where you were born, where you grew up that would be your biggest influence. Because that is what you will always reflect on... I would probably bring into my identity what I like to do, even what some little habits are... I think it involves everything...your experience will have a lot of influence on your actual identity. (Interview 12.3)

Student 24 said that it was: "...the way you carry yourself, the way people see me... the way that I express myself" (Interview 24.3). Student 29 saw it more in a visual sense: "the outline of a person and you fill in information about them...sort of a pictorial representation, personal identity" and when asked what she was filling in in the picture, she replied, "...traits, characteristics about that person that makes them different from somebody else..." (Interview 29.3) This was also the case with Student 15, it

amounted to a list: “makes me think of how you see yourself as a person, how you describe yourself, your principles, values and beliefs and all those sort of things” (Interview 15.3).

7.1.2 Personal Traits and Characteristics of Identity

The students did talk about these ‘traits, characteristics’ (Interview 4.6; 6.3; 8.2; 16.3; 17.4; 19.3; 20.2; 24.3; 27.2; 28.2; 29.4; 30.4). The most common characteristic of the student identity was ‘hard-working’, ‘confidence’, ‘determined’, ‘kind and caring’, ‘independence’ ‘good-listener’ and ‘sensitive’. All characteristics that you would hope to find in teachers:

I have a very outgoing personality I enjoy being around people and that’s probably why I became a teacher. I like anything social, talking to people, working with people. I wouldn’t be reserved or quiet if I had anything to say I would say it. (Interview 26.2)

Identity relating to nationality, family, community and county (Interview 5.2; 8.3; 13.3) featured the most prominently among the responses. There was no evident order or hierarchy in their answers, but as this question came at the beginning of the interview, some students were still settling in to the interview and often mentioned that they were not really sure, and cited nationality and county first (Student 5). A number of students gave comprehensive answers.

I think for me identity is who I am, for me it is where I come from, my family, the things I am interested in. I would find especially when I go out foreign that speaking Irish would be a big part of my identity. Even walking up a beach with a hurley; it is kind of they know where you are from. It would be a big identity thing to me. I think your beliefs and what you think about, not even religion, just general beliefs about different things. (Interview 13.3)

This student seemed to have thought about the question before and it meant a great deal to her. For Student 5 it was the case that he did not, “have a county jersey or anything like that or even an Irish jersey” (Interview 5.2), as identity was a much more fluid thing for him. Student 12 also gave a comprehensive answer:

I think you can't describe identity in one word. It is more like an influence of a lot of things. I think culture would certainly come into it, your experience, family influences would definitely come into it but also where you were born, where you grew up that would be your biggest influence. Because that is what you will always reflect on but for me for my identity I would say I am Irish and I would probably bring into my identity what I like to do, even what some little habits are. You know that sort of thing. I think it involves everything but your experience will have a lot of influence on your actual identity. (Student 12.2-3)

This student encapsulates both the external idea of identity (nationality, culture) and the internal (experiences and family influences).

7.1.2.1 Leader/Follower

One of the aspects of a teacher's life is the ability to stand in front of a class of children, and to both keep control and motivate these children at the same time. This is why I asked them about being a leader and a follower. Did they have any experience of standing in front of a group of their friends, family, etc. and have the ability to motivate and be a leader. Of the twenty-eight students who were asked if they were a leader or a follower, five were followers, thirteen were leaders and the remaining ten said that they were both, usually depending on the circumstances. Of both the leaders and followers, some said that they could be the opposite at time, again depending on the situation. However I categorised the answers based on what their first answer was. One student gave a good picture of college life in regard to this:

...in college here, there would be some leaders, even going on nights out there would be people saying we will go here and I would go. I wouldn't have a problem with that, they are not being pushy, just outspoken and that's fine... (Interview 16.5)

For Student 20 there was a satisfaction in being a leader, because "you feel like you are doing something that other people aren't doing" (Interview 20.4). Among the students there were former head-pupils from secondary schools (Students 12 and 21) and some who had worked on the *Meitheal* programme in school (Students 20, 25 and 29). The Irish word *Meitheal* can be translated as a group, community or work-team. The most

common use of the word is in reference to cooperation in rural Irish communities with the harvest etc. In some Irish secondary schools it refers to a peer-mentoring and anti-bullying programme for senior level students, where they become mentors to the incoming students in First Year. There were also a number who had served as student officers at college. Some had got an early start on leadership and working with children through sports (Interview 1) or youth activities (Interview 10), that they were able to see how they worked as leaders with groups of children. All those who answered that they were ‘leaders’, were asked if this had any bearing on their decision to become teachers. Most said that it did.

I think you can’t exactly be a quiet person that doesn’t want to get involved. To be a teacher you need to be somebody that has a bit of go in yourself and wants to see children aspire to do these things as well. (Interview 4.9)

The answers to the question were not always emphatic. One student began with “I’m very much a leader” and then modified it to “I can be a leader” (Interview 7.7). Student 14 was not asked the question, but told me that she was a leader when talking about identity:

I have always been a leader, from being the eldest in the family I have always been taking care of others. I like to take charge and I like to organise stuff and I feel that I have always been like that. I suppose that lends itself well to what I am going into. (Interview 14.3)

Student 29 said that she had good leadership skills, but likes to sit back at times and let other people be involved: “If there was nobody else taking the leadership I would have no problem doing it” (Interview 29.5). Student 19 used the analogy of sport to explain how she was a leader:

I think I am more of a leader because like I usually play in mid-field and in centre forward so I’m kind of the one who is bringing the ball up to everyone else...so they are relying on me, so I have to be leader. I can’t just, you know, fall into the background, I have to, I am the one who is bringing up the ball to everyone else so then you are also a team player because you are passing it to everyone else. You’re seeing who can make the best shot, you are not just going yourself, you are like passing to everyone else. (Interview 19.6)

Student 6 was a follower, but later on in the interview he told about a situation at college, where he had taken the lead and kept an activity going through innovation and taking charge.

...there was a night on a few months ago, it was a busy week, a freshers' week and we had an event on every night and by the Thursday people were wrecked and we had a small crowd at an event and it was, you could just see it bombing and people weren't enjoying themselves, so I had my Irish method assignment in the boot of my car which was just three buckets that I'd made a game out of and a ball and you had to throw it and you get different points for different buckets and with the kids you have to say different things in Irish so we were obviously doing drinking games with this when we were doing it, so I got the buckets out and I laid them up on the table tennis table and we started setting up ladders. I started setting up a ladder and we started trying to get the ball in from different angles. By the end of it, I had about twenty lads involved in it and the girls were watching. (Interview 6.5-6)

This phenomenon happened a number of times in the course of the interviews: students gave one particular answer, but then through something that they narrated or in the course of answering another question, they gave evidence of a totally opposite opinion. This happened in particular with regard to the answers to questions about being religious. Although showing both external and internal signs of religiosity, they answered in the negative to the question about being religious.

Some of the students who were 'followers' conceded at some level they might lead, especially if they did not agree with what was happening (Interview 8.3/9.4). One student just preferred to be a follower (Interview 10.4).

Most of the students who told me that they were both, said that it depended on the situation, and when asked to elaborate, they tended more towards being leaders (Students 30.07). For Student 18 it depended on mood: "If I'm in a good mood one day, I'd be really like awake and perky and assertive and then if I'm just feeling a bit quiet, I'd kind of take a step back and just observe and see what's going on" (Interview 18.4). Student 21 described it as follows:

A bit of both, it depends on the situation. I suppose making decisions, things like that, people would look upon me just to, because I can be outspoken at times, just to make decisions, but then I suppose if I'm uncertain, if I'm on the fence about something myself, if I have no definite agenda, I'll be a follower. (Interview 21.5)

7.1.3 Personal Construction of Identity

As identity can be defined in terms of self-concept, I asked the students about the parts of their identity that they saw as being personally constructed by themselves. Student 19's answer defined these characteristics, (in her case patience, kindness and generosity) as being personal because she is not "really influenced a lot by other people" (Interview 19.5). Student 1 began by saying her beliefs and morals, but then conceded that these were more from her family as; "you don't pick something off the ground" (Interview 1.8). Student 27 considered herself as a product of nothing except her own construction,

I don't like to think I am a product of anything, I like to think that I am my own person that I have chosen who I am, even though I know that's not true...I wouldn't like to think that I was a product of anything. (Interview 27.3)

Student 10 had an answer that seemed based on determination: "I am a product of like wanting to do something and doing it and gaining experience from that...It comes from the determination to prove my parents wrong" (Interview 10.3). Student 7 spoke about similar characteristics, which seemed to underline a certain self-construction: "self-knowledge, conviction, and self-motivation" (Interview 7.4).

7.1.4 Product, Influences and Relationships

The section is concerned with the social nature of identity and the fact that a person is a product of the world around them, their background and other influences. The social aspect of identity has a bearing on teacher identity and on religious identity. Some of the answers given here might be seen to refer to two of Rahner's categories: the human as a product of that which is not of themselves and persons-in-relation. During the interview three questions were asked which will be discussed together in this section.

Students were asked what they thought they were a product of; what the influences were in their lives; and to talk about the relationships that were important to them. The answers to these questions were all similar. Students spoke about the importance of all three of these social aspects. Student 15 spoke about the importance of relationships, "...just people you can trust, someone you can lean on when you need them to be there. People that you can trust to be honest with you are a big thing...people who will advise you with honest advice about what way to go" (Interview 15.6). While some students saw the influence of God in their relationships (Interview 2.13; 5.05), only one mentioned a relationship with God, which she mentioned in the same sentence as romantic relationships (Interview 14.4). The students spoke about five principal categories: parents/family; teachers and school; friends and college; the community, the experiences of life.

7.1.4.1 Parents/Family

Students mentioned their family and their parents being a part of their identity: "...the way I was brought up that I was always taught that if you work for something it will pay off..." (Interview 9.3) Students spoke with affection about their families and in particular their parents. The students valued most their parents' good example, their work ethic and their support.

...we are a very close knit family...I think they were the perfect balance of strict and gave us a perfect amount of freedom because I don't think we really caused, well every child causes problems, but I think they did everything right. (Interview 17.3)

Many of the students spoke of a close knit family and hard working parents (Interview 3.6; 6.2; 7.5; 15.02; 17.3; 23.8; 25.2). Speaking of himself and his brother, Student 7 said:

...both my Mam and Dad they always made sure that we had the best of things and stuff like that. I mean, they gave us the best life that they could but they definitely taught us a value for life and a value for everything within life and

having that sense of value is definitely something that is instilled within me like. (Interview 7.5)

Student 12 spoke about a supportive and interested family who asked her about her studies (Interview 12.2). Student 25 spoke about the example and values that she had learnt from her parents:

...people who know me and know my family know that I get on really well with my parents...they both have a really good sense of humour...and they would always be completely helpful to everybody. So growing up, I'd see my Dad cutting people's lawns and doing it for people for free and Man did home help for years, bringing dinners to people. People being welcome in our house, our door was always open so people are always welcome and it wouldn't matter if I brought back ten people after a night out it wouldn't matter, they would always get to stay. (Interview 25.2)

Student 26 spoke of the chances that she had received from her parents in terms of education and the pursuit of other interests (Interview 26.1). For Student 30, the family was her first educator and the most important: "I would see my parents as educators for who I am, they have taught me my traits; they have taught me how to behave" (Interview 30.5). This answer might be perceived as the parents teaching their child to perform in a certain way – identity as performance. It might also be perceived that the student appreciated and valued the opinions of her parents. This was similar to the experience of Student 29: "the way they brought me up, their opinions, their beliefs, their outlook on life has influenced the way that I make decisions..." (Interview 29.3). Some students spoke about the value their parents placed on education (Interview 8.1). This was particularly true for twelve students (1; 5; 7; 10; 11; 12; 13; 14; 15; 26; 28; 30) for whom teaching was a second choice. Some of the students interviewed had started one university course and, for various reasons, had then dropped out and had chosen teaching; another had completed other third-level degrees and had come to teaching late; some had started one course, had got a leaving certificate re-check and had been accepted for teaching. For some of these students their parents had shown support for

this career change.

My parents are very supportive of whatever I want to do...I had previously started another course and I didn't like it and I started again...it was like "if this is what you want to do" to continue. So I would say they would be what impacted my life the most. (Interview 13.3)

In the case of Student 30 there was also a sense of support in the decision to change courses and for Student 1 there was a conversation with her father...

...he said 'what are you doing with your life,' and I said 'good question,' and he said 'know where are you going and...you know what's your plan...and I didn't really have one and he to be fair he wasn't cross that wasting his time and his money. He just he kind of asked me what my strengths were what my interests were and we kept coming back to children and teaching... and he said 'why don't you give primary school teaching a go,' and I said 'because I didn't want to be you know pigeon holed,' and he said 'well, what else would you do in life, something broad. You're doing something broad and you're not achieving anything,' and I said 'that's fair enough. (Interview 1.14)

Three students mentioned their father in particular having a strong influence on them (01.01/14; 04.02/04; 27.02). From Student 1, "my Dad's great, we have a lot of the same interests...and kind of all the same ideas about things. He is very like 'by the book'; quite black and white which is bad sometimes..." (Interview 1.1) Student 4 was influenced by her father's example, in particular the charity work that he did. He was the religious person the student mentioned when I asked her to name one. Student 27 also valued her father's opinion: "...we have a very open relationship we're not a father/daughter relationship it's, were more like good friends...a huge influence. I have a lot of time for his opinions I respect what he thinks and he has been a big influence in my life" (Interview 27.2).

Three students (13.07; 14.04; 19.02) mentioned their mother and the value of their mother's opinion.

She is a very strong influence in my life, even if she doesn't mean to. I always kind of take her opinion and kind of probably do what she says even if she doesn't tell me what to do. But I always, kind of, ask her for advice. (Interview 19.02)

Two students mentioned a parent who was a primary school teacher who had a huge influence on their life. Student 10 described her father as, “the teacher that everyone feared in school but everyone loved at the same time...I meet guys I would have been in school with and they’re still asking about my dad” (Interview 10.1). Student 14 mentioned her mother:

I would say she is very patient; she has taught infants for years; she would be charismatic always, full of energy; she is very caring and affectionate; she would always have a very strong bond with the children, they like her; it’s hard to separate her from being my mother and being a teacher as well. (Interview 14.4)

7.1.4.2 Teachers and School

For many students, a strong influence and building-block in their lives were the teachers they encountered and the schools that they had attended. Later on I will also refer to teachers who had an influence on the students’ decision to become a teacher, but here the section deals with teachers as an influence on identity. Student 2 had the opposite experience to most students, but the outcome was the same:

...the fact that I hated my teacher in primary school the fact that I didn’t want to be anything like her, I think did have an effect on me. (Interview 2.12)

Some of the students had been at boarding school. One student that had attended found that the influences in her lives were mostly from her friends as opposed to her parents (Interview 2.10), and this was mirrored by Student 12:

...from school I think I became more independent of myself. Like I know now from living with two other girls that I find that because I was able to fend for myself I learnt to look after my own space. (Interview 12.2)

Some had teachers in their families, some of whom were an influence (Student 7; 10; 16; 17; 20; 26). The matter of bullying was one influence in particular which has been mentioned elsewhere and which had a strong influence in the lives of four students (7.1 / 9.2 / 12.7 / 13.5). Many of the students who spoke about the influence of school and teachers were mostly talking about primary school as in the case of Student 13. Her

primary school was small and staffed by young teachers:

...they gave me a lot of grounding in different areas that I would be interested in and they really try to promote different things like when I did get into trad music and that they were very encouraging. (Interview 13.4)

Just as small close-knit rural communities have an impact on the students; small close-knit schools have had a similar influence. Teachers in some of these schools seemed influential in the students' decision to become teachers, and it seemed to be the teachers who added the extras in the day, who were prepared to help and push their students (Interviews 4.1; 6.6; 14.4). Student 30 wanted to imitate the teacher that she had in third class because of how she remembered feeling in that class and how good the teacher was: "I want the kids to enjoy school and to have the same experience as I did" (Interview 30.8). Student 16 wanted to be like the principal in her primary school, who played the guitar, "he got the job done and everybody liked him. He was a really good teacher" (Interview 16.7). Student 25 spoke of a teacher who had died and what she would have thought of her former pupil and "would she like me to be a teacher now or what would she think of me now" (Interview 25.03). Student 11 often saw her former primary teacher, who was willing to offer advice and help out the student in regard to teaching practice. Likewise, Student 24 kept in touch with a former teacher, who has been a help especially in teaching practice. This student gave a portrait of this teacher who:

...did an awful lot of singing and awful lot of music. She was up on the ways of the world; she was very caring, very genuine, very kind...there were only six boys in the class, and once a month she would take the six of us out to the cinema ...she was very good to us. She was a very close teacher and she knew everyone of us very, very well then. Even still she would know us, she could tell if you were lying to her or not, even today if you met her you wouldn't get away with fibbing her. In fact I worked with her for the week's observation, third year following the Resource Teacher and she knew straight away I was trying to bluff her about something; she picked it up straight away. She was very artistic, we all loved art, it was a four teacher school and it meant that she would have to go with the other classes to do art because the other teachers wouldn't do art. (Interview 24.2)

7.1.4.3 Friends and College

The interviewees mentioned friends as an important part of their identity in terms of social identity and Rahner's idea of 'person-in-relation'. To begin with three students mentioned the influence of boyfriends. A number of students mentioned the influence of college, and some saw themselves as a product of their college education (12.4). There was a sense of singularity in the college's purpose, as everyone was preparing for the same career (Interview 1.12; 11.4). The relatively small sizes of the college were an important factor in building friendships, relationships and a sense of community among students, staff and faculty (Interview 5.6; 6.03). Student 9 thought that there was a wide diversity of people in college and due to the size it was possible to get to know them (Interview 9.4; 23.14):

...when you get to college, because you wouldn't know so many people, you're kind of meeting different people from different counties, people that have different family circumstances, people that have different experiences in life, people that are a different age, people that have children, people that don't have children, people that are party animals, people that are not, that are kind of quiet and I think that effects your own understanding of relationships and how you'd interact with people. (Interview 23.14)

However some student felt that there was a danger in remaining in 'secondary school' mode because the size of the colleges were more like secondary schools and sometime the workload and constant attention of the lecturers perpetuated this (Interview 22.3; 26.3).

I have been to different colleges and I see this one as a real community. It takes a while to get in on it too, because if somebody is coming from secondary school into a college it's easy to make that transition...it was very like secondary school here for a while again, you see each other every day, you have small classes, you know your lecturer like you know your teacher and in first year you probably don't appreciate that but I think by the end of third year you do. They are easy to talk to and they are always there so definitely yes, college is a community. (Interview 26.3)

During their time in college these students have often left behind the friends they had at secondary school and have begun to make new friendships:

I don't know because I think the friends I've made in college, are kind of, I have a lot more in common with them than my friends at home. I think sometimes I feel like I am just still friends with them because I've been friends with them for so long and that we had, you know, so much history. But sometimes I feel like I don't really have a lot in common with them anymore. Whereas...my friends in college...we are doing the same course, we have the same interests...I seem a lot closer to them... (Interview 19.4)

These relationships have helped Student 8 to mature: "people I've met like, things that I've come to understand better from talking to people from seeing people deal with things and then obviously dealing with things myself" (Interview 8.2). Some friendships are based on sport and common interests (Interview 16.2). As with parents, it is often the opinions of friends which matter most:

You just kind of value their opinion and if you have a problem you just go to them and you value what they say I'd value what they have to say or what they think about that problem or whatever I was talking to them about. (Interview 22.2)

Rahner's theme of persons-in-relation is in evidence when speaking about community, and in particular with regard to the sense of community that exists in each of the three colleges where the students studied. Five of the students came from the city and another three from suburban towns near large cities. Seventeen students were from rural areas and the remaining five came from small towns/villages in rural areas. The majority was rural based, but many of the students from urban areas had an appreciation of the sense of community that can exist in the suburbs or through association with sports clubs etc. Student 29 defined what was meant by community at college:

It's just everybody working together for the best of everybody, the students, the lecturers. It's not like we are here to teach you, sit down. It is a learning environment. It is a community; everybody working together and getting on. (Interview 29.6)

All the students who were asked saw their respective Colleges of Education as "a very close-knit community" (Interview 3.8, 14.4), and those who had attended larger institutions before beginning teacher education had found the smaller size of the college

more suitable to them:

I deferred it for a year and I came up here in January just to be shown around the college, one day, one Saturday afternoon and absolutely fell in love with the place, thought it was a fantastic atmosphere, would love to attend college here, loved the kind of homeliness of it and things like that as opposed to being a number in UCC. (Interview 7.2)

Student 3 appreciated that the lecturers knew her name (Interview 3.9). One student had been in hospital while at university (before starting teacher education) and although she had been out for a while, no-one had missed her (Interview 13.6). That sense of community had helped one student (Interview 19.7) to mature in her understanding of friendships and relationships and the connections that people make and the sense of mutuality and reciprocation at the heart of community and which is essential in smaller colleges. The student compared her experience to that of her sister at university. They had been walking through the university campus together and her sister hardly knew anyone they passed. For some, relationships helped build up the sense of community along with a willingness to get involved (Interview 4.10) and work at it (Interview 5.6). For Student 9 the size of the college meant that everyone was “in it together” (Interview 9.5), which was an important component for community. For many who spoke of a strong family relationship at home, the strong ‘family’ relationship also existed at college,

It’s like a family. It’s ridiculous because it’s so small and you really kind of, well particularly me and some of my friends get really involved in aspects around the college and I really think that helps you build friendships... Like there’s people ... from different year groups and different friend groups that you meet that you wouldn’t necessarily talk to if you were just with your friends all the time and you didn’t get involved. And I think that helps the community spirit... (Interview 17.7)

This student had also spoken of a strong family bond and closeness to her parents and was very proud of where she came from. Finally, one student understood the importance of community but said, “at certain stages I need to be by myself because

you need time to yourself to kind of think. You know your head gets kind of foggy if you are around people too often, listening to them all the time” (Interview 22.4).

7.1.4.4 Community

In social based identity theory, as mentioned in the theoretical framework, the community is an important influence. Students from rural areas mentioned the importance of the local community that they grew up in. One student saw his upbringing as rural and traditional with a strong sense of community and the obligations of each member of that community towards each other. There was a strong sense of *Meitheal*; “a bit like the Amish” (Interview 24.2). For many of these students the very positive sense of community at college echoed home-life and helped the student when she began at college (Interview 1.12). Student 16 summed it up: “I think it’s just that you fit in... you feel a connection. You are interested in the same things. You see them at Mass and if you were out the night before you would know, it’s comfortable; you know each other’s routines” (Interview 16.2). For Student 21 it was being able to walk down the street in her town and know people and stopping for chats (Interview 21.6). She saw it as an ideal upbringing; almost like a cocoon:

I suppose I was in a very close knit tight community, nice parish, never saw anything else that was going on, never saw the rest of the world. (Interview 21.4)

Student 20 had worked on summer camps during the summers which had given her a different view of community, and helped with openness towards people from different backgrounds (Interview 20.2). For Student 2 close relationships were evidence of a strong community (Interview 2.13). Three students mentioned the GAA (15.5; 23.9; 26.1), both as something that had an influence on their life and that had taught them about community.

Match days especially there would be a huge sense of pride and togetherness... because GAA is about community. It’s like that saying you don’t choose your club, you are born to it...I was never a big player in the club but you don’t have to

be a player to be a part of it, you don't have to be good to be a part of it.
(Interview 15.5)

Another student spoke about the MTV/globalisation/consumerist culture which had been a big part of making him who he was, which was one of the malaises on modernity in Charles Taylor. He was still someone who brought particular products and brands; still influenced by the crowd mentality and needing to fit in with what everyone else was wearing: "You don't want to be ostracised, you don't want to be something different. You kind of want to not blend in but you want to fit in with your friends. I suppose that's affected the product of who I am" (Interview 23.9).

Two students spoke about two people that they knew or had encountered who had been influential in the formative years of the lives and who had helped them become the people they were today. One was a similar age to the student:

...we were talking about self-image and self-awareness and things like that. He was a very kind of deep, deep thinker and...it really got me thinking about who I was...he was a great, great guy to talk to and as I say going back after even talking to that guy and having reflected over...I developed this attitude of I am who I am. (Interview 7.7)

The other was considerably older:

I suppose I feel better when I do go up to see him. I often feel that if there was something annoying me in work sense, if I go up to him, he'll listen to you and he'll always put you on the right track. If someone annoys me down home and I'd lose the head with them, he would always be able to settle you down and put you on the right track again. Even though he would have a short temper himself, he would always tell you himself not to do something. (Interview 24.5)

7.1.4.5 Experience

I asked the students about being a product of the experiences of life. Experience is an influence on identity, especially when a person learns from that experience and uses in interpreting and constructing their identity. This is the internal dimension of identity which comes from the external influences and experiences. Some students spoke about how various experiences in life had shaped them as people. For Student 5 the influence

came with the books read and the travel undertaken (Interview 5.3). Student 30 spoke about the death of grandparents and a friend which affected her:

...it changes your thinking and it made me...rethink my whole way of life, I think. I had one very close friend who died and after that I was like, life is too short, because up until...I used to worry about everything I just felt life is too short...it made me think about things like, small things like arguing with people and stuff... (Interview 30.2-3)

It also had an impact on her relationship with parents and siblings, having seen the effect of a death on other families. What I noticed in particular with this interview was that this student seemed to think deeply about many of the questions and subjects asked. For another student it was the realisation that she could be whoever she wanted to be, and that through education there was no limit in terms of social class or religion. The word that she used to describe this was 'free expression' (Interview 27.2), and that everything was about the person that you made yourself as opposed to the external influences of which you might be a product. Student 21 had difficulty in answering the question and her answer was not really about what she had experienced herself. The reply was:

I'd say it's the chance that you are given in life, the chances put in front of you. I suppose not being faced with particular obstacles. (Interview 21.5)

However the student, who was very driven, seemed to have availed of every opportunity that had come her way. This was similar to Student 4, who spoke about the importance of, "the life that I have led, the life that has been put in front of me...I was blessed with what I was given" (Interview 4.7-8).

7.1.5 Identity and Change

Based on the notion that identity is dynamic and changing, I asked them about what had changed in respect of their identity over the years as they had grown up. The most common answer was that they had gained in confidence and cared less about the opinions of others, or that they no longer had to please other people (Interview 2.9; 4.7;

13.5).

Student 4 stated “I have grown into myself and found out who I am” (Interview 4.7). This changed had been helped along by the intervention of another pupil in her school: “...she was like have some faith in the staggeringly beautiful person that you are becoming and it’s something that I have always carried with me ...I’m changing I’m becoming more confident” (Interview 4.7). For some this confidence helped as they undertook the path towards teaching (Interview 3.6). The last area of change was their feeling of maturity and independence as they begin the transition from home to college and on from there (Interview 14.2; 17.5; 22.2; 26.2). Students were also negotiating the move from school/home friends to college friends and the commonality of purpose that those friends had with each other. Finally from Student 10: “I don’t think anything has really stayed the same. I am constantly getting better at one thing or developing something else” (Interview 10.3) and from Student 12: “...everything changes, nothing stays the same” (Interview 12.3).

7.1.6 Identity Salience

The final part of the identity theory from the theoretical framework is concerned with salience and the ability of a person to inhabit multiple identities. This was not a term that the students were familiar with, so I had to try and describe it for them. I asked the students if they saw the various elements of their identity like layers laid on top of one another or all mixed up. This might be considered as leading, but as this was an important element of the interview and an understanding of their identity, I felt that it should be done, but cautiously. Student 21 used the image of little boxes:

I wouldn’t be able to segregate my life. I’m not one of these people who come home to the dinner table and I don’t talk about my day in college. They’re sick of listening to things and my parents aren’t people who don’t ask questions. They are as nosy as ever but I’m terrible at keeping secrets but no, everything would be mixed together. I wouldn’t be making any secret that I might be going to Mass and keep that to one little box. I couldn’t have little boxes. I suppose one big

box. (Interview 21.15)

This is a good quotation which exemplifies the problem of identity salience and the ability to understand various multiple identities as separate, before there is an understanding of them as being salient. Most thought that everything was mixed in together or interlinked (Interview 2.8); a mix of different things (Interview 13.16); intertwined (Interview 15.14); jumbled up (Interview 16.14); integrated (Interview 19.18):

I think you bring different aspects of your life into other aspects... Like my identity does impact on my teaching and me as a teacher ... I have a very definite image in my head of who I want to be and who I want to be perceived to be. I think the classroom first of all is the main place that you're being, not being watched but it is an important place where you use those characteristics and traits so I think it's overlap. (Interview 30.15)

For other students (Interview 25.13; 29.14), certain parts of their identity were brought out to the fore depending on the circumstance, and in the case of Student 26 it was impossible to separate the layers of identity:

You can't separate religion from being a sports person, you can't separate religion from being a family person, no you can't really, your faith, your religious identity no I don't really think you separate it from your layers. (Interview 26.10)

Finally Student 6 thought that he would, "adjust my faith to my identity" (Interview 6.18).

7.2 Teacher Identity

This next section is about teacher identity, which is the next part of the theoretical framework and the first of the sections that make up the thick description of the student teacher. For the most part the questions were on the topic of beginning or emerging teacher identity. I asked them about why they wanted to be teachers and the influences on their decision. I asked them what they needed to be good teachers other than college and teaching practice, and I asked them if they considered themselves teachers now.

7.2.1 Why Become a Teacher?

I asked this question to give the student an opportunity to talk about why they were drawn to becoming a teacher and the influences on their decision. On the one hand the person makes the decision to become a teacher which is personal to them, but it has a wider dimension because of the influence of others. Twenty-three students responded to the question about why they wanted to be teachers. Student 7 mentioned the idea of working with people as one of the motivations behind wanting to be a teacher. It was interesting that it was working with people as opposed to working with children, although he had referred to that at another point in the interview. Student 14 also mentioned ‘working with people’ (Interview 14.5). The ability of Student 23 to be a leader was part of the reason why he wanted to be a teacher:

I wanted to lead from the front. I didn’t want to sit back, I didn’t want to work in an office job, nine to five... so I wanted to lead the children, I wanted to show them the right path or show them the right way to live their lives, be a positive influence. (Interview 23.13)

Student 27 mentioned a number of factors which encapsulates many of the answers of the other students:

I loved school, in primary school I was always interested in things, how things worked why things are the way they are, finding out about a new ideas, I have always been good with kids. I can remember minding cousins and things like that at a young age and I just found I never had to give out or shout or anything like that, it just came naturally to me. (Interview 27.5)

7.2.1.1 Influence of Teachers

Student 2 had had a bad experience of her primary school and found herself motivated to become a teacher to prevent other children having a bad experience of teachers (Interview 2.14). Student 7 also had a bad experience of a teacher, which he narrated very emotionally:

The honest answer...I never in my life wanted a child to feel the way I did when I was in school and be treated the way I was. I never in my life wanted to see that happen again and as I said, that in itself is trying to make a difference...

(Interview 7.8)

Student 21's school experience had also been the inspiration behind becoming a teacher; this time the experience was very positive:

The teachers played such a big part in that and I could see teachers out there that do the minimum but then you could see how far you can go with it...I think you have such freedom with that and also such responsibility and I suppose I like that sense of responsibility. (Interview 21.7)

Student 3 and 9 also had great teachers and that had inspired them (Interview 3.9; 9.5).

Student 12 was motivated by both: she had been bullied in school and "I remember I used to have some really awful teachers in school, that were so strict and that would really put you down at times. I'd sometimes get hurt by that..." (Interview 12.6)

However she also remembered and talked animatedly about a teacher who had taken her for choir who had been kind and caring of the children. It was the principal and his dedication to the school and the wider community which had inspired Student 17 to be a teacher. Student 29 was also inspired by past teachers (Interview 29.6). For Student 23 it was teachers that went that bit further in their teaching:

Someone that was trying to develop a child in terms of not just their academic development but more holistically... and that would have had an impact on me and then teachers that I had in school, would have certainly impacted upon me. I always looked up towards the teachers that were doing things in a different way, that were inspiring or that had a personality. (Interview 23.16)

7.2.1.2 Influence of Parents/Relatives

Eight of the students had relatives of one sort or another who were teachers, so this was something that a number of them brought up when talking about the influences and motivations behind teaching. Two students mentioned parents who were teachers. One was motivated by her mother to be a teacher (Interview 14.4). When asked, she said this of her mother:

I would say she is very patient, she has taught infants for years, she would be charismatic always full of energy, she is very caring and affectionate, she would always have a very strong bond with the children, they like her, it's hard to

separate her from being my mother and being a teacher as well. (Interview 14.4)

The other was reluctant to follow her father into teaching, but eventually did. Again she spoke with affection about her father:

...he was the teacher that everyone feared in school but everyone loved at the same time...he is still like a big giant kid you know and he is real in to art and drawing so the kids all love that. (Interview 10.1)

One had been inspired by a brother who was a teacher, and for whom he had done some substitution (Interview 26.4).

7.2.1.3 Working with Children

The fact that they liked children (5.6) and working with children (3.9; 4.12; 22.4) were strong motivations for most of the students becoming teachers. Student 4 was very passionate in her answer:

I love working with kids and I love seeing the development over time. I want a job so bad next year, because I don't want to sub I don't want to go into a class that is someone else's class and you are there with them for a day and you know nothing about them and I want to be a teacher because I want to see them develop and see how much they improve over time and that is so important to me, come hell or high water I want to have my own class so I can, that's why I want to make a difference to children. (Interview 4.12)

Some students had been involved with children either in sports (5.5), youth activities (6.6; 7.2; 10.5), Transition Year and other work or classroom experience (6.6; 23.16), or with younger siblings (15.7) or cousins (9.5) and had enjoyed that experience and decided to continue with teacher education. Student 24 liked working with children and loved the innocence of the children (Interview 24.6). Student 15 described 'playing school':

From the time that I was a child, because I had three younger siblings they always had friends over in the house and I was constantly organizing activities for them teaching them, I would set up school and even with my own friends I was always the bossy one not bossy but I was the organizer, I was always planning things for everyone to do, I was sitting them down and teaching them what to do next and then when my friends grew out of me I turned to my siblings and their friends and I was always teaching them, obviously my parents were watching all of this and thought she is going to be in a classroom again some time. (Interview 15.7)

Student 17 also mentioned ‘playing school’ when she was a child. When asked the question about wanting to teach, Student 9 had difficulty putting words on what she was trying to describe, which seemed to indicate a deeper motivation and inspiration to becoming a teacher than just the example of teachers or working with younger cousins. In a similar vein, Students 16 and 19 had never thought of doing anything else but teaching even from an early age. While she had thought of other things, Student 25 always had teaching in the back of her head because she loved children. This was also the motivation of Student 30 and she thought that this was something of a clichéd answer – presuming it to be the motivation for most people to being teacher education. Student 5 still thought of himself as childlike and loved the exploration and finding out dimension of childhood...as well as the comics and toys.

7.2.2 Needs other than College and Teaching Practice

The students were asked what they needed to be good teachers, other than college and teaching practise. Again this question was asked to give the opportunity to think about teaching beyond the scope of college and teaching practice. Twenty-one students gave a reply to the question concerning what they thought they needed to be teachers apart from what they had gained in College and the experience of Teaching Practice. These answers were mostly list of qualities and were very aspirational in the choice of words and descriptions. Included in this are answers to the questions about what makes a good teacher. As again these answers were idealistic, which ties in with the ideal teacher identity from the literature review, I added them among the answers here. I have divided the answers into two sections – the third year students whose experience of what they might need is based on teaching practice; and the fourth years who were teaching full time at the time of interview. No student mentioned a love of knowledge or wanting to change society.

7.2.2.1 Needs of the Third-Year Students

The answers to this question can be divided into three sections: personal characteristics, dealing with other people, dealing with the children. Many of the students spoke about the qualities that would be personal to them. Patience was the one mentioned most often, along with organizational ability and confidence. Others were leadership, a sense of humour (Interview 2.15); open-mindedness and a willingness to change (Interviews 5.07; 10.6); similarly, a need to go with the flow and to be flexible and ready for anything. Student 4 said that a teacher could be quiet and a person who does not want to get involved, "...to be a teacher you need to be somebody that has a bit of go in yourself and wants to see children aspire to do these things as well, not necessarily everything" (Interview 4.9). Student 16 said that the classroom was not the place for a perfectionist (Interview 16.8).

With regard to dealing with others, some mentioned the ability to get on with (Interview 5.07) and relate to people (Interview 3.11) in the school community; the ability to listen and understand what people are saying; to see things from another perspective and the patience to persevere (Interview 8.4)

Others answered with the children in mind. For Student 1 it was a genuine interest in and actual passion for children, suggesting that otherwise it would be, "the longest day in the world" (Interview 1.14). Others mentioned care for the children (Interview 9.6); and an awareness of where the children were coming from, in the sense that the difficulties that children in a disadvantaged school might be experiencing outside the school (Interview 20.6). Student 9 said that you had to love the children you were teaching, "...because there is no point doing the job if you don't like children and want to be there" (Interview 9.6). One student saw what she had learned elsewhere from working with children as being beneficial in the classroom: "I think your attitude with

children, you have to be able to relate to them...I have always got on very well kids...I do summer camps during the summer so I am nearly surrounded by them all the time. (Interview 13.08)

7.2.2.2 Needs of the Fourth Year Students

As the fourth year students are in school permanently, they have a different set of needs to those of the third year students. The first two answers seemed very much from this experience. There was the need for energy and diligence:

You need to get up every morning with energy because if you don't have energy you will find yourself getting down. (Interview 26.5)

Diligence I think, it's not something you can do half-heartedly...I think you have to be committed because each child, each class requires something different of you and whether that means you have to read another book or you have to try a different approach in the classroom, it's very demanding you need to be dedicated. (Interview 27.5)

Student 24 also saw the need to be mentally able, especially for the Junior Classes, along with kindness, patience, understanding and the ability to listen (Interview 24.6). Another student spoke of the need for confidence which she had gained in the classroom after nearly a year of teaching (Interview 28.4). Both students 29 and 30 spoke about the need for experience, which would only come with time. Student 29 had experience of people who had a natural ability as teachers even though they had never been to college, but had a wealth of life experience of dealing with children (Interview 29.7). Student 30 questioned her teaching and what the children were learning. She realised that it was a learning process that was on-going and only experience would help it: "it'll never end really" (Interview 30.10).

7.2.3 Are You a Teacher?

I asked this question to see if the students, as the literature says, were moving from an idealistic and personal view of teaching to an opinion that was based more on professionalism and their role as teachers. As many students had been influenced by

teachers and were aware of the ‘cultural archetypes’ of teachers and had come to college with ‘lay-theories’ of teachers, I thought the question might draw a different answer from them. Seventeen of the students were asked if they considered themselves teachers now. The question was not asked of those in their fourth year who were teaching full time. Fourteen said that they thought they were; two said no (Students 1 and 22); and one student said that she did not know (Student 11), although when pressed she gave me some qualities of being a teacher: enthusiasm and not being critical of the child and “making every learning objective matter” (Interview 11.6). She went on to give an example of how she had done this in teaching practice, so the qualities were not just aspirational, but ones she had attempted to put into practice. Most of the students offered explanations as to why they had answered the way they had, and offered a list of personal abilities which made them teachers. Student 5 thought it was his approach and curiosity, and the fact that he liked to share knowledge and facts. Student 8 had four qualities: the desire to support; to pass on information; to enhance children’s lives; and to help people. Student 21 mentioned patience, combined with the ability to break things down and bring others along.

Some of the students felt that they had changed and grown into the identity of a teacher. Student 14’s approach to things had changed. When she was looking at things like books, it was with an eye towards how it might be used in class. Student 12 had found “her teacher voice coming out” (Interview 12.08), even when she was at home, helping a younger sibling with homework.

Some mentioned the children in particular and their ability to communicate with them. When I pressed Student 17 on why she thought she was a teacher even though she was not qualified she replied, “...that it didn’t matter... I think ... I care a lot and I think I have a good ability of connecting with the class. I think I relate to children, like when

I'm with a class I think I try my best to relate to them as best I can" (Interview 17.09).

Student 1 felt that although she had taught and that she had impacted on the lives of the children through teaching, she was not yet a teacher.

Student 6 felt that after the experience of a recent teaching practice which had been particularly tough that he was a teacher. His experience of a school that did not seem to want student teachers, of the class teacher who had told him that she was watching him, and the presence of the external examiner had made for a difficult experience, which the student felt had gone well but which had also left the feeling that he was a teacher.

Some of the answers were more a matter of logic than anything else. Student 2 said, "I'm not qualified yet but I think as long as you teach something to someone then you are a teacher so yes" (Interview 2.18). Student 19 had a similar distinction between 'not qualified, but still 'being a teacher'. For Student 9 it was not a case of qualified or unqualified, but whether a teacher was good or bad. Some of the answers were based on the fact that knowledge and skills had been acquired. From Interview 10: "I probably know more things. I know how to teach. I know it is the methodology that makes me more of a teacher" (Interview 10.06). For some of the students it was instinctual or idealistic. Student 15 felt that he "instinctively teach(es) people" (Interview 15.08). Student 16 answered: "Right now, it's just, say if we are doing fractions or something in a class I wouldn't leave it till they all get it. I am not just there to tick all of the boxes; I really would like to think, obviously they are all different levels, but that they would all learn from it. I want to teach them" (Interview 16.8).

7.2.4 What matters most about being a Teacher

The students were asked about what mattered most to them about being a teacher, in an attempt to make them prioritise. This is linked to teacher identity in terms of the narratives of teachers from Søreide (2006), as many of the comments they made came

in the form of a narrative concerning some aspect of their experience of teaching. The answers were idealistic, but gave a sense of how they saw themselves as teachers. For the most part they mentioned the children: teaching the children to think; having an effect on the child; the welfare and happiness of the children. Some students mentioned themselves. One student mentioned herself and what mattered most about teaching (along with the happiness of the child) was that she would learn and get better (Interview 14.06). Another student who had been doing a lot of substitution work narrated incidents of how he had been treated in two particular schools. In one school he was isolated and ignored. In the other school:

once you went into the staff room you were the focal point, someone new had come in, they were all asking you questions, how do you feel about this and there would be a bit a craic, banter and joking ... I found that, the values of teacher in the staff room itself. (Interview 24.6)

What mattered most was how he was around other teachers, and how to avoid the attitude and experience of the first of the two schools mentioned. Student 30 also had a hard time in staff-rooms (Interview 30.9).

There was a sense of personal fulfilment in many of the answers, in that making a difference in the lives of the children was personally affirming:

helping the children out is one thing that really appeals to me because...that feeling when you help someone and...that gratitude that they give you, you know I really like that feeling... the feeling that you've made a difference to someone or that you are helping someone, like I couldn't see myself in some job, do you know, some office or whatever, thinking that I was doing nothing to help anyone. I couldn't see myself in any type of job and I think teaching is one of the jobs that...really...helps people. (Interview 19.9)

A point regarding what mattered most about teaching was giving the children the facility to think for themselves. This was mentioned by Student 1 with regard to her teaching religious education...

that you give the children their own mind that you are not there to teach them like exactly as its set out both in religion and every other subjects but obviously maths and things you know but I think you are not there to make them clones and to

make them the same your there to give them the tools and the information to become who they want to be. (Interview 1.16)

I find it interesting that teachers who are not yet qualified see themselves as not teaching from the book, considering the level of religious knowledge that some of them possess. This was also the case with Student 3, who “wouldn’t follow everything word for word”. This is an attitude that is not confined to these two students and seems to be common among some of the students interviewed. Are the students adopting an attitude of ‘things are done my way in my classroom’? What is difficult about this position is how the student knows what to teach and what to leave out, which is possibly something that comes with experience. What is interesting with this particular student is that she goes on to recount her experience of teaching practice and how she was afraid of giving her own opinion and risk indoctrinating the pupils, “I’d rather...have things right for them, part of the thing is I’m searching deep, you know I’m studying to, what question, what answer to give the child if they did ask a question about what we were doing” (Interview 3.11). The student did not make the link between teaching a prescribed programme and giving the children the right answers: there is a limit to her knowledge; a limit to freedom in using a programme, and a limit to adaptation of the programme. It appears again when discussing teaching religion where some of the students did not feel the need to follow the prescribed curriculum and made up their own lessons. Student 19 also had their own ideas on the programme while on teaching practice:

...the other schools I was in were Catholic schools so I was doing the *Alive O* programme. I didn’t really find it that good so...I found myself kind of like making it up myself, like not really following the book but more ... doing things that I thought would be beneficial to them. (Interview 19.17)

Again, there was notion that the student had a better notion of what was beneficial for the students as opposed to the writers of the catechetical material.

Student 2 wanted to have a positive impact on the lives of the children and to build enthusiasm in the children for learning (Interview 2.18), and Student 8 wanted to “enhance the children’s lives” (Interview 8.4) and to pass on information and support the children. Student 3 was the only one to mention having a spiritual effect in the lives of the children (Interview 3.12). For Student 12 what mattered most was inclusion and differentiation – not seeing the class as a group but as a class of individuals. The effect on the child for Student 13 was in the way that the teacher was approachable and had a relationship with the child, especially when a child is struggling and needing help. Student 15 also mentioned relationship with the children. Student 23 quoted Sydney J. Harris, “The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows”, or rather misquoted Harris:

A good teacher gives windows to the world and mirrors upon themselves...a child...can look at something that’s going on outside but that they actually look into themselves and see things that they believe in and that affect them. I think as a teacher that I am trying to do that with the children. (Interview 23.10)

The happiness of the child was mentioned: “that the kids are happy at what they are doing and they feel safe and feel that everybody is included” (Interview 28.4). The student mentions three words in quick succession which are noteworthy – happy, safe and included. As criteria for what characterises a teaching philosophy it is commendable and if it is an attitude that she maintains throughout her teaching it will be enormously beneficial to all her students. Reviewing the interview, this attitude seems to come from a happy experience of school at an early age and a happy and secure childhood, which gives further evidence to the idea that what a teacher brings to their classroom is what they have grown up with and have been influenced by. Student 10 mentioned the importance of a happy learning child, who is improving and taking something new with them every day. Student 8 had done teaching practice in a DEIS school and the happiness of a child in this situation was what mattered most (Interview

6.8). He spoke at length and with enthusiasm of his experience in a particular school: how he had coped with the difficulties; learned to get the priorities right in terms of teaching, discipline; and had given the children a positive experience of learning. He was able to marry the idealistic side of teaching with putting it into practice. Student 25 also mentioned the teacher's role in the happiness of the child in schools in disadvantaged areas:

they have a lot going on their lives anyway and a lot of upset, so I think school needs to be a constant for them so I would like to be, not so much a friend because you can't really be their friend really, I would like to be a person that they would respect and they come to me if they had a problem. (Interview 25.7)

Student 21 had a similar response:

I think school can be a haven for some children whereas it's an escape from the outside world. An escape from whatever is going on ... I think that school years should be enjoyable. Everything should be made doable. I know you can't make everything but that you need to mix it up, and that children should come out of school happy and come into school happy. (Interview 21.9)

Student 8 was similar in being concerned for the academic welfare of the children:

Giving everyone an even chance making sure that the children enjoy it and get the best experience that they can so that they will have something to bring with them for life, that it's not just teaching for the sake of it but it's actually things that are meaningful and that the children will actually be able to use in life and it's not me at the centre of it but it's them. (Interview 8.5)

Her comment about the centrality of the children and not the teacher is very important and an attitude that she will hopefully maintain into the future. Equality, fairness and developing the potential of the children were mentioned by Student 20 as things that matter most (Interview 20.6).

7.3 Religious Identity

7.3.0 Introduction

This section on religious identity is the third theme from the theoretical framework and the second piece that makes up the thick description of the student teacher as the answer

to the first research question. These are the responses to two series of questions in the interviews. The first dealt with the relationship between the personal and the social sides of religious identity. This led on to questions about could a person be spiritual and not religious. The second set of questions was about personal religious identity based about the question, “do you think you are a religious person?” and how that ‘religious person’ is defined. The students offered a varying array of answers with regard to their understanding of personal religious identity, and mentioned some of the factors that made up identity, beliefs and practices. Of the thirty students three said that they were either agnostic or atheist. All the others were Catholic or Christian and although some suggested that they were not particularly religious, the answers gave indications of religious disposition. I have begun with answers to questions about God and then cover the answers to questions about personal religious identity. This is followed by the section on personal religious identity and then the section on being ‘spiritual and not religious’

7.3.1 God

I asked three direct questions about God: an image of God, a word to sum up their understanding of God, and closeness to God. The purpose of these questions were to see what level of understanding they had of God, and if it was a God that they felt a closeness to. I was also trying to look for evidence of a transcendent notion of God coming from Rahner. The students spoke about God on eleven other occasions and I have included some of these comments.

7.3.1.1 God - Words and Images

The students were asked to give a word or a phrase that would sum up their understanding of God and twenty-six students responded with a variety of answers, some of which were traditional and some were original. They were also asked what

image of God sits most comfortably with them. Likewise the answers were a combination of traditional and original answers. The following table has the answers given by all the students. The chart displays the words offered by the individual students (numbers 1 – 30).

1. Energy	2. Creator/Guide	3. Someone you can always rely on. Father/Light/Bright Light
4. -----	5. -----	6. Big Man – Up There Protection/White Beard
7. Shining Light	8. Forgiving/Ever-Loving	9. Closeness/Presence
10. -----	11. Creator Tall Man/White Clothes	12. Non-Existent Face in the Clouds
13. Crack in the Wall	14. Loving/Caring	15. Unique
16. Ray of Sun coming down from a cloud/Random	17. -----	18. Personal
19. Unconditional Love	20. In the Sky	21. Puppeteer/Life/Love
22. Love/Caring/Listens Always There	23. Understanding	24. Idir inn
25. Cloud/Guiding Hand	26. Righteous	27. Almighty/Great
28. -----	29. Always There Guardian/White Hair	30. There all the time Non-Judgemental

Table 5 - God in Images and Words

Some of the students found it hard to come up with words or to explain what they thought God was, in one or so words.

God is the Father I suppose, he is, it's just something that I know is there, I can't, it's hard to explain, I just know that there is something there at the other side. (Interview 3.7)

Most of the words are ones that are common when referring to God, e.g. Father,

Creator, light etc., but a number of others warrant comment. When asked about an image of God, Student 13 found it difficult to put it into words. She then offered this explanation:

I think to be God is someone that is there but sometimes it is just hard to see where he is. It is nearly like having a crack in the wall but you just can't find where it is. That doesn't really make much sense but it is He is there - I mean if there was a crack in the wall you know it is there but sometimes you just can't find it one day but the next day you mightn't be able to find it. (Interview 13.14)

This was also the student who found it difficult to articulate whether she felt close to God. The image is interesting from the perspective of the hiddenness of God, something that is there but that is difficult to perceive.

If God was anywhere in these images God was in the clouds, which perpetuated the idea of God above and, as others had said in the section on closeness to God, watching over them. Student 12's idea of non-existent did not mean that God was non-existent, but that she found it difficult to contemplate God visually, although she then conceded the idea of God as a face in the cloud, which she admitted came from the Disney film, *The Lion King*. Interview 23 also had difficulty with the idea of an image of God. "I don't have an image of God...I don't know what God is, what God looks like, really what God is" (Interview 23.10). I asked if it was important to have an image of God, the reply was the following:

I don't think it has any real relevance to be honest. I don't see why seeing God as a particular picture or particular word or whatever would have any relevance in why you believe in God or why that would affect you as an individual. It's very hard to think because it's one of those things that is nearly beyond our comprehension on earth. Unless you are up there with God, I don't think you can understand and really have an understanding of who He is or She is or whatever it is. (Interview 23.10)

This student was the only one to even mention God as female. Another 'cloud' image was from Interview 16:

An image would be the rays of sun coming down from the clouds, I think that he is always there watching, sometimes it is rainy and he is gone but he will always

come back in a way, bad things will happen but a few years later something good will happen. (Interview 16.12)

The image conveys both the idea of God on high, but also the hiddenness of God at times when ‘bad things will happen’. For many of these students there is almost a black and white view of God. One student’s image of God had changed as she had got older. When she was younger and playing with a doll’s house, she was like God. The idea of God as a puppeteer had stayed with her, but now she found it difficult to put a face on God. Student 25 did not need to know what God looked like. Student 2 saw God as a guide through life:

I don’t see God as someone who like would hound you...but as someone who would guide you through or help you make the right decisions in life and who brings you to things and makes you face different situations for a reason so you can learn something from. (Interview 2.10)

Student 24 used the Irish phrase ‘idir inn’ to describe God, which he translates as ‘among us’.

...well that’s my sense of who God is, he is in everyone...They say that God is in everyone, I find that there is a different part of God in everyone, a different part of Jesus in everyone and that no-one has the whole lot but whatever is present in a whole community, the one close knit community, I feel that is what my sense of ‘idir inn’ is, it’s not just one person it’s from everyone and all the parts compliment. (Interview 24.10)

This image indicates a great deal about the faith and religious identity of this student. He spoke constantly about the sense of community where he was from and everyone helps out one another. It is a faith that the student does not find he needs to question very much: go to Church, say one’s prayers, and be kind and considerate to one’s neighbours and friends.

7.3.1.2 Close to God

A short double question was asked of twenty-seven of the students – “do you feel close to God?” and “do you think God is close to you?” The three remaining students had already given indicated that they did not believe in God or were doubtful of the

existence of God, so the question was redundant. Sixteen of the students said that they felt close to God and that they felt that God was close to them. Two students felt neither close to God nor that God was close to them. Four felt that God was close to them, but that they did not feel close to God. Two answered only one part of the double question – indicating in one case that they did feel close to God and in the other case that they did not feel God close to them. The remaining five students gave varying answers and also commented on what they meant.

Student 7 felt close to God at times, and felt that, possibly “in one form or another” God was close to him. Student 13 felt that closeness to God and God’s closeness at times: “there are times when things do look up and things do look better and I do feel that” (Interview 13.13), which equates closeness to God in good times rather than in difficult times. Student 17 gave a similar answer, feeling it to be an occasional thing. Closeness or not to God was about feeling protected. She found it difficult to give expression to closeness:

I don’t think I can really describe it to be honest. I think it’s untangible (sic.) or something I think I do thrive on the fact that it is intangible because ... it’s something more to hope for I think. (Interview 17.14)

One of the most interesting answers came from a student who by all other indications was religious in outlook. The student took the study of religion very seriously at college, prayed, was involved in parish at home, had contributed to the life of his post-primary school, and indicated that he was a religious person. When asked about closeness to God, he did not think so. When asked about God’s closeness, he did not think so either. This happened with another student who gave many indications that religion was important to him, but did not feel close to God. He hoped God was close to him:

I wouldn’t say I’m that close to God. I suppose at times I would have felt, if I asked for guidance or something and there was a sign or I would have taken some

kind of meaning from that; that that's God looking down on me and saying that it's ok, that everything will be all right but I suppose in day to day life I wouldn't expect Him to be, expect to be too close to God, no. (Interview 23.6)

One student found the chapel at college very peaceful during a difficult time in her life, but did not feel either close to God or God's closeness; "I just liked sitting there" (Interview 10.09). Another student gave the following answer to feeling close to God: "Not really, like I find, I would have when I was younger definitely. I don't know if I really believe in God but at the same time I do. I want to but I don't know if I do", and to the question on whether God was close, "If there is a God I'd definitely like to think that he is" (Interview 8.8). This student was also one who showed a good disposition towards religion and religious identity, but seemed to be reluctant to commit as to a definite belief in God.

Some of the students who had said 'yes' to both parts of the questions added some comments. For some the closeness had to do with feeling protected and blessed. That sense of protection related to his liking for cars: "I do feel he is looking over me, if that's what you mean. I think that there are lots of things that have happened to me that I should have been, there must be something else there or you would have been killed on more than one occasion" (Interview 24.8). One student equated closeness to God to the intervention of God in life. The student believed in a God who guides. Another student felt looked after and blessed and added, "that's not necessarily the God that is being talked about in the Bible. It is the God that I believe in" (Interview 15.13). One of the students seemed quite dogmatic about closeness to God: "I think anyone who is healthy and has a good life should feel close to God because they have nothing to be, not angry, but they have a lot to be thankful for so there is no reason that they shouldn't be close" (Interview 26.7). For another student it was about reciprocation: "I think that if I'm close to God then God is close to me I don't think I could be close to God and

him be really far away from me so I think he is probably closer to me than I am to him in a sense” (Interview 2.7). What is most interesting about these answers is the relationship between her feeling close to God and the fact that she had not experienced any particular serious problems or lost anyone close to her.

7.3.1.3 Other References to God

Students made other comments about God. When asked about any sense of God or religion, Student 5 told me that he did not believe in God. He did not contemplate any form of “higher power” or anything spiritual. I asked him about how he had come to this particular opinion:

I sat on the fence for a while and then I said, really I wasn’t happy, oh I don’t know either way but when you look at the world, the more I travelled, the more religions I’ve encountered, the more people I’ve encountered, the more I’ve understood the world, I don’t think, there is no evidence at all for God and there is no need for one, so many different types and there is so much conflict between what God, if there was a God, well which one, there is so many different types of Gods and religions and stuff. If there was one there’d be a lot more continuity between all the religions and stuff like that. The way we are as people and I suppose as I understood evolution more, my understanding of that and that we can get to this place. (Interview 5.11)

For him, “God isn’t needed” (Interview 5.11). This was one of the interviews where I felt the need both to defend my particular opinions on faith and also try and argue the points mentioned, in particular concerning the sense of continuity between various religions. However I did not challenge and listened to what was said. During Interview 18, I questioned the student on her idea and attitude to God. Belief in God came down to how God can permit earthquakes and poverty in Africa etc. When pressed on whether these situations were God’s fault, the student replied:

No, it’s not God’s fault. That’s it, I am not saying that God did this because, that’s because that would then imply, oh well God doesn’t love you so that’s why you are like this. But I think you have to be very careful and I wonder why they don’t question it, to be like, ‘ok, if God loves me then why is this happening?’ Do you know what I mean, like, obviously it’s not God’s fault but there is, I would see naturally that link then – ok well, if he does, then why? And I think, well I suppose I do question things, but that is just a natural progression I’d see.

(Interview 18.12)

Right through this part of the interview the student was very animated about God and views on God. I felt in the interview that the student was trying to convince me, and I was trying to avoid getting into a discussion with her. It left me with the opinion that these are the sort of things that should be the subject of religious education classes in Second-level schools and in the Colleges of Education. I was left wondering if this student had had any previous opportunities to talk this passionately about her ideas about God. Student 6 had a different answer to this question of God and natural disasters (in this case the topic of the earthquake in Haiti arose):

Yeah or the tsunami, I think that you see God in those situations when you see the amount of people who try to help. You see how good some people are and my brother, I didn't even know, my mother told me maybe two weeks after that tsunami, he used to work in a video shop before he went to college and he wouldn't be getting much from there and he donated five hundred euro to the tsunami fund and this is a guy who has no link to this area of the world but like that brought out the good in people. That brought out generosity and kindness in people, looking out for people, moving over there to try and help out. (Interview 6.13)

One student said that "from the three years doing the Religious Studies Certificate, I find that I don't believe any more about Jesus and the whole crucifixion and I mean anyone could have come with that story" (Interview 12.11). This comment is similar to ones that a number of students made with regard to a particular course that they had done in Religious Education at College, and these comments will be considered in another section. However the student's comments give the opinion that everything that she was brought up to believe has been proved to be incorrect:

It could have just started from a simple rumour now I am thinking is the whole thing a rumour and it has been just blown out of proportion totally, here we are not worshipping this person but was that person actually alive at all and are we just going by these four people that wrote a book. And then it is like if that is what I am believing how come he has never appeared to me, if I believe in Him how come I can't see Him or how come I can't hear Him or in my thoughts or should I be able to hear Him if I do believe in them. And then it is like if I am at Mass and when the consecration does occur do we just believe that or are we

supposed to just believe that this magic has just come over the bread and wine. I just think it doesn't seem realistic. (Interview 12.11)

For the student, understanding of religion and belief in God and Jesus has been reduced to the stuff of myth and magic. Whereas for student 24, who was very traditional in his understanding of God, when it came to questioning about God, the student related a conversation with a friend,

'God is God' and I said, 'Sure you wouldn't know you don't go to Mass', and he said, 'You may go to Mass every week but if you are questioning who God is, I have more of a belief than you.' So he still had the old belief that you can't question things. (Interview 24.04)

Some of these are mentioned as they give an indication of the religious identity of the students. In some of the responses there was a sense of the students constructing God in a manner that they were comfortable with, that was different from talking about images and ideas of God. Student 1 had used the word energy to describe God, but had offered this qualification:

I think that he is not as wonderful. I think that he is not as powerful as everyone would like him to be... I think that he has been beefed up too much is that the right way of putting it. I think that... too much has been based around him and like too much has been based on him. (Interview 1.9)

And at another point, she could not contemplate the notion of God's plan, "I think your path definitely what you actually do in your life is God I don't believe that God has this big like plan for everyone because I think...the magnitude is impossible...but I think that you have a path set out and if you stray off that, that he would bring you back onto it" (Interview 1.08).

7.3.2 Personal Religious Identity

This sections of responses deals with the opinions about the students' personal religious identity, in terms of beliefs and practices. I tried to broaden the scope of questioning to look at indicators of religious identity other than Church attendance. As mentioned already, the questions attempted to follow the five-part indications of religion, as

mentioned by Watts and Williams (1988) which were ideological, ritualistic, experiential, intellectual, and consequential. I was also guided by the categories from Astin, Astin & Lindholm (2011), divided into Internal (values, beliefs, and perceptions) and External (behaviours, experiences, and actions) and also both the five scales of Religiousness (commitment, engagement, conservatism, scepticism, and struggle).

For student 30 it was the culture that she grew up in, “I think it was all around my life” (Interview 30.1). Student 6 mentioned getting along with people and trying to help them out, when asked about religious aspects of his life. Student 24 felt that he could not call himself religious if he was not able to forgive other people, “one of the most important things; to be able to forgive other people for their actions” (Interview 24.8).

This set of characteristics was offered by Student 8:

...I would always try to be good or what I perceive as being good. Like I would always try to be Christian and not talk about people and try to be caring towards people and try to do all the things that I should do but at the same time I don't pray daily probably, I pray when I want something or if I'm scared or things like that not only then but that's probably the main reason, but it would be important. (Interview 8.7)

For Student 17 what defines a religious person was “faith or belief in something important...it's nice to have someone to look to for help or to give thanks to as well” (Interview 17.12). Student 22 mentioned all the same characteristics: Mass, belief in God, and prayer. Student 25 suggested that how one treats others is something that came from their religious identity: “In terms of giving everybody a chance, giving people a second chance and kind of I would be quite forgiving so if somebody did anything to me, I would be, I would readily forgive them” (Interview 25.10). For Student 3, “religion is a huge part of identity” (Interview 3.5), and it also encompassed background. Student 6 preferred to use the word ‘optimistic’ (Interview 6.13) rather than religious to describe himself and attempted to define religion and faith,

I can't tell the difference at the moment. Religious, the word is linked to

churches, to religions. To be religious you can believe in that way and you can go with your practices but I would see myself as Catholic and I don't go to Mass anymore. (Interview 6.9)

He also mentioned at another point in the interview that "I think my religion is different to everyone else's" (Interview 6.15). Student 2 did not consider that she was very religious and had difficulty using the word religious as it had connotations of something traditional. She called herself Christian and said that she had faith. It seemed to be a faith of personal choice and construction and, "you can pull into your life what you want to get from it" (Interview 2.8). Only two students mentioned the Bible as something that was central to their religious identity and its development (Interviews 2.6; 3.05). Student 25 turned to her Mass attendance when I asked about the part that religion plays in her life, saying that her attendance could be better. Student 13 considered herself religious although she did not go to Mass,

I know not going to Mass might be an aspect that would make me not religious but I do think I do believe that you know there is something there and I do pray and I would do more spiritual things myself than I would do going to Mass. I think the only aspect of Mass I do feel bad about missing is Holy Communion but I do feel the rest of it I can do myself. (Interview 13.13-14)

As regard how they saw her religious identity,

I wouldn't say it is strong. I don't think I would go around shouting and screaming that I pray at home, I think it is more of a private thing I do myself. I wouldn't like people to think I wasn't religious but at the same time I don't think I scream Catholic as I walk down the street. (Interview 13.14)

Again religious identity is equated with attendance (or not) at Mass. For Student 19 it was a point she challenged her friends on: how could they say they were Catholic and the only time they went to Mass was at Christmas. Another common thread arose with Student 14, when I asked about being a religious person. She struggled with the question, not because she did not have an answer, but because this seemed to be questioning something that she had taken for granted up to this point. She also mentioned being Irish and Catholic as part of her identity. Something similar happened

when I asked the same question of Student 18:

I am not a religious person, like Irish religious, what it's meant to be. Like if we were sitting in a religion lecture like and they were talking about stories and the bible and all that, like I wouldn't know all that, I wouldn't have that knowledge of religion. Like I wouldn't have what they think you need to teach religion. I'd still be stuck, turning around teaching religion, I'd be like I don't know, what I am doing, I'd be more personal religion, I wouldn't know like anything about... (Interview 18.17)

Two things in particular about this interview, firstly the equating of religion with Irish, and the fact that 'what's it's meant to be'. The student, by admission, has little or no religious knowledge and for her it was about *personal religion*, which was collecting medals and having a bottle of holy water. Developing a faith was, "I suppose just prayer and I like a few medals here and there" (Interview 18.18).

For Student 21 her religious identity was important and this was something that came from her upbringing. Unlike many of the others, her sibling also shared this strong religious identity. What was most interesting about the student's responses was the fact that she found it difficult to articulate. I was asking questions about topics that had been taken for granted for as long as she could think. I asked what drew her to religion, but she responded that she was not drawn to it; it was always there. Her parents had chosen to baptise her, and religion was something that was always there and part of her identity: "Religion is part of who you are, your core being" (Interview 21.12).

7.3.2.1 Comments about Faith

I found in the course of the interviews that the students often used the terms, faith, religion and spirituality without necessarily seeing a difference between them. Here are the comments of five students regarding faith. Student 19 mentioned how a pilgrimage had help in strengthening faith. Although only ten years of age at the time:

I felt that it was really, really kind of beneficial to me. Because, do you know like, at that stage I was like... you just want to be hanging out with your friends and none of my friends were like... interested and all that kind of stuff so I felt like, it could have been a point where...just before I went into secondary school

where I could have totally forgotten about religion, totally went against this but it was good, it was kind of something I always wanted to do it again... (Interview 19.14)

Student 6 did not consider himself religious, but said he had faith, and a “completely different view to faith to anyone else. I like to think...it’s simply individual to me” (Interview 6.9). When asked later in the interview what comes to mind when thinking of faith, he replied, “people who believe that there is something better, that there is something that’s going to improve” (Interview 6.14).

7.3.2.2 Personal Spirituality

The question was asked of some of the students if they relied on their spiritual side at any points during their day. One said that he did, “at night when I am lying down with my own head and I can’t sleep” (Interview 6.12) and another found it of benefit when upset and found it a comfort, “like someone’s listening” (Interview 2.6). Student 5 offered a non-religious definition of spirituality: it’s your sense of self, your self-worth, the world, the way you fit into it” (Interview 5.9). Student 15 suggested a spiritual person as follows:

To have their more individual beliefs that they have more conjured up in their own head rather than following a set religion. If someone said they were spiritual...would mean that I believe in a God that I believe in because I feel God’s presence rather than being taught about it. You can still pray or meditate or connect in your own way to what you believe in. (Interview 15.11)

The notion of ‘conjuring up’ beliefs makes it seem like a magician. There are two possible ways of understanding the phrase that is quoted here and which is used as a title for the thesis – “I believe in a God that I believe in”. It could be taken to mean on the one hand a God personally constructed by me, or on the other hand a God for whom knowledge is not required, least of all that learned in religious education. Although these might seem to be opposite they reach the same conclusion – a belief in a God that is constructed by the person without any reference to a particular religious

denomination. Student 19 relied on her spiritual side throughout the day and had a particular belief in a Guardian Angel. Even as an adult she prayed to her Guardian Angel at times of fear or upset, "... and I always feel like this relief. I don't know, people always say 'oh it's just in your head' but...I always get this kind of like calmness and...if you are all panicky and then you are just like, it's just like washed away" (Interview 19.13). Student 23 saw that a spiritual side had less to do with God, and more to do with a connection with people who had died.

It's kind of, I don't know if I'd think of God in terms of spirituality but even people that have passed before me, talking to them and their spirits I suppose, even though they are not actually physically here, I'd talk to them and look to them for guidance and chat to friends that have gone before me. (Interview 23.15)

7.3.2.3 Influence of Family on Religious Identity

Many of the students spoke about the part their family played in their religious identity, often pointing to one or other of their parents as being either religious or not. Many students spoke about the religious identity of their grandparents: "...my Granny especially I think she is somebody who kind of influences me...I just remember growing up and stuff and she used to always have her prayer books and her Bible and things like that" (Interview 3.6).

7.3.2.4 Prayer

Of the thirty interviews, seventeen mentioned prayer, mostly as I had asked if they prayed. Student 3 said that it was important to her: "I don't like to forget what I am or who I am...it's really nice just to take ten minutes of your day before you start to reflect" (Interview 3.4). Often the students' prayer was not formal activity and mostly took place "for a few quick seconds at night" (Interview 1.5) or "when you wake up in the morning" (Interview 17.14). For some students it was something that they had done in the past when they were children, or at least were more regular in remembering to pray, "I used to be a lot better when I was younger like praying every night but now it is

more if you are going through an exam or you are having problems” (Interview 11.8). In the case of Student 16, the prayers of childhood had been left in childhood, although there was still prayer in her life: “I used to pray every night before I went to bed I used to say the prayer from school...please bless and there would be a big list of people. I do now but I do find myself praying when people are in trouble, so I do pray once a week” (Interview 16.10). Student 13 remembered the example of a grandmother (Interview 13.13) and Student 2 got the regular nightly prayer habit from her mother

I pray at night every night but that’s because my mother ever since I was a baby used to always say prayers beside me in my bed so I’d say the same prayers every night because I was used to saying them so they were kind of like a comfort but if I was worried about something or if I was nervous or if I was sort of upset about something I would always it would always help me to write down a prayer or to say a prayer. (Interview 2.6)

This student found prayer a comfort against worry or nervousness. For Student 6 it was not any formal prayer, “it’s just thinking” (Interview 6.11), or from Student 7, “...not necessarily that I actually go and say ‘In the Name of the Father’...that’s not always it but literally I will probably, usually look up to the sky somewhere and say “if you’re out there anywhere, if something is out there anywhere, please help me” (Interview 7.13). Student 9 mentioned four things that were the subject of personal prayer: worry, needing help, being upset and missing people who had died (Interview 9.9).

When I need help or when people are sick or when I think other people need guidance or then whenever I go to church I would always pray for little things that might be insignificant to some people. (Interview 4.5)

Many students’ prayer was motivated by a particular need and in one case in thanks for the recovery from illness of a family member (Interview 13.13). Successful exams results were also the topic of prayer by students (14.7), but many students prayed for more altruistic motives. Student 15 spoke about prayer with regard to those who had died, and in particular praying to those who had died. This particular language was unusual, in the sense that it is the norm to pray to God for those who had died, whereas

the student:

I pray to people that I have lost and I wouldn't so much pray I wouldn't as often pray to God, I would thank God or ask Him for anything but it is just the afterlife that I believe in. I pray to people who have died because I am not even sure, I never say to myself I am praying to someone who is in heaven or to someone who is in a black space so I don't even know if you would call if praying but yeah I have my own personal more of a spiritual thing that I do. (Interview 15.13)

Again there is the notion of a personally constructed and interpreted spiritual consciousness. Student 19 mentioned something also in regard to asking things in prayer, "do you know...when...you are having a brilliant day and everything is going brilliant...you never really say a prayer 'oh, thanks for making this day go really well'. It's only when you are having a bad day and you need help that you pray, it's really bad..." (Interview 19.13) Student 19 talked about the importance of prayer in her own life and the occasions on which she prayed (Interview 19.12). When mentioning the social and personal aspects of religious identity, the same student referred again to prayer and said that she did her best praying on her own (Interview 19.10). One student mentioned praying in the classroom when teaching or on teaching practice. One gets the sense of the obligation of classroom prayer, which is tempered by a sense that it is something important for the children:

In my role as a teacher I would pray with the class, in the mornings and before you eat meals and at the end of the day but I don't think that's off my own bat. It's more something that I feel I have to do for the children and that I should do to give them sort of a perspective on God and give them the opportunity to actually pray. (Interview 23.5)

Finally for Student 22 prayer was a deeply personal and solitary thing:

It would be very irregularly but if I was feeling upset or something and you just feel like you need someone to talk to and like you don't want to talk to your friends or anything because you don't want them to see how upset you are or you don't want to ring your parents and bother them over silly little things that might seem small to you but you know they mean a lot to you as well, just as least there is someone else there that can help you. (Interview 22.07)

7.3.2.5 Is Parish Important to you?

I asked a number of students if they were involved in their parishes at home, stressing the community dimension of religion. This ties in with what was said in section 7.1.4 regarding the importance of community to these students and how they are a product of that community, made up of family, friends and neighbours. Not only is community important to the students, but they see themselves as a definite part of it. This brings up the idea of the 'parish' as a type of community and the 'parish' as the assembled people of God worshipping on a Sunday morning. This is where a distinction arises. Many of the students spoke of their parish when they were growing up and for the students from rural areas the community aspect of their parish was very important. At the heart of the parish that Student 17 belonged to was a community spirit and the priest who, "kind of ties everybody together" (Interview 17.13). As most were in college now, they were not as involved in parish activities. One student (Interview 21.11) was very involved. Along with another person of the same age the student was picked to be a leader in a programme helping to prepare for the future course and development of the parish. Some had been asked to be involved in Sunday School (2.05) had been readers (Interview 3.4) or in the choir (7.13; 8.07). Student 5 preferred the idea of community rather than talking about parish in terms of religion. In this way religion had a place and what he said was a good exposition of what a community might be: people getting involved in tidy towns and that sort of thing. When I asked was he suggesting that tidy towns was the new religion:

Religion is great at kind of organising things like town fetes and stuff like that, to bring a sense of community and things like that, that's the organisation side but that was always there before there was kind of. Religion just kind of take those things over and people would tend to do that... what religion does is just bring people together who are all different but should still feel a sense of, cause what happens then is just, not ghettoise but people start just looking in on their own group. (Interview 5.9)

It was an example of a secular humanist parish. Religion at a parish level is good for organising, but there is no mention of any religious dimension to the parish. Student 11 also emphasised the community aspect of religion: it “brings people together, and it’s part of our community and our culture and our country” (Interview 11.7).

7.3.2.6 Is Church Attendance Important to You?

I was conscious that the Church of Ireland students might view this section differently, as traditions of practice and attendance differ from those of Catholics. However the answers are very similar for both groups and I have not differentiated so as to avoid drawing attention to the interviews with the Church of Ireland students. One student, when responding to a question on what had replaced religion did say that nothing had replaced it; it had just fizzled out:

I think that mainly as you’re brought up though, like when my parents were being brought up there would have been off to church every Sunday everyone would have to go...now you don’t have to go if you don’t want to. Children don’t really understand when they are young, you might go to Sunday School and they love that but afterwards, ‘I don’t want to do this, I don’t know why I’m doing this’, teenagers they don’t go at all and as they get older it’s just something that doesn’t happen. (Interview 4.2)

This student also stated that she went to Church because she wanted to, not because anyone was telling her (Interview 4.3). A final aspect of her interview was when she spoke about going to a service with very few people and having a feeling of emptiness, “I don’t like sitting in a big church when there is just a priest and maybe two people that is something I just don’t like. I think if you want to be there, there is a feeling of energy and fullness if the place is full” (Interview 4.11). Another student talked about going to Church in terms of the social side of religious identity and for the sake of appearances:

...be good to be seen going to Mass or going to church because ... people are like, ‘oh yeah, she must be a good person she goes to church every Sunday’, but I don’t necessarily think that follows through. (Interview 2.3)

For this student the personal side of religious identity was preferable. Student 19 also

mention the fact that people might go to Mass for show rather than out of a genuine reason, however she did agree that “it’s a good feeling, everyone coming together to pray together” (Interview 19.11), a sentiment similar to that of Student 4 above. Student 23 also mentioned the social side of Mass: the gathering of people, people in one place, praying for a common good or a common goal and the chat before and after Mass (Interview 23.3). This student came from a rural area where this type of Sunday morning tradition is still very much in evidence, as will be mentioned by other students. Many of the students talked about their personal experience of Mass. After the untimely death of a family member, Student 13 found it difficult to attend Mass anymore (Interview 13.13). Student 24 had stopped going to Mass for a while, but missed it:

I felt very empty when I wasn’t going to Mass, I felt that there was something wrong...Then something did go wrong on me, something went very wrong on me and that day I went back to the church, I went back in, there was candles outside the door, I wouldn’t go in, I lit three candles and I prayed that what I was hoping would work out and it did work out...I did think that when I did go back to Mass, I did feel a lot better for going back...I wasn’t happy in myself when I wasn’t going to Mass. (Interview 24.7, 9)

Student 6 grew up being brought to Mass and then stopped going. I asked why she had returned to going Mass:

I felt that I needed, not that I needed help, like I wouldn’t want to rule out my chances of getting help. You think when you are seventeen, got an exam coming up next year and I need to be on everyone’s good side, especially the big man up the top. So I got back into it and it gave me time to kind of think, you don’t chat in Mass so, it gave me time to think in my head for forty-five minutes in a nice warm atmosphere and the music that this choir, this youth choir sing. There’s this one song and every week I just look forward to it in Mass. (Interview 6.11)

For many students they equated Mass with religious identity. When I asked Student 16 if religion was important when she was growing up, she replied, “It was important...you had to go to Mass” (Interview 16.10). When Student 12 was asked if she was religious, she did not think so. I suggested that this might be perhaps because

she equated Mass with being religious, she agreed that this was the case, “I think that’s where the whole thing comes from” (Interview 12.15). Later in the interview I asked why it had to be ‘all about Mass’, she replied that it was how she had been brought up. For two students (24 & 26), almost the first words from their interviews were that they went to Mass every Sunday, and when asked about being religious, Student 26 replied: “...what else defines me as a religious person...If you mean do I pray, I don’t. I pray when I go to Mass” (Interview 26.6). For Student 9, attendance at Mass did not define her religious identity; it was a means of practising it. Student 7 went to Mass and although he would be more for science than religion, “I still believe that there is something there. I can’t quite put my finger on what it is but I still believe there is something there. The thing is that I am not willing to tie that down to one particular set of doctrine or one particular set of beliefs” (Interview 7.13).

For Student 18 when asked if she was religious, she replied, no. When I asked why, she replied, “cause I don’t go to Mass, and I won’t go to Mass” (Interview 18.17). Student 22 answered the question about being religious with the reply, “No, I go to Mass every week but I wouldn’t be that religious” (Interview 22.8). It is interesting that she does not equate Mass with being religious. Earlier in the interview she had talked about Mass and the obligation to attend. Since coming to college there was no-one telling her to go, but she felt bad if she missed Mass and started going: “...my friend would be like, oh you have to go, so I’d go and I’d always feel better when I did” (Interview 22.6). Although one could say that her friend was the driving force behind her going to Mass, I think that by making the decision to attend Mass at the weekends at college she had a more mature attitude to Mass attendance.

Returning to the relationship between being religious and attending Mass, it was said by Student 23, “I don’t know if I am religious in so far as I go to Mass and that side of it,

that I practice and pray” (Interview 23.8).

Many emphasised the social aspect of going to Mass, especially in rural areas, “in the sense that people go to Mass to meet people and a lot, like, church events or what not are community based, bringing the community kind of together” (Interview 17.11). I asked the same student about the importance of going to Mass, although she saw herself as being more ‘spiritual’ than going to Mass. For this student it was nice to listen, nice to feel part of the community and being involved. She was from the country and equated this feeling of being part of the community with the nature of rural life, suggesting that, “especially in Dublin, you probably wouldn’t feel that a lot anyway” (Interview 17.11).

Some students were still expected to attend Church when they were home on weekends or holidays (Interview 12.8; 8.7), which has led to disagreement. For Student 12 there was an incongruity about going to Mass when she did not believe certain things. For her parents, there is still a guilt attached to not going to Mass. Later in the interview, she said that her parents’ making her go was not necessarily a bad thing; “they are making me go because they were told that maybe that was the right thing to do and that’s what they’ve learnt. I might keep that with me as I grow older” (Interview 12.12). For Student 8,

I don’t go to Mass all the time, and ... it still is to my mum especially, really important and now I think to myself for God’s sake why don’t you go to Mass? You know it’s definitely not going to do you any harm. Like it’s going to please Mum just go. Like big deal and still Sunday mornings come and I don’t. Well not very often. (Interview 8.7)

However later in the interview the student was prepared to contemplate going back to attending Church when she began teaching, if for no other reason than it was a good example to set.

I would never force my beliefs or anything but just to show that it is a good thing to go and to listen and to think even if you sit there and think for forty-five

minutes about whatever you want to think about. (Interview 8.11)

For Student 25, it was a very simple thing: “I would go to Mass more, most Sundays and most weekends; I just find that it is important” (Interview 25.8). Student 30 said that when she did not go to Mass, “I’d talked to God myself” (Interview 30.10). While many students went to Church, the Sunday obligation from some of their parents’ generation was no longer there. They went when they felt like it, “it depends on the humour I would be in” (Interview 11.08), and four of the students mentioned that they were the only one of their siblings still going to Church (Interviews 6.13, 8.6, 17.10. 25.9).

7.3.2.7 Church Teaching

Student 9 discussed Church teaching on certain issues towards the end of the interview. Contraception was a personal issue to do with personal safety rather than the teachings of the Church because, “Jesus and God, that’s not they are about”. When asked about this, she replied:

I don’t think that contraception would come into their heads or their minds really, I think it’s more about like, you being safe and you being loved and I think that’s more important, that if you love yourself and you want to respect yourself, you need to look after yourself and if that means going against one of the Church’s teachings, then I think that’s ok. (Interview 9.14)

The topic of homosexuality came up in three of the interviews. Interview 1 used the issue to explain that she saw herself as more spiritual than religious, because she had no problem with homosexuality, whereas friends, who considered themselves religious, would have a problem. Being spiritual was about “your own sense of being” (Interview 1.7). For student 15, it was a topic, along with the Child Sexual Abuse controversy that had been a topic of discussion with family and/or friends (Interview 15.13). For Student 13 it was the sign of an old fashioned, out-of-date Church:

Just some of the basic rules that are said to be in the Gospel and are said to be in the Bible that you can’t do this and you can’t do that and I think people

nowadays, because people are...independent and so they feel they don't need a higher thing to look up...That they feel there is enough rules in the Constitution why should we follow these other rules...I do think the issue even around same sex couples anything like that I think it is something that down the line the Church will have to look at because realistically there is nothing wrong with it, no-one can help who they are. (Interview 13.9)

I asked the student if she was familiar with what the Church, (and by here I mean the Catholic Church), says about same-sex couples, she said that she did not. The question was asked not to test the student, but to see was there any inclination that she was informed about what the Church said. I asked a similar question of a student concerning the involvement of the Church in education, asking if she knew what was the Church's role in schools, and again the student was unfamiliar. What these questions emphasised was my worry that I was listening to them give me what has become the opinions and assumptions about aspects of Church teaching and/or policy. For student 2 the issue of sex before marriage, "it's people's own decision. I don't think it should be "necessarily formulated by religion. Although...in the bible....it says you shouldn't..." (Interview 2.9)

7.3.2.8 Religious Objects

I mentioned religious objects as a way of seeing if there was any attachment to something religious that might be a characteristic of religious identity. The students were asked if they personally had a religious object (as opposed to ones in the family home) and where did they get it from. Twenty-one students had; objects ranging from crosses, rosary beads, medals, holy water and memorial and devotional cards. Student 23 had been given a cross, which he wore daily, which had been given to him by the children in Kolkata. It was significant to the student, who had got it from children who were Hindu and Muslim and who had gone to the trouble of finding it. Many of the students got these object from parents (Interview 3.7) or grandmothers as in the case of Student 12's rosary. She also had a miraculous medal given to her at the end of her

time at secondary school.

Three particular students stand out with regard to religious objects. Student 24 mentioned that his mother had given him holy water when he bought his first car and his aunt gave him some St. Brigid's cloth. Ever since, he has thrown the holy water over every new car he bought and saw a real power of protection in this, evidenced in the next piece of the narrative:

One time I was in a scrap yard trying to find something and there was a few cars that were completely mauled and myself and the older man that I was going to get the engine, the two of us were looking and I said do you think they had holy water, no matter what car you would look there was never any holy water font or any other religious symbol. (Interview 24.10)

Student 7 had some rosary beads from her grandmother, who had died recently. At the mention of the object the student talked at length about his grandmother and her significance to him and how the rosary had kept her memory alive (Interview 7.15). I asked Student 18 about religious objects and she had miraculous medals. I asked where she had got them, and it had been on a pilgrimage. When I asked about the pilgrimage she said she had found it a very significant event, although she found it difficult to describe. The student, who had been very cynical about religion up to this point, was very animated about the experience of the pilgrimage. I suggested that she was very aware of her spiritual side. I have included the dialogue in its entirety. The dialogue is worth noting for the way that the student makes meaning from the experience of Lough Derg. While in many cases she lacks the language to describe the experience of the retreat, it was obviously an experience that meant a great deal to her:

I think in Loch Derg it was because also ... it was our last year together. And I suppose you are with your friends and you just kind of, like they kept talking about ... we were growing up, we were all ... turning 18. This was the last year to be together and it was more talking about that we did a lot of things about where you were going to be in a year's time. So you had to write ... letters to yourself and stuff like that. And talk about, you know, things that happened up to now ... we did the stuff like you put it in the fire anything like that and ... I don't think we had a set Mass or anything like that, I think we just ...

You would have had Mass at some stage. I mean, I presume there was a priest there, was there?

Ye, but it wasn't like a set Mass.

I don't know what you mean a set Mass.

Like I don't remember there being the readings and stuff, like I remember being in the church and I remember that's when you wrote down the things that happened in the past and put them in the fire and I remember then having another ceremony. They have another little room, and we sat there, but we did other things like you had to sing a song, like you were in your groups and you had to organise like a little song or sketch or something like that and then you said a few prayers. But I don't remember, like the bible coming out or anything. But I remember watching a video about the fasting and all that... And that's where I got my miraculous medals.

Right, so why do you carry a miraculous medal?

Because some of them I got in Loch Derg and you got the water and stuff put on them. Some of them I got of my school saint and we all just bought it because you know, it was our last...

Alright

...so we all got little miraculous medal. And I have, like loads of my friends went to Medjugorje and stuff and I've got loads of miraculous medals from Medjugorje.

So why?

Because I like having them...I like having the Loch Derg one because it reminds me – oh I got that in Loch Derg – and I like the Medjugorje ones because someone got them for me.

So, it's more to do with the...

Memory

The memory

And then the motorist prayer, it's like; I might as well have, just to be safe.

So it's a case of hedging your bets?

Not, hedging my bets, like I don't have them because like, I am going to be safe because I have them. I have them because I like them. And I keep them, I just so happen to keep them in my car.

Sure, sure, sure.

And they are nice to have. But I wouldn't have like rosary beads or anything like that.

Why, what would...

I just never got them. I've never seen them, I've never really. Like when we were in the shop in Loch Derg we just all saw the little miraculous medals. And then I have like a bottle of the water. I have loads of them (laugh).

Like, ok, em. Do you think you are a religious person?

No. Not really, no. (Interview 18.15-16)

References to the student's school have been removed. I would guess that the 'miraculous medals' are not necessarily the traditional ones, but a term that the student uses for any medals. While I am unsure as to the content of the retreat that the student attended, it did have a significant effect on her. What is obvious is the dearth of religious language to describe some of the events in the narrative – the blessing with holy water; what may have been a form of the sacrament of reconciliation common among secondary school students; the use of the word 'Mass' for anything that takes place in a church and the use of the words 'formal Mass'. The significance of the religious objects is the memory they hold, rather than as an object of religious devotion. While I pushed the notion of her hedging her bets with the motorist's prayer in the car, the student was honest that that was not the reason.

7.3.2.9 Charity

As one possible indicator of religious identity, I asked students if they gave to charity or did any charitable work. As students, most had little enough money to give to charity, but many did give and some did charity work. Sixteen students gave an answer. However, as can be seen, very few of them saw charity as an indication or extension of a religious identity. On being asked if they saw their trip to Kolkata in any religious terms two students (Interviews 30.12; 10.9) replied that they did not. In all other respects, these students were very conscious and comfortable with their religious identity. However this religious consciousness did not extend to this trip. One student (Interview 29.11) did mention that her parents saw their considerable charity work as an extension of their identity as religious people. That is not to say that some of the students had not thought about the experience. When I asked one student why he had gone to Kolkata, the answer was:

Give back. I've had a privileged enough childhood. There's kids over there that have absolutely nothing but the clothes on their back and some of them don't even have much clothes on their backs. So, give back something, try and help out in some small way that I can. I suppose even lead by example. I'm a teacher. I'm supposed to be a caring person that leads children towards the right path so if I can do it over there in my spare time, it's well worth doing. (Interview 23.7)

It is interesting that the student equates being a teacher with being a caring person. I asked if there was any religious dimension in it. The response was no. I pressed the point; that it might have something to do with him in terms of religious identity or the particular person that he was. The response was nearer to the point:

Well yeah, there's certainly Christian values in going over there and helping. The Good Samaritan helped the person by the side of the road. Take stories like that, you're going over to help people, you're not doing it for your own good. I can't say that I was going for my own moral gain or whatever, I certainly wasn't but there would definitely be aspects of religion in what I did. I went over. I helped. I tried to do the right thing and help out in any way I could so certainly if you look at any kind of religion, I think their values are pretty similar. (Interview 23.7)

The student was able to pick up on the notion of the Good Samaritan. When the answer continues the student focuses on the trip as producing something in or for him; the trip to Kolkata might be a for 'your own good' or for 'moral gain' rather than being the outward sign of a belief in a God. One student did a large amount of charity work and this was mentioned very early on in the interview in the questions about interests and hobbies. I asked if she saw it as religious:

I don't know if it's religious but it's hard to explain. You know the way one of the values of the Catholic religion...it says to help other people. A lot of people say they're Catholics but they don't do that so I would rather be doing what I'm doing even if I don't pray rather than saying I'm a Catholic and not doing that stuff. (Interview 20.9)

She saw that it was important to have a practical side to one's religious faith. She had begun with a peace and justice group in secondary school and doing voluntary projects. In college she volunteered with fundraising and had been abroad with one of the non-governmental organisations. I asked how it felt to be involved:

I feel really good after it. I don't like not doing charity work for a period of time because you just get really depressed that you're not doing anything about it because there is so much injustice in the world that if you are not even doing a small bit. (Interview 20.9)

The trip abroad had galvanised the volunteerism as, "you see all the people that you are helping when you are campaigning back home and that they are real people" (Interview 20.9). Again, I asked about it being part of a religious identity; "not really. I don't do it because I should or because God tells me to. I just do it because I want to" (Interview 20.10).

One student talked about how Kolkata had been a life-changing experience for some students who went. Life was "down to experience, and what you see and what actually you experience" (Interview 13.13). Another student (Interview 17.13-14) who was preparing to go to Kolkata in summer 2011 reluctantly saw it as religious, but saw it more as an extension of her training as a teacher. This was also true for students who volunteered for summer camps (Interview 14.7; 4.9; 2.1). Another student (Interview 15.12) who worked for a cancer charity saw it more to do with morality than with a religious dimension. Another was also reluctant to see it in terms of religion, saying that it was more about her being a nice person (Interview 8.7). One student was very moved by a trip to Ghana and had thought about it a great deal:

It was an experience. It wasn't volunteering. It was seeing it and then that affecting me. It's terrible and it's great to see poverty like that. It's something that, like I remember when we all got back... we went specifically to one school... and they were all dressed up in lovely uniforms and shorts and things like that. They all had smiles on their faces but then we were told that they would have an eight kilometre walk home in that heat to poverty where they would have to help out around the house and they could have younger siblings with no parents, they have to do everything like, it's just surreal to see the difference that education makes to these kids and that's probably another reason why I want to be a teacher...these kids get up at six to walk to school, I get up at twenty past seven to drive into college and I'm still moaning like. But it is a different situation. It's surreal. You know what I mean. If these kids had the same freedom that I've had for my life and the luxury, I've been lucky enough to have these luxuries. I still think everyone human thinks the same. They appreciate it more but if they had experienced it their whole life they would have the same

mind-set. (Interview 6.11)

Another student had a similar response to her volunteering with the ISPCA. I asked why she volunteered even though she was a student, “I would definitely ... I think that it is important coz I’ve never wanted for anything and I’m lucky enough to be able to say that, so I think it’s important” (Interview 1.6).

Three students had been to the Marian Shrine at Lourdes in France. One went on a regular basis and found that the religious side of the pilgrimage had no impact: “I go to Lourdes every year myself but that’s just more of a community thing. Helping out and I enjoy the work, I enjoy the camaraderie and things like that, certainly not to go to the Masses or anything like that” (Interview 5.8). The trip made the student appreciate health and family, coming back “shattered emotionally, but just with having a sense that my life is good” (Interview 5.10). When I asked if God had anything to do with it, he replied:

No, it’s just people, just having a perspective on life, just enjoying people and knowing that you can make a difference, the little things can help. I get no sense of God at all. Certainly when you are in Lourdes, it’s an odd place, up to heaven and all that. (Interview 5.12)

Another student saw it in terms of Church attendance on Sunday. Observing people in wheelchairs and housebound at home made her appreciate being able to go to Church on Sunday. She was affected by the place:

I just thought the atmosphere and the people like, the people were so sick, like they are not necessarily going to get better but they have this belief that this place is going to help them and I always commented on how quiet the place is, even though there’s thousands of people, there’s just like serenity around the place. (Interview 9.9)

Student 29, who was the only one who mentioned volunteering with the Legion of Mary in the past, had also been a volunteer in Lourdes when in secondary school:

...we still kind of talk about that for lots of reasons. It was a general, all round, good trip away but definitely after that experience I think, it does make you think about your religion and your beliefs. (Interview 29.12)

These three answers beg the question: how are two of the students able to see the trip to Lourdes in religious terms, but the student who has been there on a number of occasions can only see it in terms of being a help to the people, and kind and friendly as the answer implies?

7.3.2.10 Change in Attitude to Religion

Student 2 mentioned that she had matured in her attitudes to religion by not being prepared to accept everything that the people tell you.

I have a lot of friends who would be extremely religious and they don't think it's right for people to be gay or people to be lesbian or anything but I have a friend now and he just came out and told me that he was gay but I don't think there is anything wrong with that. I think that's just the way God made him. So for me I suppose ... my views ... have changed about what I feel I can do or I can't do... I don't think it's a crime for him to be gay even though people say that the bible says you shouldn't be. I think that's just the way he was made and that's it. (Interview 2.7)

The student refers to people rather than the Church or religion in general and the decisions and attitudes that she has adopted are very much ones that she has put into practice. More of the students (13.04; 19.15; 23.08) felt that they had also changed over the years as regard their religious identity and were now more in a position to ask questions and no longer take things for granted. This topic will surface when their experience of religious education at college is discussed. Student 19 summed this up very well:

...when you are younger you are told all these stories and you are saying this is what it means and you are like 'oh ok' and you just kind of take it for face value but like, I think when you are older you have to kind of, like search into the meaning and kind of how it relates to you. Do you know, during the homily when the priest is talking you could just sit there and you could, do you know, be in your own little world for the ten minutes or I always try to like relate it somehow to my life where...whatever he is saying, seeing how is that connected to me. ...relate it to your own life rather than just being told...this is the story, this is what it means, this is what it should do. Kind of more like, how it affects me... (Interview 19.15)

This response shows this student's ability to internalise and most importantly

personalise the external characteristic of religion, so that it becomes something of relevance for her. Being older and more aware of other religions was mentioned by Student 4, which would help prepare for teaching and having children of other religious denominations in her class (Interview 4.6). Student 28 felt that whereas when she was younger, she was made go to Mass, now she went of her own accord (Interview 28.7). Student 17 was similar, but there was a touch of the 'self-constructed' about her answer: "I think now I accept that fact that it's more my own decisions about what I choose to take out of it and what I choose not to" (Interview 17.16).

7.3.2.11 Questioning

Following Rahner's notion of a person as a questioning being, I asked the students did they question and what did they question. For many of the students there was a great deal of questioning as a result of one particular course that some had done in college on Jesus. This particular section will be dealt with in the section on religious education. For the moment I want to focus on some of the other things that were the topic of questioning for them.

Student 23 regarded questioning as part of his identity. He considered himself a deep thinker, and was likely to question things experienced during the week. He also liked books that made him think. When asked if there was anything of the religious in any of this, he mentioned the difference between him and his mother, in that in any discussion about issues, his mother was very traditionally Catholic and would not question (Interview 23.12). Other students brought up this difference between their attitude of questioning and that of their parents who were not inclined to question, especially with regard to religion. Another example came from Student 12 who questioned the teaching of religion in school, but found it difficult to get her father to engage in a discussion or conversation about the subject (Interview 12.06).

Student 5 said he always questioned, and was not worried if he made a mistake with the question, “I don’t have a problem with that. It means I’ve learnt something new. You either win or you lose but I sit up the front and I would question why things are the way they are, give my own feedback” (Interview 5.4). For a number of students questioning was personal. Student 17 said that she second-guessed herself a great deal,

I’d always be kind of, even last night say, when I was at a table quiz and say if I was given the answer but I would have to think, question myself about, like I never would just, sometimes I wouldn’t be confident in just giving something if I thought it was, I don’t know, if it wasn’t right, if that makes sense. (Interview 17.6)

Student 19, having had bad experiences with deceitful people, would question her ability to judge character. Student 7 found himself constantly questioning:

I question my decisions all the time. I always question my decisions. I always have a constant battle going on with my own conscience. Am I doing the right thing? Should I be doing this? Why am I doing this? Why shouldn’t I do this? Where is this going to lead me? What is this going to do? Those kinds of questions always just go constantly in my mind I’m very much a reflective person in that respect in that I always will question any decision I make. (Interview 7.6)

And for Student 10, “I sometimes question my integrity; about why I am doing something, if I am doing it for my own good or somebody else’s good or to prove to somebody” (Interview 10.4). Student 14 said she would question her faith because she would be a practising Catholic and it would seem that to be a good Catholic implied questioning. Student 7 was similar and saw the need to question your faith as part of your faith:

Kind of questioning what it is I believe in, based on what I’ve heard, based on what I’ve experienced so far. What has led me to this point? What has led me to this belief that I’m having right here, right now. From that point of view, it is very important to question... (Interview 7.12)

Student 13 saw it as a matter of working it out personally, without the need to be in church and saying the same prayer every week, “I think for me to understand God better and to have a better...relationship there I have to do it myself” (Interview 13.10).

Another student said how she was not as dogmatic as she had been when she was younger. When asked about anything in particular they replied:

Like things like drugs and things. I would have thought, ‘oh my God,’ when I was younger, ‘terrible if anyone takes them’. More so from a point of view of worrying about the person rather than thinking it’s a really bad thing to do. I would have thought...there is something terrible that’s going to happen and I always would have been very much of the opinion that like it’s very selfish which it is. How could someone do something so stupid? Do they not value their lives? Whereas now like I question well, is it worth the experience if they are ok then you know, what difference does it make if they’ve done it and they are ok? Still it was a silly thing to do but fair enough. (Interview 8.3)

Student 2 questioned a number of the moral issues: “whether or not it’s okay to drink whether or not it’s okay to...have sex before marriage; whether or not homosexuality is okay” (Interview 2.11). An interesting answer came from one of the students regarding the authority, firstly with regard to Government and then with regard to the Pope, who “was just like you and me” (Interview 1.10). This student also questioned the bible in terms of literal interpretation. She believed in the New Testament, because it was “all stories”, but not in the Old Testament.

...don’t think that the bible is...that scientifically. This is where I get confused because I think that there’s definitely a God...but I don’t believe...God made the earth in seven days. I don’t believe in Adam and Eve or anything like that because the evidence is just too strong for evolution and for the scientific Darwin aspect of things. I don’t believe in so I don’t really know if I believe in the Bible but then again if I don’t believe in the bible how can I believe in God. (Interview 1.10)

I asked if she had brought it up in class, and she said she had. Student 21 questioned the lack of fairness in society and the hardship that some people experience; a questioning which came from the fact that she had done very well in life and had been lucky so far (Interview 21.5), whereas Student 15 did not see the need for questioning:

I feel like we don’t need to question it, I don’t think we need to live worrying about what is going to happen after we die. I feel like there is a heaven on earth and I am more about trying to find heaven on earth than trying to find it after you are gone. It’s trying to make the most of your life while you are here, and whatever happens afterwards, happens. (Interview 15.5)

Student 16 questioned if there was a heaven, because belief in it was comforting (Interview 16.4). Student 26 also saw little need for questioning, “I stick to my own world...I don’t think I need to think about that right now”. When asked ‘why?’: “Just because I’m probably busy and haven’t time to be thinking philosophical like that yet maybe when I get older and wiser I’ll think more about what is the meaning of life and stuff like that and I might have a better answer but at the moment I don’t worry about things like that” (Interview 26.3). For Student 27 the personal questions she asked herself were resolved quickly, but the student, *a propos* teaching in a disadvantaged school, also questioned society and how people fell through the gaps and why people were unwilling to help them (Interview 27.3). Student 30 had suffered loss and the questioning that she did was influenced by that:

I would be more inclined to question things that affect me directly, like in school or my teaching or attitudes...I...wonder what is the meaning, that is very deep, but I watched something on TV recently and it’s kind of like you go through your education, you go through work and you die... but like there is so much to live for at the same time, like... Just for example in our family recently...my sister had a baby and it just brings so much and then there is weddings and even small things like dealings with friends and stuff, it’s kind of like this is why I’m here to enjoy it and of course you have to take the bad with the good, these things happen but until I sat down and thought about it I was saying what’s it for, it’s a means to an end really isn’t it...I talk about everything. Everything that goes through my mind, I talk about everything I have to; I can’t keep anything to myself... I enjoy meaningful conversations and things that make you think and seeing what other people think... then sometimes I would be conscious of what people might think, about what I say. If there was two or three other people in here now I wouldn’t be talking at all, if we were talking about the meaning of life, I wouldn’t say anything at all. (Interview 30.6)

7.3.3 Spiritual not Religious

In this section I was interested in what were the characteristics of the individuated spirituality which I had read about in the literature and if it had any affiliation with other religions or practices such as yoga, etc. In the end no student mentioned yoga or other form of alternative therapies. One student did mention meditation (Interview 4.3). Every one of the thirty students were asked (in one form or another), “Some people say

they don't go to Mass, but are very spiritual. Do you agree or disagree with that?" I asked this question to investigate some of the concepts found in the literature review regarding the mind of the individual self and the modern phenomenon of being spiritual without any affiliation to a particular religious denomination. Every student agreed with the statement and said that it was possible to be spiritual without being religious. Many were asked to elaborate on what they meant by that and what follows are some of those answers. Student 8 said that spirituality and religion were two different things. She qualified it with a very insightful comment: "I think a lot of people are religious and probably not very spiritual and visa-versa" (Interview 8.6). This is the opposite of what I had been asking, but an interesting way to put it, and similar to the response from Student 22 later on; that some people were far more spiritual than those who were going to Mass (Interview 22.5).

Only one student, in narrating his own particular life journey, gave personal weight to the statement regarding being spiritual and not religious:

... being raised a Catholic and then being more of a Protestant and then even going further than that. Living abroad with people who aren't religious. I was living with one guy who was an Indian he was a Hindu and just being very aware of that. Another guy was a Muslim and stuff like that. I don't have any religious, I'm not linked to any Church or philosophy or things like that...I probably always will you know but I've certain kind of standards that have always been put into me just...Manners, I really respect manners and if people don't say please or thank you I'd always bring them up on it. I think it's just a way of showing you respect people and I've always had that in every situation. I don't want people being rude or unkind or things like that so that's philosophy that's standard with me and will always be with me. (Interview 5.3)

I get the feeling that this student means Christian when he says religious. Although he says that he lived with people who were not religious, he goes on to mention a Hindu and a Muslim. Either they were not practising their particular faith or the student did not consider them religious. These comments beg the question as to whether this person is spiritual, because there is no indication of a sense of religiousness in any of

the interview and he stated that he did not believe in God. For him spirituality was, “a sense of self, your self-worth, the world, the way you fit into it” (Interview 5.9). This for him is a personal definition of spirituality. Student 4 had a similar definition for spirituality:

Spiritual could just be a feeling within yourself and have nothing to do with the religion, I mean you might not be of any, you could be an atheist but at the same time not religiously spiritual but spiritual in different ways. (Student 4.3)

When I asked her to elaborate, she declined. I asked her at another point if religion was a good thing:

I think maybe more faith is a good thing, having faith in a specific thing, it doesn't necessarily have to be a specific religious body or whatever but whether it is Muslim or Hinduism or even whether you do meditation it is important to have something that you, that you feel is there for you all the time, presence always there that you can fall back on when things are tough it's something that is always going to be there for you and that no-one can take away from you. (Interview 4.3)

Again the notion of inventing what you believe in and also that you have something to fall back on when times are tough. This is a noble sentiment, but the student did not specify what exactly one is supposed to have faith in, that would be sufficient to ‘fall back on’.

While agreeing with the statement, Student 30 was the only student to ask, “...if you're not spiritual then why wouldn't you go to Mass” (Interview 30.11). Student 1 suggested that, it takes quite a strong person to be...spiritually aware, and able to have a spirituality if you don't go to church” (Interview 1.4). She went on to say that some of the actions for a person who did not attend and were spiritual were “the way you live your life...charity work, and caring a little bit more about others and less about yourself makes you not a religious person but will make you more in tune with religion” (Interview 1.4). This was the same student who did not like the terms ‘religious’ because “it categorises people” (Interview 1.4). Later on in the interview she did go on

to say that she would prefer to be called spiritual, “than having your religious identity. Because identity seems to me to be quite structured and quite black and white whereas spirituality is your own sense of being” (Interview 1.7), a sentiment similar to that of Students 4 and 5 from earlier.

Student 25, who saw religion as important in her life, wanted to know how a person would think that she was, because her religious identity was tied up with attendance at Church (Interview 25.8) and Student 20 thought that people could use this as an excuse not to go to Church (Interview 20.7). On the other side, Student 13 said that people not attending Church was ‘understandable’ because people had been put off going to Church because of the hierarchy in Churches (Interview 13.10) and some people had busier lives now and did not have the time to go to Church (11.10;18.9). Student 26 attempted to define what was meant by ‘spiritual’ and ‘religious’:

I see someone who says they are spiritual as somebody who maybe thinks a lot sometimes, somebody who is religious I think they would be somebody who believes in certain values and believes that something is going to happen, they know it is going to happen. Spiritual I think is a bit free-will and...I think somebody who is spiritual is just somebody probably constantly thinking to himself about life in general. (Interview 26.6)

It is not perhaps the best definition of ‘spiritual’ and ‘religious’, but it is how this particular student sees it. The student struggled to make sense of the question, in the sense that he could not think of one without the other. The characteristics of a ‘spiritual’ person were outlined by Student 29:

... their own personal beliefs and how they act. How they live their life, their decisions, their morals, their beliefs. I don’t think it has to be all what you do in terms of prayer or Mass or that kind of thing. I think everybody has their own idea of what they think it is and how to respond to it and how to live their life. (Interview 29.6)

Most students had a view similar to this, (Interview 2.3; 12.10; 13.10; 16.9; 17.11; 18.11; 22.5; 23.03; 24.08; 28.5), “Mass doesn’t make you less spiritual or more spiritual” (Interview 23.03), and again “I don’t think Mass defines if you are religious

or spiritual, I think it's just a means of practising your religion" (Interview 9.7). Student 2, agreed with the question, but when pressed saw the importance of attendance for the religion to survive. It was also about the personal – not needing to pray with everyone else (Interview 28.9) and student 24 suggested:

It's believing that Jesus Christ is in everyone you see and everyone you meet, that doesn't mean that you have to go to church to see him. If he is saying he is religious, he would be more religious than someone who is in Mass every week. If he is showing Jesus Christ through himself, just being kind and understanding, compassionate. (Interview 24.8)

The student has a good understanding of the person of Jesus Christ present in people that he encounters, and suggests that going to Church to see Jesus is not necessary. On the face of it, the student is correct – one does not have to go to Church to encounter Jesus. He goes on to define a religious person in terms of kindness and compassion, and again he is correct. The difficulty in one sense with the answer is that the student does not see that one of the functions of Church attendance or indeed any communal religious participation is the communal celebration and the need for the human being to have some communal sense that what one believes as an individual is believe, celebrated and lived out by many others. The answers lacks the understanding that faith, being religious, being like Jesus is something that is celebrated as part of a Christian community. Student 22 had a similar answer, that a person could be more spiritual than some of the people who actually went to Church (Interview 22.5). This was a student who saw the benefit of the gathering community, but thought that some people might be keeping up appearances and going to Church. The things a spiritual person might do were "help the elderly or go and visit the sick" (Interview 22.6) and Student 15 felt that a person's spiritual side was visible in their actions and through "the things they value" (Interview 15.11), and while Student 14 offered "caring and compassionate" as the characteristics of a spiritual person she conceded that you did not

have to be religious to be those things. This final answer deserves mention:

I don't think you have to go Mass to make you spiritual. I think if you know what you believe in; if you believe in the things you do believe in well then, yes, you can say that you are spiritual. If it is something that you worship, I think that from what I have learnt, if you worship something or pray to something then you are being spiritual. (Interview 12.10)

The answer is worth noting as the student gives a good simple definition of 'spiritual'; however it becomes a personal thing and something that is constructed personally, perhaps without any reference to any belief and/or value system.

7.4 Understanding Religious Identity

This section is based around the second research question - How does a Primary School Teacher understand their Religious Identity? I asked the students about some of the characteristics of religion in general. It was an attempt to ask questions based on the literature concerning secularisation and attitudes to religion in general. Their answers are a combination of thoughts on the subject in a general manner and some gave answers that were about their own personal religious identity. There is a certain overlap with the previous section on personal religious identity, but I wanted to delineate the attitudes about which they speak openly and the beliefs that are internal to themselves. The comments spread out to cover a number of topics around religion and religious identity: the characteristics of a religious person; the social/personal dimension of religion; the role of religion today; is religion discussed; is religion a good thing; what has replaced it; is it important; and the role of the Church. Some of these answers mentioned some of the topics discussed in the historical and social context chapter, in particular the recent child abuse scandals.

7.4.1 Characteristics of a Religious Person

I asked the students about what is meant by a 'religious person'. Student 2 mentioned a

strong faith or belief in one religion or another, which is then evident in how she acts with other people, how charitable she is. Student 3 also focussed in on strong beliefs and strong faith, but seemed to be edging towards strong personal beliefs rather than a belief system. In the case of Student 12, there was also a leaning towards a personal religion, saying that it was not necessarily “revolved around a particular faith, I see it as something more open”. For Student 6 ‘religious’ is a term that is thrown around too much. His definition was, “you believe there is something else there, you don’t know what it is, you don’t have to know what it is” (Interview 6.10). Student 23 also mentioned “being in touch with something that is not actually maybe physically there” (Interview 23.3). Student 26 saw religion in three ways: having someone to turn to; someone to thank for all you have; somebody to pray to for what you might want or need (Interview 26.6). There is an acknowledgement of something beyond himself in these answers and a maturity: unlike the answers of some of the other students, not everything has to be resolved and answered; religion did not revolve around the Church; it was again about being helpful and generous.

I can’t stand a person who doesn’t have time for someone else. If they’re busy and they can’t help someone. (Interview 6.10)

What can be seen in this and in other answers given by this student is that he not only believes, but puts it into practice. Student 24 could not understand people who say that they had no religion, but felt that God was still working through that person. People who did not believe in God made the student question his own faith and making it stronger (Interview 24.10). Student 9 said something similar in answer to the question of whether religion was a good thing:

Because you need a support and it’s something to, I think if people who are atheist it’s, ‘why are you here then.’ You have to have a reason to be here and I think religion provides you with that. (Interview 9.6)

Student 27 could make her mind up as to whether she was atheist or agnostic, but was

fascinated by religion:

I think it is fascinating how people are drawn in, I don't want to say fooled that's quite a derogatory term but how people are so captivated and how it's such a huge part of some people's lives and it can mean absolutely nothing to other people. I find that really fascinating. I don't question, I don't wonder why we are here I wonder about what I can do, I don't, I think that takes away from the living of your life if you are wondering about what's going to happen after. I know what's going to happen after, nothing. That's it, were done. (Interview 27.3)

One student was very involved in sport and we talked about the difference between values and rules in terms of the similarities between sport and religion.

If you are a follower of a religion, I don't see why you can't live by the values that they instil in you as a child, not even the rules, I wouldn't be so mad about the rules of the churches or organisations... (Interview 23.12)

For him, values were something you were born with and something that were instilled in you as a child, whereas rules were "you can do this, you can't do that" (Interview 23.12). I then asked, thinking of religion, what happened if you did not keep the rules in the sports club:

You get punished and I think that's been a negative influence on the Church, to be honest. In times gone by, there's been too much focus on rules and punishments where as if they had focused more on values, it would have been, not that it would be more popular in these days but that more people would have a clearer understanding of religion and how it influences them and that it's not just the Catholic church saying this and we should go against this. (Interview 23.12)

He had mentioned earlier that one of the elements of a religious person was living a moral life – living a good life, right and wrong. (Interview 23.3) Student 27 also mentioned rules, in talking about the Ten Commandments. She had a problem with the idea of consequences as a result of not keeping the Commandments. However she drew back from a criticism of the Commandments and talked about fasting and eating fish on a Friday (Interview 27.8). Student 25 also mentioned the Commandments, which were "a guide for living your life" (Interview 25.8).

7.4.2 Is Religion Personal or Social

The students were asked if religion was a personal or a social thing. More students

answered that it was personal rather than social, but most students saw it as a combination of both. Student 8 answered that religion was a social thing whereas faith was a personal thing. The comment seems to be a further delineation of the religious/spiritual argument. The religious/social side of it referred to attending Church and being there for people and the personal was something that no one really knew or understood, apart from oneself. Spirituality and religion were two different things (Interview 8.5-6). For Student 3, the personal had to come from somewhere, which was the social (Interview 3.2) and that for religion to continue and survive people had to still attend. However she saw no problem with personal religious practice. This was evident from the personal point of view of the student when she stated that she did not like to “profess my feelings about God in front of a crowd of people; I just think it is a personal thing” (Interview 3.5). Student 12 talked about it terms of Church attendance. Religion was a social thing and makes me look like a good person and it was personal in the way that you are motivated to go, “like am I actually going to Mass because I am actually going to pray or am I going to Mass because I want to listen to the music or the choir singing or am I going to Mass to sit there just for the sake of half an hour to satisfy myself that – oh yeah I went to Mass and that makes me a good person. It can probably be both really” (Interview 12.9). Church attendance was also the social aspect of a religious identity for Student 20, who also thought it was a combination of the two (Interview 20.7). The practice of religion was how one showed the social side of religion according to Student 14 (Interview 14.6). It was also an acknowledgement of the community gathering together, the feeling of belonging and the sense of community, although one can pray on their own, which is personal (Interview 22.5). Student 24 emphasised going to Church to be sociable and, “to be seen because they know if they are not at Mass people will be talking about them” (Interview 24.8).

Student 1 said that she was not a big fan of organised religion (Interview 1.5). Student 2 was emphatic that although religion was both social and personal, it should be personal (Interview 2.3). For student 4 it was the same, and that personal religious side came with personal beliefs: “I see religion as something that like a faith that if you want to pray to God or you want to do, it’s something that you want to do and I know you can hear the parables and all that and that’s the way you’re following Christ but at the same time I don’t feel like you have to do that” (Interview 4.3), to which she later added that it was “part of who you are...giving and sharing and all that” (Interview 4.5). Many other students mentioned the personal: personal belief, worldview, and opinions (Interview 7.11; 18.10); personal decision (Interview 9.7); personal as the student got older (Interview 10.7); the place where you talk to God. Student 13 summed up the personal decision as follows:

You could go to Mass and it could mean nothing to you, you could be just passing half an hour, whereas if you were at home and you decide you want to say a few prayers or whatever you want, reflect a bit you have decided yourself to do it – a calendar hasn’t decided. (Interview 13.11)

And Student 15 summed up the personal construction of religion:

It’s different for different people, for me it is 100% personal I don’t go to Mass regularly. Religion for me is my own beliefs in my own mind and when I pray I don’t have to pray in a Church. I am praying for what I still believe in and I do still believe in a God and in an afterlife but I don’t feel that I need anything in writing or any official place of worship so for me it is. (Interview 15.10)

7.4.3 The Role of Religion in Ireland today

All the students were asked about the role of religion in Ireland today. There was a diverse range of answers, which will be discussed. What was interesting about many of the answers was the choice of words and the language that the students used, as in case of Student 22 “I think that a lot more people, they’ve not become atheist, but they are not practising their faith as much: we’ve become more modern” (Interview 22.5) and for Student 29 there seemed to be less obvious signs of religion today: people were not

“as involved in, kind of showing their religion. I don’t think it’s as visible in some people’s lives as it would have been” (Interview 29.8), although the student did recognise that there were other ways of “doing it besides the obvious ones” (Interview 29.8). Some of the language was archaic, some of the words used said a great deal about what the students. Student 18 curled her nose when I asked about religion and proceeded to explain why she had very little time for religion, stating that she didn’t like ‘heavy influences and stuff’ (Interview 18.9). The circumstance of this attitude seemed to come from family history. Later in the interview religion was referred to as a ‘bit of a joke’ (Interview 18.10). I asked what exactly she meant by ‘joke’.

...like with everything that’s going on and I just think they (the Church) are...sticking to a very traditional background. And I think the church in general needs to kind of, reawaken and, you know wake itself up and kind of make itself fresh. Like it needs to look at everything at a new angle and I think everything about religion in Ireland is very out-dated and very traditional. (Interview 18.10)

She did change her about religion being a ‘joke’ later on in the interview when I asked the following question:

...what is your opinion of people who...go to Mass on a regular basis, see an importance of faith and a religious affiliation and the celebration of a religious affiliation...which is still countrywide, a majority of people in this country? Whether it’s Christian, Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu or whatever...do you think that is a joke?

To which she replied,

I don’t think it’s a joke but...if that’s what they want to do...it’s what they are interested in and stuff. But I think...that very much they are very passive and they are just sitting there and they take it and they are letting it dominate their lives and like, they don’t question anything and you look at people and you are like ‘how can you just sit there and not question’ and you are like, oh well. (Interview 18.11)

Student 27 was fascinated by religion and liked to argue with people regarding the Bible. They were shocked by the number of people who called themselves Christian and did not know the Bible,

...they have no knowledge of theology or anything like that and they don’t have

answers to any of the questions but yet they still call themselves Catholic. I find that really interesting and it doesn't make sense to me. If there is a gap in my knowledge I want to find out how to bridge that gap, but people are quite happy to plod along in blissful ignorance about God and religion and things like that. (Interview 27.8)

The word 'old fashioned' or 'old school' appeared elsewhere in interviews (1.2, 4, 7; 2.1). Student 2 thought that religion was still important to people, but that "people...are trying to make it less important to them" (Interview 2.2). When asked what exactly she meant, she replied,

I think there is a lot of people now who...got into the whole new way of thinking, new age and whatever and ... they just decided that they want to boycott religion and ... there is a lot of people who are turning atheist and they don't know what to believe and science and everything so I think it's kind of dying in that way. (Interview 2.2)

This was a student who really could see a whole lot of difference between the religions, and that "you should believe what you want to believe and believe what makes you happy". (Interview 2.2) This personal construction of religion based around a personal set of values and motivated towards happiness is not uncommon among these interviews. This attitude is also mentioned by Student 7: "religion is whatever you want it to be really". (Interview 7.10) For student 12, religion did not have as much of an influence as in the past, apart from "a role of respecting each other that is where you learnt all that from" (Interview 12.8). Student 4 thought that religion was not as enforced as it was in the past (Interview 4.2).

One of the most expressive comments with regard to the decreasing role of religion in Ireland was made by one of the student most critical of the role of religion and various aspects of religion:

I think it's floundering, I think, most people are fair weather Christians or whatever you want to call them; that if there is a wedding you have to have a church; if there is a christening it's at a church; a funeral...apart from that I don't think, it's becoming more of a tradition rather than a way of life...I don't think there is...significance for people anymore, and it's just a matter of course... (Interview 27.6)

The use of the phrase ‘tradition rather than a way of life’ is one that could be seen as an understanding of the past place of religion, but one which is now passed. Student 6 saw religion as something that had a role that was being criticized and decreasing, and immediately went on to see it in the light of personal attendance at Church (Interview 6.8). Student 21 mentioned her grandmother, as had a number of students:

I think that it’s, it is declining I suppose and not as much importance put on it. When I hear my Granny talking about it and it was, everybody went and, but I always within my family, go to Mass every Sunday so there is still very strong but it mightn’t be as loud or it mightn’t be as large as it used to be. (Interview 21.9)

For this student and her family, religion was still important, but this was not always the case. Student 7 said that with the busy lives that people lead today, they have less time for religion (Interview 7.10). Student 1 saw religion as something that was becoming smaller and smaller and leaving its Catholic tradition behind. The reason for this, according to the student was multiculturalism and the influx of other religions, in a manner not dissimilar to that of the Irish language. Student 9 also mentioned other ‘forms of religion’ (Interview 9.6) contributing to the decline in the importance of religion. Student 10 put it in a similar, if slightly more detailed manner:

I think it still has an important role in Irish life but you have define what Irish life is because there are so many different lives in Ireland now especially in the last decade or so. There are so many different religions and different nationalities coming to Ireland... (Interview 10.6)

Student 5 also mentioned the influx of other religions, which was divisive in certain areas and also that the Churches did not know their role anymore. When asked to explain he said that there was no leadership from the top and no thinking for the future. When asked what he would like to hear from the Churches, he said it involved suiting a more modern world: the role of women, homosexuality and divorce, finishing with, “it’s time to grow up and look at the world around you. It’s time to change or time to get rid of...” (Interview 5.8) As far as it could be determined, most of the time when

students referred to 'the Churches', they were referring to the Catholic Church. From student 17, there seemed to be no middle ground with regard to religion, either people were really committed or not committed at all (Interview 17.9). This is a very black and white attitude, and very different to the attitude of many of the students which was a very personal, and/or personally constructed attitude to religion. Student 23 thought that as there were a lot more religions in Ireland today, religion was still important. He was one of the few students who saw the influx of other religions as adding to the religious nature of the country, as opposed to a role in watering down what was there already. He still saw a role for religion in Ireland today, an opinion which he had arrived at when he had got to college and when he had experienced things that had happened in life:

I think, really affects you deeply in terms of spirituality and religion and kind of finding something to not believe in but, kind of look over your own values and things that might influence you in that way. (Interview 23.2)

7.4.4 Discussing Religions

I wanted to see if the topic of religion was every something that the students talked about. For some and because of the recent events, the Church and Child Sexual Abuse were mentioned and this is done in another section. Students mentioned the religious discussion that took place as part of class in the Colleges of Education and that is mentioned elsewhere. Student 25 liked talking about religion and was able to help a friend in trouble by being able to talk through a difficult situation for that friend. Student 23's mother liked to get her (religious) point across when discussions took place at home (Interview 23.6/12). Debates over religion were a big part of family life. Student 3 and 4 mentioned friends with whom they had regular debates because both have strong convictions about their faith which are quite opposite to their friends (Interview 2.7; 4.6). Some students mentioned talking about the Sunday sermon/homily

being the topic of conversation at the dinner table (Interview 3.5).

7.4.5 Is Religion a Good Thing?

I asked the students if they thought religion was a good thing. It was a way to glean some of their attitudes in general and to come down on one side or the other having asked them in general about religion. Most students thought it was a good thing; seeing the need for faith (which actually was not what I was asking about) and having the comfort (Interview 22.5) that it brought in certain difficult situations in life, and that it kept people going in bad times (Interview 28.5). It is a help at times of crisis, when you need to have hope “and you can always pray” (Interview 24.7). Student 10 thought belief in something was a good thing (Interview 10.7). Student 3 answered from a personal point of view, and found it important in her life, turning to God when she had a problem (Interview 3. 2). Student 11 said, “it gives you an element of hope that there is something there and that it will help you get through difficult times in your lives” (Interview 11.7). Student 17 also thought it was good, saying that it was really important to have faith (Interview 17.10). Student 18 was similar, “I think it is important for everyone to have some sort of faith, to believe in something” (Interview 19.10), to have something after life (Interview 26.5). Student 29 returned to the personal and it was good because it was standing up for “your beliefs...your morals, your experiences and it grounds people. It gives them something to live from, to go on from” (Interview 29.9). Student 7 did not quite answer the question, but stated that religion gave some meaning to people’s lives (Interview 7.10). Student 12’s answer was a mixture of a number of ideas:

In ways, yes; certainly the Ten Commandments; I would see that as yes because they are areas of respect and manners and being civil to people really. But then other ways I don’t see religion being good for the whole story of Jesus’ death, I don’t see why I should have to teach that to children when they can’t relate to it. I certainly know when I was being taught that I hadn’t a clue. I just thought this person Jesus was made up I never knew where he came from and then as I got

older I started to think about it more I was ok this is why I am going to Mass. This is why I am being told this because this is what I believe in. Whereas now I am thinking, is this what I actually believe that or is that true. (Interview 12.9)

The student has reduced the Ten Commandments to a series of maxims to live by, without any reference to their origin, tradition or religious affiliation. The reference to the death of Jesus also warrants comment. Perhaps there was a lack of any religious education in the student's background to help in an understanding of salvation, but also it begs the question as to whether the student would or could teach it in the classroom. Student 15 said that the message in the Bible was good, "but I think for me the laws of the Church and the way that it is taught overrules the fundamental message that they are trying to get across" (Interview 15.9). The words to note here are 'for me', as it seems to be a way of saying any groundless theory, without needing to argue or prove the point.

Student 18 was mixed in her view of religion and, "if it's not pushed down your throat it is a good thing" (Interview 18.10). Student 16 mentioned the power of the Catholic Church "went totally overboard, and that wasn't a good thing at all" (Interview 16.8). Student 27 thought it was 'mass hysteria' and it caused undue worry about the keeping of rules and the consequences in heaven or hell, which also gave her "a creepy feeling" (Interview 27.7)

Finally there is the response from student 23 on whether religion is a good thing. The answer is a good personal summary of his religious belief:

It has its positives and negatives like a lot of things. I think it's what people see in their religion that makes it positive or negative. Like a lot of people have found great positives in believing in God and believing there is something after we die and that there is someone looking over us, caring for us, someone that you can talk to, express your feelings, emotions but then some people take like a fundamentalist view on it...and you can only do some things the way the Church wants or like this is the rules. You have to live by them. If you break them you'll get punished or consequences for your actions if you do something against your religion. I think that has its negatives, like a lot of wars have been started by religion, people kind of taking one meaning from it... (Interview 23.2)

7.4.6 What has Replaced Religion?

If people were not going to Church on Sundays or had religion as part of their daily lives, had they replaced it with anything, what was it: family, shopping, the altar of consumerism and capitalism (Interview 5.8); sleep, football (Interview 6.9); television, wanting to be famous (Interview 10.7); activities, hobbies, work, a last day at home (Interview 12.9); nothing in particular (Interview 13.9); shopping (Interview 20.6); live her life (Interview 18.9). Student 18's parents had done other activities on a Sunday morning instead of sitting in Church, and she had little regard for the need to be sitting in a Church when there were other things to be doing, "like parties and football matches and stuff" (Interview 18.10). It is interesting that Student 5 who had no particular religious affiliation would see that with sweeping religion away in society there was nothing to replace it with (Interview 5.8). Other students (7 & 13) said that people in Ireland had less time for religion anymore in particular since the time of the 'Celtic Tiger' and did not see religion as being important, or that to some people it was not as important as it used to be because "it had gone through a lot over the last few years" (Interview 16.8). The 'Celtic Tiger' was only mentioned on two other occasions in the interviews, saying that during the period people had been more concerned with their job, and status and earnings rather than religion, as opposed to the past when, "people's identity would have been based more on the Church and what ... other people thought of them in their community" (Interview 1.2), and that "things were pushed really to the extreme and maybe that is why religions has been ignored slightly" (Interview 12.9).

7.4.7 Is Religion Important

7.4.7.1 ...in General

Many students mentioned that religion was still important, not as important as it had been in the past, but still important (Interview 16.08), or important but not in every

family (Interview 4.2), or not as important as it was twenty years ago (Interview 10.7) as people have different priorities in life, like work, money, television, pop culture and wanting to be famous.

Religion seemed to still be important in rural areas as opposed to the city (Interview 1.1). Student 8 saw religion as a comfort, something that “shapes you and shapes your outlook on life whether you’re against it whether you’re indifferent which I do not know how many people are truly indifferent... or whether you really truly believe it” (Interview 8.5). Student 22 also mentioned comfort:

I think it is important because we are becoming very materialistic so it’s nice to have something else, something for like after you die, to know that something is there is kind of comforting. (Interview 22.5)

Student 18’s answer warrants mention: “No, I think some people want it to be and there is like, some people holding on to that and the rest of the people kind of realise that it’s not” (Interview 18.9). When asked whom she meant she brought up the issue of schools, “like priests and stuff” (Interview 18.9).

When talking about religion the focus was always the Church and the influence of the Church, which as mentioned previously, usually meant the Catholic Church. Student 19 said that religion was not as important as in the past, “like the Church doesn’t have as big an influence as it did before” (Interview 19.9). Student 24 was the only one to talk about the decline of the influence in the Church in terms of the priest:

I don’t see the priest as an important figure as he used to be in the church...I wouldn’t go to confession; I haven’t gone to confession since I don’t know when. I would see confessions as I would go to the church and I would light a candle down at the back of the church at that place and I would do my confessions there but I wouldn’t actually go a priest for confessions, it wasn’t just that I wouldn’t go to the priest in my local church, I didn’t feel that, I don’t feel how the priest has the power to give me absolution, I can’t see how I can’t get it if I’m in the church in the house of God why do I have to go to the priest. The priest has come and he is going to go again and there’ll be another priest in another few years’ time. (Interview 24.7)

While the sentiment is true of many Catholics in Ireland today, her self-ministration of

the sacrament is interesting for a number of reasons: the lack of belief in the Sacrament and the role of the priest; the commodification of a Sacrament of the Catholic Church into a personal action; and the elements/requirements of that action decided by the person herself. However Student 7, who saw religion as being important, although becoming less so, was insistent in separating religion and the Catholic Church. Student 14 also gave that mixed answer, when asked to explain she replied:

In the sense that like as you said earlier what would make you question something, I think that religion is a key part of that, to me anyway, because I believe that there is a greater power helping you along, doing something. It's important to hope. (Interview 14.6)

Student 15 was the opposite and felt that there was no need to question. Life was about “trying to make the most of your life while you are here and whatever happens afterwards happens” (Interview 15.5). This is evidence of a construction of a personal belief system. Student 15 also mentioned that since she had been in college, she had met a number of students from rural areas for whom religion was still an important thing. As far as she was concerned religion was dying out among young people (Interview 15.9). Student 25 also made this point: “I know a lot of people my age wouldn't go to Mass and it wouldn't bother them, they wouldn't even think twice about going to Mass” (Interview 25.8).

7.4.7.2 ...Personally to You

Some students answered the question personally. Although the question was asked about the importance of religion in Ireland, the students still elected to answer the question personally. Religion was important to her, but “not a major thing in my life” (Interview 10.9). For Student 17 it was important to her and to some of her friends, but not to other people (Interview 17.10). Student 21 always had an interest in religion, which came from her upbringing (Interview 21.11) and it was something that was important to her. Student 30's instinct was to say that religion was important because it

gave a lot of people hope:

I don't know how to say it but, if you don't have religion, it's not what do you have but for a lot of people maybe, I can only talk from personal experience, I don't know like, but I have turned to it a lot, so, a lot of people do I don't think it's just me. (Interview 30.10)

I think there is honesty in what she says. Some of the interviewees seem to be talking from a point of view of the opinions of others. She's really committed to talking from her personal experience. Student 26 also spoke out of a very personal experience when asked if religion had played a part in who he was as a person:

Yes of course religion has played a part if I didn't go to Mass, if I didn't believe God was close to me or I was close to God, if I didn't think I had someone to turn to in times of need I think I would be a different person. I think everything carves a person into who you are. (Interview 26.8)

Student 23 mentioned his religious affiliation in daily life:

I'd like to say very important but I don't really feel that it is that important. I suppose in different times you kind of look towards religion, times of crisis, times when you are feeling down, times you're kind of doubting yourself or doubting someone else you might fall back on religion for guidance or for help or even a little bit of support but in terms of my day to day life, I wouldn't say that I pray, I wouldn't say that I think of God in my day to day life. Just spur of the moment and say thanks or chat with Him or whatever. It depends on the time I suppose. I suppose I'm one of those Christians that look towards God in times of need and times of crisis maybe more so than anything else. (Interview 23.5)

The student is nothing if not honest about the place of religion in life – times of difficulty and crisis, but the easy relationship with God that the student talks about is noteworthy, because it comes from somewhere, either upbringing or experience, but he is comfortable with a quick thanks or chat with God.

7.4.7.3 ...in your Family

The students' family backgrounds were discussed in terms of their religious identity. It would seem that their parents, for the most part, gave them the example of religious practice and these students went to Church, whether they liked it or not and only later did the students have any choice about religious practice, "when I was old enough to

make my own decisions I was given the choice and I preferred my lie in” (Interview 1.4). Many of the students talked about being brought to Church as children. For the most part it was the example of mothers that were spoken about. Student 21’s mother had been very involved in the local parish and prayer, Mass, blessing yourself and mass-cards were part and parcel of the student’s upbringing, “it was kind of just built in to my family” (Interview 21.10). Student 14 mentioned the generational dimension of her religious upbringing:

It’s just something that my grandmother would have instilled in my mother, and my mother would have passed on. I think that it’s important, it’s important to have something to believe in. (Interview 14.7)

Student 23’s mother was the only person whom he knew still said prayers at night, but he did say that religion was forced on him when he was small and he was expected to go to Church (Interview 23.4). Some of the students were still expected to attend when they were at home, and some had maintained some level of attendance as a result of the example of their parents. Student 18’s father had been brought up in a very strict religious background and had chosen not to have that type of upbringing for the student. Student 17’s parent had emphasised morals more than doctrine in her upbringing (Interview 17.10). Student 30’s parents always emphasised the religious side of things like Christmas and receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation and First Eucharist (Interview 30.11). For student 5, religion was not important growing up: he was never pushed to go to Church, and Sundays were spent gardening or other things like that, there was no prayer in the home. He did emphasise his parent’s values, which he had hoped he imitated in life, but these values were not based on any particular religious affiliation (Interview 5.10).

7.4.8 Church

Many students mentioned the Church as an institution, and had a variety of comments

and opinions to offer. Student 9 had difficulty with the role of women in the Church in Ireland, “how many thousands of women all over the world lead people in prayer every day yet we’re not allowed” (Interview 9.8). The student also mentioned the fact that priests were unable to marry, which she saw as one of the contributing factors, “that’s led to a lot of bad things happening” (Interview 9.11). Student 19 talked about the family involvement in the Church, parents as Eucharistic Ministers and Readers, and that she and other siblings had been altar servers. The involvement in Church was something important to the student. A number of the students had been involved in their local parish church as servers when they were younger. Another student gave this picture of her parents’ involvement:

Ever since I can remember they have been involved in the religion or the church in our parish. My Mam would have always been like cleaning the church, she does the crib at Christmas and she’s sacristan at home now ...My Dad says it’s easier to run St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome than run the church at home...Ever since I was small she has been bringing me up to the church and I have been helping her do things and my Dad as well the same, he is on the Parish Council and other stuff for years and if anything needs fixing in the church he kind of does it if he can. If there is a funeral on, he is up and down so I would have been involved. (Interview 25.9)

For Student 7, the Church was central to the life of the community at home; in the way that it brought the community together. I suggested that the GAA did the same, so what was the difference.

The church brings people together to get that profound sense of community, that profound sense of belief and really self-reflecting and things like that. I just find it interesting... There is very much a thing of, always after eleven o’clock Mass on Sunday morning, you will see three particular men, every Sunday, without fail, standing directly across from the church, having the chat for about an hour after Mass and that’s the social aspect of it and it has always been that way in Ireland I think, from what I’ve been told by my parents and things like that. (Interview 7.11)

Student 15 had a great deal to say about the Church, and again we are talking here about the Catholic Church. I asked if religion was still something important and the student said that although you cannot generalise, for a great deal of people it was not. Most of

the people she knew would not have it in the top three of their priorities. The reason was because the Church has lost a lot of respect:

...it hasn't changed with the times, it is old fashioned and that would be a big reason why I can't get my head around it. I think most people still have their fundamental beliefs in God and in the values behind the teachings but they don't go to Church because they have lost respect for Church because it's just completely and utterly out of date. (Interview 15.9)

I asked what had replaced Church attendance:

I don't think that it is that there are other things to be doing, I think that if the Church was more in touch, a lot of people have personal reasons for dropping out one by one; not going to Church for their own personal reasons rather than it being just a case of being completely lazy...my parents brought us to Church even though they had doubts in their beliefs and were kind of against certain aspects of the Church but they always brought us still because they wanted us to have the choice and to grow up saying that we were brought there and we had the option to contribute and could go if we wanted to and they could just as easily said no we are going to bring them to football or hockey on Sunday morning. (Interview 15.9)

Finally I asked what would make the Church more appealing. The response was the status of women, allowing gay marriage, and sex before marriage. The matter of the role of women was also mentioned by Student 16, who also mentioned the position of Muslim women also:

It's women as second class citizens, that's one thing about religion across the board that really gets me down, the fact that women can't be priests, not that I would be a priest, if I got the chance. I feel strongly about it but if someone said that I could it is not like I would go into it. It's just the fact that the Pope is so against women being priests. (Interview 16.9)

Student 27 also mentioned moral issues and the Church's position on them: contraception, abortion, and divorce, "I know a lot of progress has been made over the last couple of years but...the church should be the voice of reason and they are not which leads me even more to believe that religion is pointless" (Interview 27.8). I suggested that there was not any religion that did not have a problem with abortion, to which the reply was, "every religion has a problem with something. Well that's my opinion and I know it's quite simplistic but..." (Interview 27.8) In a similar vein I

asked Student 15 if she would be attracted to a Church which was accepting of women, of homosexuals etc. She replied that she would be but, “it would have to be a Church that would agree with what I want to agree with, that’s what I am probably more spiritual than religious” (Interview 15.12), having already said:

I am not really pulled to be a part of that community because a lot of the people that I know that are a part of that community are... not thinking on the same wave length as me so I am not that attracted by large groups of people who don’t agree with what I agree with. (Interview 15.12)

This is religion on her terms and according to her personal construction. In essence, all these students seemed to want religion on their terms, which was tempered by the attitude of self-opinion.

7.4.9 Child Sexual Abuse

The interviews for this research took place from October 2010 to May 2011, not long after two reports were published by the Irish Government regard Child Abuse: in May 2009 the Ryan Report, which had investigated Institutional Abuse; and in November 2009 the Murphy Report, which was an investigation into the handling by Church and State authorities of allegations and suspicions of child abuse against clerics of the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin. The matter of child sexual abuse arose in fifteen of the interviews. Of the students who professed little or no religious affiliation or interest, none of them brought up the topic of child abuse. For the most part it came up in answer to the question about the importance and role of religion in Ireland today and in some cases in answer to the question concerning discussing religion with family, friends or others. The answers to all the questions show that the students had considered the problem in a serious and considered manner. One student’s credibility in clergy was affected by what had happened:

I find it hard to actually relate to the people that are talking in a sermon every Sunday up at the top of the church and I know that’s a stereotype and I know it’s wrong to stereotype everyone with the same brush and I try not to... I think it’s

very hard to look at an organisation in the same way as I would have as a child growing up not knowing what I know now with the abuses over the past fifteen years. (Interview 23.8)

Of the four Church of Ireland students, two brought the topic up. One of them suggested that the child abuse had led to people losing their faith and the other student had mentioned it in responding to the question regarding whether she thought religion was important. She replied:

I do and I don't, I think since the reports have come out ... people aren't as strong, Catholicism isn't as strong...people aren't as strong in their religion ... anymore. (Interview 3.1)

I then asked if the reports had affected members of the Church of Ireland faith. She replied that she did not think it had. One student did mention the resignation and departure of one of the Church of Ireland bishops. In 2006, Bishop Peter Barrett resigned from the Diocese of Cashel and Ossory after admitting an affair with a married woman. The topic of Child Abuse came up mostly in response to the question about the importance of religion in Ireland today. One student offered this response:

I think that it's unfair that the scandal, whatever the scandal was, I think it's unfair. I think if it was a teacher thing, that maybe fifty teachers, a few years ago, had done what those priests had done, if I was considered, if my profession was considered to go down because of what other people had done, I'd think it would be a disgrace and I think it's a disgrace the way the media treat the Church. (Interview 6.8)

This was one of the only comments to see the situation in terms of 'what if it had been teachers'. Another student saw people as being disillusioned with the Church and the abuse scandal as a 'bad representation of the religion itself' (Interview 9.06). Student 16 presumed that everyone would bring up the Child Abuse reports, and said that, "people's view of what religion is in Ireland has been ... the Murphy report and things like that... You can't escape from that. You can't get away from that because it is real, it's there, it happened" (Interview 7.10). Although she had not been to Church for a while, student 13 did not think that this was because of the scandals. For student 8, 9

and 15 the reports had been a topic of conversation among family and friends. Student 9 had struggled with what had happened in the church and this had also been the case with her parents. Speaking about her father, she said, “I think he’s from a certain age group that even though things happen you still kind of have to go to Mass but I think my Mum a bit more is struggling with it. She kind of says that she wants to work towards things getting better from kind of the inside, from being in Mass” (Interview 9.10). The student herself referred to the Child Abuse situation three times in the course of the interview, stating that the church had not accepted enough responsibility and finished by saying, “I’d still say I’m a Catholic and I’d be proud of it, I just am not proud to go to Mass” (Interview 9.9). However she had also mentioned talking to her mother about it.

I don’t feel that by sitting in a church that I’m saying that I agree with what happened...I just feel that by sitting in a church I’m kind of saying that everything that happened was ok because I don’t think that enough has changed to make the church better and to make it more appealing to young people. (Interview 9.8)

For student 15 the topic was one of a number of the current topics in the Church, including gay marriage. One student saw the scandal in terms of how she viewed her religious identity, saying that with everything that had happen and, “with all the talk about the Murphy report and all that kind of thing, I think you can’t but question and talk about it and discuss it” (Interview 29), and that although there was only a small number of people involved, it had given religion a bad name.

I brought the subject up of Child Abuse on two occasions, firstly with student 11 who did not think her belief would be affected by what had happened, and secondly with student 14. Her answer was interesting in that it showed how the student’s family had dealt with the problem:

...she (mother) would have said that she couldn’t believe that it could happen at the time, but she completely would agree that it was a terrible, terrible thing. She

and my grandmother would put the priests to one side and that was a terrible thing that happened and God was on the other side, her religion would still be intact. (Interview 14.8)

Both her mother and grandmother, and by extension the student were able to separate religion and belief in God from the institutional church. Student 26 was also able to understand the distinction between ‘a couple of bad eggs that have destroyed the good name’ (Interview 26). His answer was direct and emphatic and somewhat defensive of the Catholic Church:

I don’t think at the time the Catholic Church didn’t do enough because society at the time didn’t permit, there was a kind of hush, hush about it ... you have to take things in context and what was happening at the time ... I think ... something should have been done a lot earlier in different cases ... I still think there should be prosecutions ... followed on from what has happened. What has happened like was the Pope’s message ... done a lot of good healing things, Diarmuid Martin he is a very good man, I think Cardinal Sean Brady is a very good man too, so that’s really it. (Interview 26.8)

For student 25 the scandals were just one of a number of contributions to the decline in practice in Ireland. Certainly it was something that people were hurt over and that the Church had covered up and hidden things, but the student also mentioned an elderly priest who was singularly contributing to the fact that people were not going to Church on Sunday.

I know one of the priests at home would have been elderly enough and he used to give sermons that people didn’t find relevant, he was on the missions for years and come along on a Sunday and get up and talk about the missions and people just weren’t finding what he was saying relevant to them so they used to go to different Masses or not bother going at all. So we have another priest now and I think people can kind of relate to him a bit more. I don’t think it’s all down to that some people who weren’t brought to Mass in the first place wouldn’t go anyway regardless of what went on. But I don’t think it’s definitely all to do with the scandals. (Interview 25.09)

7.5 Teaching and Teaching Practice

This section is divided between the students who are in their third year and have completed a number of teaching practice sessions at this stage and those in their fourth

year and are teaching full-time.

7.5.1 Third Year Attitudes to Teaching and Teaching Practice

The students mentioned a wide variety of things that were important to them in teaching and their attitudes to teaching. Of all the students, only one saw it as a stepping stone to another career (Interview 20.5). Student 9 had always wanted to teach:

...being a primary school teacher is very much a part of who I am. It's what I always wanted to be and I always saw myself as that and I suppose I would be quite traditional in that I wanted to settle down and have a family and just be a teacher like. (Interview 9.1-2)

As with the fourth years, one student talked about the amount of work that was involved in teaching (Interview 4.12). Student 10 said it was the most stressful thing she had ever done and hoped that the stress that she felt with teaching would dissipate once she got to teach full-time. Student 11 found it exhausting (Interview 11.5). Likewise Student 12 found it particularly tough at the time of the interview with a heavy course workload, which led her to suggest that the practical classroom experience of teaching practice would be better. Student 1 felt that the teaching day would be the longest in the world if you didn't have an "actual passion for the children" (Interview 1.14). Student 8 found herself a bit unmotivated when it came to course work, but as soon as teaching practice was coming up she began to get enthusiastic again, "from the second I start planning I love it and can't wait to do it, enjoy every day no matter how tired I am. It's just a great buzz" (Interview 8.4).

Most of the experiences of teaching practice were a mixture of good (Interview 10.6) and bad (Interview 9.5; 18.21), apart from the revelations about how tough and exhausting it was (Interview 7.9; 22.4). Some of the positive experiences seemed to galvanise the students desire to continue teaching (Interviews 4.12; 6.8; 19.8). Student 19 said: "I just went up and I was like, this is actually what I want to do and I know I haven't made a mistake..." (Interview 19.8) Student 14 missed the school for a few

days after teaching practice. Student 13 said: “there have never been instances in classes where I have sat there and said ‘I didn’t want to be a teacher’” (Interview 13.7).

One comment regarding exhaustion:

...it’s really tough so at certain points during the teaching practice, you become so tired that you’re like, ‘oh I can’t actually go on,’ with this but you have to, it’s only three weeks and I would enjoy doing it when I am in my own classroom in front of them and being able to teach them my own way. (Interview 22.4)

Some of the students found their attitudes becoming more realistic about what could be achieved in the classroom and in the course of the day (Interview 5.6). This particular student had been very idealistic about what he wanted to achieve in teaching and had even talked about educational reform (Interview 5.5) and his role in it. Student 6 talked at length about how much he had enjoyed teaching practice, even though he had had tough classes in tough schools. He seemed to be able to negotiate the difficulties of being in a class with a mentor teacher, who at first did not want the student. He had the ability to listen and take advice.

...she doesn’t even have to look at me, she knows how well I’m doing and how organised I am and how I respond to what she said. I take advice well if they ask me to do something I’ll do it, I’m not going to beat around the bush like, if I honestly think I can’t do better than that, I’ll say it. (Interview 6.7)

He was aware of his limitations and was prepared to be honest about them. However his first teaching practice had nearly turned him off to teaching, principally through the attitudes of the teacher to which he was assigned, as well as some bad experiences of supervisors. However a recent experience of teaching in a DEIS school had been memorable and the student recounted it at length.

The role of good mentor teachers seems to be important to the students, and was the case with student 13’s teacher:

She was very helpful and kind of knew when I had supervisors coming in, she knew if one of them was going to act up and she might have a word or I felt she instilled a lot of confidence in me... And she used to give me feedback at the end of the day and it was never real critical...She let me do it myself and then if it

didn't work well maybe you should try it this way. She was out of college only about 3 years, so at least she was still in tune with what the kind of files and stuff we had to do... (Interview 13.8)

This student had also been in a DEIS school and had found the experience rewarding, “just the advancements they can make in three weeks when you are starting with nothing I think it is really worth the effort you put in to it” (Interview 13.8). Student 9 also had teaching practice in a DEIS school, but found the teacher undermining the work she was doing. She was also in the school on her own and there was no support. I asked if it had turned her off teaching but it had not. She felt that if she had had the class full time, things might be been different (Interview 9.5). Student 12 had taught in Catholic, Protestant, Muslim and Educate Together schools and found the experience positive. Culturally there was a big difference between the Muslim and the Educate Together schools in terms of how the children treated one another (Interview 12.7). Student 18 had a negative experience of teaching practice from a cultural point of view. Teaching in a Church of Ireland school, she thought the heavy emphasis on religion was to the detriment of other subjects. The fact that she was required to attend assemblies was particularly difficult:

I was like, as a student teacher...there is so much I could be doing... like I need to get my project done, I need to do this... and the teacher specifically told me...‘no, you have to sit and listen to him because what he has to say is so important’. And this was my second last day of teaching practice, my file is due the next day, and I thought there is better things I could be doing. (Interview 18.21)

7.5.2 Fourth Year Attitudes to Teaching

One thing that was common among these student teachers in their fourth year was their new-found appreciation for teachers as they moved from short periods of teaching practice to the entire school year. One student had been employed as a substitute teacher in a number of different schools and found it difficult. She said that it was like “starting a new job every day because you didn't know the routines in school and

you're using your wits to get you through the day" (Interview 25.7). However her enthusiasm for the job had not been dampened, as they still liked teaching the children. Student 23 had a better appreciation for the work of teacher since moving from teaching practice to full time teaching in his fourth year. When they had been on teaching practice the attitude had been how much better that they could do the job, but this had now changed, as they experienced how much you had to "cram into six hours in a day" (Interview 23.17). For both these students, teaching practice had been such a false experience, and Student 25 had found that there had been a lot of work involved with the full time teaching and the remaining course work at college. Student 27 found the experience better than she imagined it would be: "you really don't realize it until you are working in a school for a couple of months but when you walk in the door in the morning, the kids, the kids are just...you are there for the entire day and...they want to know everything that you have to tell them and I think that's amazing..." (Interview 27.5) In the year since beginning full time teaching, Student 30's attitude had also changed from a functional mode of teaching, to one of concern for the pupil as a whole:

...you have to make sure that the kids are not just learning Maths, English and Irish they are learning as a whole person to be an all-round person and trying things they haven't tried or don't get the chance to try. And then you have to remember the kids that come in from maybe less fortunate backgrounds than others and what you are giving to them...as much attention as they would like and they come in trying to tell you stories that may not even be true but they just want to talk to you...you have to see the child as an individual... children need different types of attention, or different types of praise or you have to aware of their abilities and what they need. (Interview 30.9)

7.6 Teaching and Religious Education

This section is the subject matter of the third research question - How does their religious identity influence their teaching religion in primary schools? The section includes the answers relating to the Church in education and their attitudes and opinions regarding teaching religion in primary schools.

7.6.1 Church in Education

This question comes from the social and historical context chapter and the section regarding the management and patronage of Irish primary school by the Catholic and Anglican Churches. As soon as I asked the question about the role of religion in Ireland today student 5 thought that religious education should be taken out of the schools altogether and that it should entirely be the responsibility of the parents and based around the churches (Interview 5.12-13). In another part of the interview the student also mentioned the position of the churches with regard to schools, citing the fact that originally primary schools had been meant to be multidenominational, but “the Churches wanted to hold a piece in it” (Interview 5.4). From the evidence of the interview the student did not hold any particular animosity towards the Church – he had had a good experience of a religious secondary school and he was prepared to teach religion, to a certain point, but the comments here show that as far as he is concerned the Churches have no place in the area of education and religious education should be taken out of schools along with the patronage of the schools by the Churches. Student 19 answered in a similar manner. Her personal view seemed to be that if it had not been for the Churches, then people would not have been educated in the first place, however she did say that:

I think people really don't see that they (Churches) should have an influence or that their role in education is as important because the State... have taken over the role of education rather than the Church. (Interview 19.10)

Student 21 took a different view and thought that the Churches' role in schools was important in the role of preparing the children for sacraments:

I feel that our church community will decline even further because I don't see parents, a lot of parents take a renewed interest in religion when their child is preparing for Communion or Confirmation and that kind of pushes them back into it in a gentle way which they accept. (Interview 21.7)

I thought the use of the word ‘our’ was an obvious indication of the student's interest

and personal involvement in the Church.

7.6.2 Religious Education

This section is divided into three sections – the students’ experience of religious education growing up; their experience of religious education at college; their experience of teaching religious education. What can be said from the outset is that all three are very much related – in that the students’ teaching has been conditioned by their experiences of the first two. It is also related to their religious identity as will be discussed in the final section.

7.6.2.1 Religion and Religious Education in Primary/Secondary School

Some of the students mentioned religion in secondary school. Their answers were mixed, but for the most part it does not paint the best of pictures with regard to how religion was taught in secondary schools. There are three categories of students: students from secondary schools of a religious tradition; students from vocational schools; and students who took religion as a subject at Junior and Leaving Certificate level. Most students had not taken religion as an exam subject. Student 6 said that he had got a good religious background in school. At another point he mentioned a brother who was an atheist, the fault for which he blamed secondary school religion: “he was being told and wasn’t asked to criticise it, and started thinking about it himself and he said ‘this just doesn’t make sense to me’ and he’s been an atheist since then” (Interview 6.13). In this case there was religious education without explanation or the possibility of critique. I mention it because the student has a positive view of religion, mentioned at other points in the interview. The student had the facility and ability in college to question and critique. Student 10 used the word ‘thrust’ in relation to how religion was taught in secondary school. When asked to explain, she said it had to do with morning assembly and the quantity of prayers that had to be said. When further asked if this was

necessarily a bad thing, she replied that it was not and that again college had advanced her knowledge and understanding of aspects of faith. For her, there was little religion in the school, although traditionally this would have been a Catholic school: “in my school religion wasn’t a big thing...it just wasn’t a presence...like in religion classes we watched DVD’s or in 6th year...he let us study” (Interview 18.18). This was also the experience of Student 20, who “ended up watching videos so ...it was more like ethics” (Interview 20.10).

Student 11 had taken religion as an exam subject in secondary school, but did not think that she was more knowledgeable as a result. Student 13 had also done it and found it hard to believe how anyone who had not done religion in secondary school would be able to do religion in college. This student also had a positive remembrance of the religious nature of the school she attended. In the case of Student 16, she spoke of a traditional religious education at primary school – catechism, responses and visits from the priest. Religion had been Student 22’s favourite subject and she spoke quite enthusiastically about it and it was also a help when studying it at college.

Student 19 had gone to a vocational school where religion had been taught by the local priest. The student makes the point that: “we also did...sexual education and ethics and morals, and those kinds of things, so it wasn’t just focused on Catholicism” (Interview 19.1). The student makes a distinction between Catholicism and these other matters, as if sexual education, ethics and morals had nothing to do with Catholicism. Similarly, Student 20 mentioned that “we did Christianity and the Irish experience so we got a broad range but it was not so much like concrete religion, it was just like philosophy which was really interesting questioning life and stuff” (Interview 22.7). The use of the word ‘concrete’, distinguishes philosophy from religion.

7.6.2.2 Religion and Religious Education at College

Many of the interviews mentioned that there was a great deal of discussion on the topic of religion in many of the religious education classes at this particular college and a general feeling that all things could be discussed, argued and debated: “the religion certificate course was always very controversial and very different opinions and views...” (Interview 28.8) Lecturers in religious education were mentioned by a number of students with varying results: one student mentioned that the religion lecture was a matter of turning up and signing in and then getting on with other work, while the lecture was going on (Interview 2.13). One surprising comment was a student who felt that he would not have been as religious if he had not gone to college: “I enjoyed the debates, getting stuck in and reading documents from the Gospel and trying to understand what their meaning was and listening to the lecturer” (Interview 26.9). The Catholic nature of one of the colleges was mentioned by Student 5, suggesting that the college only paid lip-service to its Catholic identity (Interview 5.12).

Student 1 thought that religious education at college had been more concerned with the information side of things more so than the students’ spiritual side. I had made the distinction between ‘information’, meaning how the students were taught the facts of religion etc. and formation, how their time at college had helped in developing their spirituality, religious practice, personal understanding of God and the role of religion in their lives. For Student 1 the emphasis on the ‘information’ dimension was due to the fact that time was limited and, “we have to go out and teach this in a year’s time” (Interview 1.13). Student 23 did not feel that the spiritual side was catered for much at college. Some students did get involved in the spiritual life of their colleges as chapel student representative or religion and welfare officers. Two students mentioned participating at prayers at chapel, which were held every morning. Another student

found this morning worship very important to her: “it’s really just coming more in touch with faith and gives you the opportunity to and then there is church on here every morning and I have done a couple of readings there and no one goes and I don’t like going to church when there is no-one there” (Interview 4.11). The comment at the end is telling in the light of the individualisation of faith – the student prefers the presence of others when being part of the worshipping community. Another student, who was taking religion as an academic subject and had participated in the faith life of the college, did not think that the lectures had nurtured her spiritually. Student 17 saw the religion as an opportunity to look at the stories of Jesus and to the meanings behind them. For this student, “I wouldn’t have thought about them as deeply as I would have” (Interview 17.15). Student 25 had not done much religion in secondary school and had always looked forward to religion lectures. She found that she had encountered other students who were interested in religion and that nobody was judging you or your faith. She seemed to have got a great deal from them in terms of her own faith and being ready to teach in school:

I found them interesting, I liked learning, and I did learn a lot from them. I found I have a sense of faith but I didn’t really know a lot about different things about Jesus’ ministry and different things like that, but I did learn a lot from religious lectures...It made me see that teaching religion to kids could be fun and you could make it fun for them and it’s a subject that they don’t really like to do. (Interview 25.12)

Students also mentioned the distinction between religion and religion methods. Some finding the latter more important than the former:

I enjoy religion methods, I do not enjoy religion...not that I don’t enjoy it...I would rather do that by myself and not have to....I like religion methods as in different ways that you can teach about all the different parables in the Bible and a way of life, but religion...I cannot sit for two hours and listen to somebody talk about something that I have no idea what they are talking about... I’m just lost I would rather go and look at it myself and take my own take on it because everyone’s take on religion is completely different. That’s what is so important in primary schools that you are not forcing what you think onto the children that would be the one thing you would be worried about. (Interview 4.10)

The quotation indicates a number of things – the difference between religion and religion methods (which in all the colleges are taught separately); the way the student brings their particular view of religion to the way she intends to teach religion; and the student's desire to work things out for herself. It also gives an indication that the way religion is taught in college needs to be addressed. Student 6 used the word 'eye-opening' and 'eye-closing' to describe the two elements of religious education at college, and said how it had helped with the teaching of religion, but not with his own religious identity. (Interview 6.15) Student 10 also used 'eye-opening' which she combined with 'confusing', but she was well disposed to what she was learning. Student 12 did not see the need for doing two different 'religion' subjects at college.

The section on religion and religious education in college is dominated by one particular factor from one set of interviews. Students in one particular college had participated in a class which had used the book "Who Is Jesus?" by Thomas Rausch. Rausch's book is an introduction to various current theories in Christology and is meant for university students. Many of the students had a problem with the truth behind the stories of Jesus, the historical accuracy of some of the events, and the actual truth behind the miracles. I will let the students in this particular cohort speak for themselves as to what they thought of the course and the effect it had on their attitude to religious education at college. For Student 8, it was good to hear about the stories from an adult point of view, and that, "everything that you learn religiously will affect your spirituality" (Interview 8.10). Student 9 mentioned that many students had found this hard to grasp. For Student 11, discovering these things felt as if everything she had learnt had been lies and mentioned the shock in the class when these facts began to be spoken about. In fact student 13 used the word 'lie' when referring to the Crucifixion, and found the class unsettling. This particular student had said earlier in the interview

that she did not like change, and felt out of her 'comfort zone' with this questioning (Interview 13.4). I used the analogy of discoveries about Santa Claus in childhood, which she agreed with. Although initially somewhat angry at the revelation, Student 11 was able to look at it from a different perspective: "I think it is a belief you take from it and the actual moral meaning behind the story. You look at it deeper" (Interview 11.11). This was the attitude that the student felt she would take to the classroom: "In schools instead of just been told the story and having discussed it like what is the actual meaning behind the story. What is Jesus telling us to do with the story...It is like every story has a meaning and you have to keep deeper at it and you have emphasise that to the children" (Interview 11.11). Student 12 brought up the Religious Education certificate in terms of the role of religion in Ireland and the effects of the Celtic Tiger. The student had said that the effect of the Celtic Tiger was one of the reasons that people were not going to Church. I asked if this was the fault of the Church, and the response mentioned what had been done in the seminar on Rausch:

...you also have like in RE Cert lectures how we are challenged with our thinking and is all this Christian religion just a cult or like did this really happen or it this just a group of people who met together. I think people think like that as well. It is not just me but that people think that this whole notion of cults stuff has arose that maybe they relate to that religion to that now and maybe they just see what's the point in that anymore. Do they see themselves actually benefiting from it? (Interview 12.9)

For the student, the lectures had reduced religion to the status of a cult. The lectures had failed to resolve the attitude that the student had formed. It begs the question about the content of a religion programme and the effects that it had on what could be seen as underdeveloped religious knowledge.

Student 15 had found that as the basic things that she had believed since childhood had been disproved and were basically a 'lie', there was a great difficulty in believing anything.

I would be kind of like if one thing that I was taught was proved to be a complete lie and would be completely wrong, then I would have a lot of trouble in believing everything else is fundamentally true, I will start to doubt everything then. (Interview 15.10)

When asked about her choice of words, the student pulled back from the notion of it being a lie (“because lies were intentional and the people teaching these things had their genuine belief”); there was something of a cover-up in the whole thing (Interview 15.10). I asked for a specific example:

Well just something that recently springs to mind is that we were always taught that something as simple that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and that is probably the most repeated Christmas story ever and to find out that he wasn’t born in Bethlehem and to hear that Jesus was a virgin and died a virgin and to hear conflicting arguments from people who have studied it that Jesus was actually in a sexual relationship and had children and I am like if that is true why would that be hidden that Jesus was a human being who had had a sexual relationship and had a child and it angers me to think that if that was true and that it was covered up because I can’t see the crime in that and in fact if I had been taught that Jesus was in a relationship and had a child I probably would have had a lot more respect for religion because then I can relate to it more because that seems more believable, so I can respect it more. (Interview 15.10)

Later, towards the end of the interview Student 15 had found that these lectures had nourished her spiritual side and she enjoyed the discussion and debate:

...it doesn’t matter if they are true or not and started to focus just on the message that they are giving and now I have become more accepting of teaching religion because I am like, it’s more like the message that they are conveying, it’s more like the morals that they teach that comes with it... (Interview 15.15)

Student 16 could see that much of it was metaphorical (Interview 16.2), although this student did make a point which warrants mention. She mentioned the difficulty of teaching the story of the Prodigal Son to children because it was not true and then you would be lying to the children. What the student did not realise (or no-one had told her) was that the story was a parable and was not true in the first place. This indicates that there was no understanding of the nature of parables, and the distinction from the stories or events in the life of Jesus. One student found the lectures difficult: “he would be saying stuff, annoying you in one sense and you would start arguing back with him

but he was doing it deliberate” (Interview 24.4).

Student 14 was despondent about the class wondering if there was any point to it at all, although at time of stress she came back to it: it doesn’t affect my core, I would be shaken but wouldn’t affect my core” (Interview 14.9).

I specifically asked three students about the Religious Education Certificate, which graduates are required to have to teach religion in a primary school under Catholic patronage. One student was atheist, one was agnostic and one was very negative towards the Catholic Church. I asked all three why they were doing the Religious Education Certificate, if they did not believe, had doubts, or had little time for religion or the Catholic Church. Student 5 was honest about the fact that he was doing the Certificate because he wanted to teach in Irish schools. The fact that he would have to ‘fake it’ when it came to religion seemed to be something of a concern, although he had his beliefs and they were not for changing. Student 18 said that she did not want to put herself at a natural disadvantage by not doing the certificate, as 90% of Irish schools are Catholic. For her that was stupidity. When I suggested that it was also hypocrisy, the reply was, “Yeh, I know but you have to do it” (Interview 18.19). I suggested that this might all prove difficult when the student actually began to teach, and she replied that she had enjoyed teaching religion on teaching practice, and had been able to teach what she liked, which was world religions. The response of Student 27 was one of those cases when the non-verbal attitude of the student is central to an understanding of the response to the question about doing the Religion Certificate:

I found it so interesting, it was really interesting. I liked the logic behind the argument I like listening to the reasons why and thinking a way around them, I enjoyed picking flaws in it, and I just, I genuinely find it really interesting, I don’t know why...I just find it interesting. Even the symbolism behind...different things, the Bible or in different religious statues, I would have been one of the most outspoken in lectures, just from purely argumentative point of view. (Interview 27.8)

The tone in the interview was very patronising, and her attitude was that of superiority over any notion of religion. One other student (Student 7) brought up the matter of the Religious Education certificate, saying that for most students they were doing the certificate so as not to limit their employment opportunities after college. He was highly critical of the need to have this certificate: “It’s an absolute disgrace to have that because you’re judging somebody on the ability to do a job based on the fact they don’t have a piece of paper; a particular piece of paper, not a degree” (Interview 7.17).

7.6.2.3 Teaching Religion

Teaching religion at primary level had mixed responses, with some students having a positive experience and other picking up on the negative attitudes of the teachers whose class they found themselves. Student 25’s experience of subbing was that teachers left no work to be done in religion, adding that it did not seem to be a priority with teachers, although he liked teaching it and had enjoyed teaching it when on teaching practice. Student 4 also enjoyed it while on teaching practice. She felt that a religious identity was important when it came to understanding what she was teaching the children; “children have a right to religion just as much as they have the right to reads and write” (Interview 4.11). She could not understand students who came back from teaching practice and who had not taught religion, as it was timetabled and part of the curriculum.

Student 20 had been told that she could teach whatever she wanted in religion when on teaching practice. Avoiding the *Alive-O* programme, she taught about a saint, which she found comfortable because, as she said, ‘it was a true story’. Asking what she was avoiding, she replied “prayer and things like that” (Interview 20.11). However, earlier in the interview she had talked about religion in school and sacramental preparation in school:

the schools that I've been in, especially around Lent and things like that like, there is a really strong religious theme going on and I know people say that its totally, that children don't care about Confirmation or Communion or anything but we are seeing that they do really, when they get into it, they know all the prayers and they are really into it. I don't think it's as bad as people make out. (Interview 20.6)

Student 18 also avoided bible stories which she was unfamiliar with and taught world religions because, "I find that's important, that's religious education. Like that's, you've to talk about, and especially you have to sit in a classroom and you do not have thirty kids who are Irish Catholic...most of the time I'd do Judaism" (Interview 18.19). She also said that she had done some little prayers, "but I did it more like a thought for the day" (Interview 18.19). Student 13 also taught world religions while on teaching practice due to constraints imposed by the school. This she did by inviting some children up to talk about their own religion. The student went on to say that she had taught in a Catholic school and found it tedious, as the children were hearing the bible stories over and over again and the stories should be taught in a more modern form. For some reason I did not challenge the fallacy of both remarks with regard to the *Alive-O* programme. Similarly, Student 12 found teaching religion "a chore", asking why it was necessary to have a religion certificate:

I saw it as a chore and I saw it as this really wishy-washy subject now it could come from the programme we teach from I'm not sure – the *Alive O* programme – I just found that some of the questions they were aiming at this age group there are sometimes I would read the question at night, I would say no way would I say that the children, they would look at me like I had two heads and say what is she on about. Whereas like with religion I find myself teaching stories, I know last teaching practice I basically chose Bible stories because it was an easy way out to be honest. But then it backfired when children would ask me questions about stories then and I would find myself saying to them we all have a different belief. (Interview 12.15)

Again she avoided the programme and taught 'bible stories'. What exactly teaching 'bible stories' consisted of, I did not establish, but it seems to be a way of getting around teaching religion. She suggested that one should be open about what you

believe in and to let the children know that what the teacher believes in might not necessarily what the children believe. This may be very confusing to a child – why does my teacher not believe in what I believe in, if she is a Catholic? She did say that it could be difficult sometimes when children asked challenging questions. Student 5 always avoided the unknown and “I don’t do prayers, I’ve never done prayers” (Interview 5.12). When teaching in an Educate Together school he found that the children were able to think critically,

...ask questions and figure out. Some had theirs (beliefs) and I suppose if you do have a belief, it makes them stronger. You just bring it back to kind of a philosophy sense. The golden rule is the same, be nice to each other... The spiritual side, I don’t understand that, it’s alien to me. Will I be a bad teacher because of it, I don’t think so, you know. I can’t see why. (Interview 5.13)

Student 16 differentiated between the ease with which she taught the junior classes, where bible stories were more like story time and being in the class when a senior class was learning about the Beatitudes. When the children asked difficult questions she was put off. I asked one student who had told me that she did not go to confession if they would have any difficulty about teaching that to the children.

No, because I can see the benefits in my having done all those things as well...I don’t think that I would be the person I am if I didn’t go through all of those things. I definitely don’t think that it is going to serve to harm them so I don’t see any reason to leave it out but I wouldn’t have a problem teaching it because I can see the good side, I can see the good message behind all of this. (Interview 15.16)

This is a balanced response, but it does get to the heart of the matter – how teachers teach things that they themselves either do not believe or practice. Student 30 had found that she was fascinated to hear the views of the students; preferring to let the children talk rather than having them do a worksheet. General discussion was working well in class and the children were learning bit by bit. She felt that she was learning from her pupils. It brought her back to what she had done in primary school herself and how she had really missed out. Student 29 felt that it was important to have a personal

outlook. Regardless of what was in the book and had to be taught, the teacher needs to be able to interpret it:

I think your own ideas interpret and add to a lesson even without meaning to. If you were trying to just deliver a lesson and let the children believe and think and see it as, for what they do, I still think in some way your personality and your beliefs come out in it without meaning to. (Interview 29.13)

Student 27 had great difficulty teaching religion:

I would be very inclined to say to the children if they asked me a direct question, well what do you think, and I would make a point of answering questions with well, people believe or in this religion people believe but I would never say, I would never lie to children and say I believe this or you should believe this. (Interview 27.9)

The student narrated the experience of teaching in a Church of Ireland school where the clergyman had been very dogmatic. She was shocked by this approach. She thought religion had some nice ideas behind it and during the interview had assumed a certain condescension with regard to its teaching:

I like the Bible stories they are very sweet and charming, I would make a point of telling children that they are stories though. But yeah, I think it's quite harmless. (Interview 27.9)

When asked about her attitude, "I would be prepared to admit that there is a lot of hypocrisy going on there but it's either that or go on the dole and never work anywhere" (Interview 27.9). The student was nothing if not honest. Student 14 also had difficulty in teaching religion on teaching practice because the children found it hard to believe, and thought that there was very little culture of religion in the home or the school (Interview 14.14).

7.6.2.4 *Alive-O*

I mentioned the *Alive-O* programme in chapter 2. It was the only catechetical programme mentioned. The Church of Ireland programme, *Follow Me* was not mentioned by any of the Church of Ireland students. With regard to teaching religious education in the primary school, five of the interviewees had specific comments to

make regarding the *Alive-O* programme. Three were third years and two fourth years. Most of these comments are negative and warrant mention. One of the students said the following:

I consulted with the class teacher on this. She used the *Alive-O* for teaching. She dipped in and out of it when necessary, when absolutely necessary, to get prayers and things like that. Things that were very much in keeping with the ethos of the school, in keeping with the belief of the school. Not necessarily her own personal belief but in keeping with the school because out of sheer respect and that's very much the way I would view things as well. If a school has a particular ethos, then you should respect it but as I said, she said to me, take stories, take bible stories maybe something like that and teach them and do religion that way because she said the reason I don't use the *Alive-O* programme is because I don't like it. I would very much be of the same, it's very dated. It can be very dated in places. There are a lot of good things in it but it should never be used exclusively because of the fact that not everything in it is good... You should never limit yourself to one programme. The school does. The school likes to see it being taught. The interesting thing is, the conversation I had with the teacher during the teacher practice, she said when we were talking about religion. I said what happens if there is a religious inspection of the school? And she said, 'oh yeah, then I'll teach it'. (Interview 7.17)

There are a number of comments on these remarks: it has not been emphasised in college; although the *Alive-O* programme is the one for use in Catholic Primary Schools in Ireland, teaching religion among many of these students is a matter of teaching whatever you like. A number of students taught Bible Stories or World Religions. Student 7 had a memorable lesson where he had talked about angels. Secondly the student was of the opinion that one should not limit oneself to one programme, failing to understand the gradual, progressive nature of religious education. Finally the student felt that the programme was out of date.

Student 15 felt that the prayers were meaningless in the programme, "the way that they are written and I have trouble repeating them and getting children to learn that sort of thing so maybe I would rather teach a poem that has the same moral meaning to it but less, I just try to put my own spin on things so that I am comfortable teaching it so that I am not performing for the children" (Interview 15.16).

Student 18 also thought the programme outdated, when she was speaking about the Catholic Church (which she had said was a ‘bit of a joke’ a few moments earlier). Her point was that everything about the Catholic Church was old-fashioned and outdated including the religion programme. When she was teaching religion, she had done prayers with the children. When I pointed out the fact that there were poems, art, music etc. in the *Alive-O* programme, she suggested that they were all boring:

I’ve never used an art project from the *Alive-O* because all it is seems to be to get the children to draw a wall frieze or draw a picture. And I don’t like the songs because the songs always kind of seem a little bit boring and I think I did a poem once. (Interview 18.11)

When pressed and asked if the entire programme from start to finish was boring and old fashioned she said:

I think it’s basic. And I think it doesn’t require much thought and I think it’s like a lot of the textbooks. It’s like there is your plan but I don’t think it needs to be taken as, and I think they do themselves a dis-service by breaking it down to lesson 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5. Whereas they should just say, here is a load of ideas. But they are doing themselves a disservice and they are doing teachers a disservice by saying this is all you can do whereas they should be like, this is what we suggest, but obviously, there is how many teachers, I’m sure you could come out with a better way of how you can do this. (Interview 18.20)

Student 23 had used the *Alive-O* in his first year of teaching and described the workbook as a colouring book. However, because it is not inspected by the Department of Education it was side-lined. The student had done some work on the dead in September, as he said that this was not something that was done in schools. Two points on this: firstly, the memorial of the dead normally takes place in November, a fact that the student seemed to be unaware of; secondly the theme of death, dying and remembering the dead is covered on a number of occasions in the programme. One student had favourable comments about the *Alive-O* programme:

The *Alive-O* book is very, very good; I have no complaints about it. I probably think because, this might be a lazy attitude but it’s all set there for you and you really can’t go wrong with it. I think it’s interesting yeah I like the *Alive-O*, if I went in in the morning and they said teach religion on your own don’t use the

book I would be a bit wary, I think having the book, especially with a young class like that, it is good. There are good stories in it, activities, and songs; yeah I like the religion programme. (Interview 26.9)

7.6.3 Religious Identity - Teaching

Finally the students were asked about teaching and their religious identity. The reason was to see if they had any understanding of how their religious identity had a bearing on their teaching, and in some cases, even if they were not teaching religion. Some students extended this understanding of religious identity to the school as a whole and not just ‘being religious’ within the classroom. I asked them about it, first of all because it is one of the research questions and secondly, because it is the moment when all lines of the research intersect; when their particular perception of their religious identity, their attitudes to religion in general and to the Church in Ireland today, and all the other attitudes come into play as they start out to teach religion in the classroom. The answers were varied.

For some students, faith and religious identity was a private matter and they felt that they would not want to “force their faith” (Interview 2.17; 8.11) on anyone. “Force” was also the word used in the response of Student 3, who continued, “I think it is everyone’s right to have their own beliefs and their own faith” (Interview 3.10). Student 3 also used the word “inflict” in terms of beliefs. This answer is a natural progression of many of the responses of the students and the private nature of religion and religious identity. Another student was cautious about her religious identity in the classroom, in that there was a curriculum that parents wanted the children to learn, and that her particular religious identity might come into conflict with this. Unlike many students who are happy and comfortable with teaching away from the programme, this student preferred to stick to what she was expected to teach.

Some students found that teaching the children affected their own religious identity and

that they learned from the children, “I loved the things they came out with, the question they asked got me thinking...” (Interview 4.11) This student also felt that faith was not a private matter when it came to teaching. Not only is this answer opposite to what was previously said, but there seemed to be an openness on the part of this student to learn from the children. Student 8 had a similar view: “I saw how much good it can do...for these little children who are just learning the ways of the world...and that it will help them and things like that I suppose” (Interview 8.10). Student 11 spoke with eagerness about the enthusiasm and inquisitive nature of the children, “just the comments they make and they are really aware of their faith and their belief and what God has done and can do for you” (Interview 11.13).

Some students saw that religious identity was more than just imparting your own views in the classroom or school, and saw that it had as much to do with their attitude to the children: “I don’t think I’d be confident if I was rude to other people” (Interview 6.18). Student 25 had three aspects to her answer: firstly in the way she might resolve the problem of children fighting; how she would bring prayer into the classroom; and in her attitude towards the children and how she treated them (Interview 25.13; 29.14). Student 9 saw it in terms of her interaction with the children and “the type of person that I am” (Interview 9.12). For some the expression of a religious identity was about how you treated other people, and the empathy you had with people from the Third World (Interview 13.16; 17.19), or saying prayers during the day (Interview 17.18). This was how it was brought into other subjects. For Student 19, it was difficult to separate her religious identity away from the rest of the aspects of her identity, as is mentioned in the section on salience. The logical progression of that statement for her was that it was difficult to separate out the religious from the other aspects when it came to teaching:

...my identity now is a mixture of religion and other things and I think that identity affects it but I don't think it's just the religion part but because the religious identity has influenced my own identity that that influences, if you know what I mean. It is not just the religion part coming out, just kind of all of me. (Interview 19.17)

It was similar for Students 26 and 29 as religion shapes the person that you are and therefore it would have a part to play in teaching (Interview 26.10), especially in terms of talking and questioning (Interview 29.9). This questioning was also a way that the student developed her own faith:

I guess that even through teaching religion in school, questions come up the whole time and you're put on the spot but even afterwards you would be trying to think... 'did I answer that correctly' and because it's such a broad thing and everyone has their own belief, there's not a right and wrong answer to it. It would be something that you kind of take home with you and question and think further about it and wonder if you perceived in the right way and what you deemed to be. (Interview 29.12)

Student 20 equated it with teaching Irish and suggested that in the same way as a person who was into Irish would use it throughout the day, so someone who was religious would be likely to use it in their day. I found it hard to get this student to talk about her own personal experience, and she tended to give me answers from an academic rather than a personal perspective. It was slightly similar with Student 23: "Well I think your religious identity is obviously going to influence your own teaching. I don't see how it can't. If you've values, if you've a religious identity, if you're a Catholic, it's going to influence your teaching as a teacher in a classroom" (Interview 23.19). While the answer hits the nail on the head as regards to the question, it does not tell if the student not only believed this, but also practiced it.

Chapter 8 – Data Analysis and Research Questions

8.0 Introduction

The chapter takes each of the research questions and answers them. The first question will be answered by means of a religious identity paradigm. I have taken the opinions of religious identity that are most common among the students and described them in detail, with reference to the literature review. The second research question will be answered through the construction of four religious identity typologies, which best describe how these students view their religious identity. The responses to these two questions are not a general theory of all student teachers' religious identity or a set of typologies which will cover every circumstance, but is evidence of what might be learned from these students. Again I make the claim that this research is a contribution to theory and not to statistical analysis or theory generation. The final research question regarding the relationship between religious identity and teaching religion in the classroom will be answered again from the data in the interviews and with reference back to the literature review.

8.1 Research Question I

The first research question is: What characterises the religious identity of a Primary School Student Teacher? I will answer this question firstly by offering a religious identity paradigm which has been gleaned from and data and then I will show how the 'thick description' of the religious identity has an essential in letting the voice of the student teacher be heard.

8.1.1 A Religious Identity Paradigm

It might be said that in general the students presented a religious identity paradigm. Even though I will shortly categorise the interviewees according to a number of

typologies, what follows are some predominant themes common among these student teachers.

It seems to be all about the Catholic Church. Even the Church of Ireland interviewees refer back to the Catholic Church. There is something of the sense that when we say religion in Ireland we mean the Catholic Church or ‘Catholic Ireland’, as suggested by Clarke (2006) and Crawford (2010):

From this perspective, it is certainly of use to think of Catholic Ireland as being – in some sense at least – a socio-political phenomenon, one ‘*age*’ among many in the span of Irish history. (Clarke 2006, 22)

The *force majeure* inherent in the accretion of power to Catholic religious and political interests allied to the sheer size of the community made it possible for the majority’s construction of Irish national identity as Catholic/nationalist, with the addition of the foregrounding, even if at an iconic level, of the national language, to remain dominant. (Crawford 2010, 170)

This may be due to the prevalence of the Catholic Church in Irish society, from the smallest village and local parish church and school, to the contribution of the Catholic Church to the national stage in terms of education, health care, etc. It might also have to do with the prominence of the Church in the media over the last number of years as a result of scandal and investigation. However, it is the remnant of an attitude left over from previous decades and centuries and can be seen now to be passing. A number of students mentioned the presence of many other religions in Ireland today, due to immigration – a fact that had for them, implications for Catholic schools.

Berger’s ‘sacred canopy’ (Berger 1967) might be somewhat threadbare at this stage and the Churches’ dwindling influence has been mentioned on a number of occasions, but it is not gone entirely. Many of the students were well disposed to the Church and saw it as an important facet of Irish life. However the importance of Church as an institution in their lives was varied. The fact of being or not being ‘religious’ was reduced to attendance at Church or not. Disconnection from the Church did not necessarily mean a

disconnection from the community and there was a strong sense of social identity among these students. They had strong bonds with family and friends and there was a definite feeling that the Colleges of Education, for the most part, created something of a community atmosphere where the students lived, studied and recreated.

There was a divide between the rural and urban students and many of the students from rural areas gave an interesting picture of a traditional religious identity and practice – Sunday Church; importance of community; traditional values. It was evident in the answers given by interviewees in rural areas that there was still a strong community bond and general identification with the local parish. This was true both of interviewees from the Anglican and Catholic traditions.

There was also the sense among some of the students that religion was something to be commodified. If the student thought it was right for them, then it was right. It is not quite the ‘Sheilaism’ mentioned by Bellah (1985, 221), but there was a sense that religion was about making choices – choices of what you wanted to believe and what you wanted to ignore. Again it was not entirely a ‘de-institutionalized faith’ (Walker *et al* 2010, 320), but the ‘terms and conditions’ of membership were the choice of the student. This is perhaps best exemplified in the following phrases: “I think you should believe what you want to believe. I think people should believe what makes them happy” (Interview 2.2); “I think my religion is different to everyone else’s” (Interview 6.15); “religion is whatever you want it to be really” (Interview 7.10); or the phrase chosen as the title for the project, “I believe in a God that I believe in” (Interview 5.11). It is the “mind of the individual self” (Casanova 1992, 27).

Among the interviewees who showed indications of a religious identity, and in particular through attendance at Church on Sunday, many of them stated that they were the only ‘religious’ one in their family, and mentioned siblings who were

agnostic/atheist, or whose sole attendance at Church was at Christmas and often at the request of parents.

In the section on Karl Rahner's pastoral theology from 1963, he offers a description of a future Church. In the course of the interviews much of what he said appeared in one form or another:

...1) faith is constantly threatened from without and received no support from institutional morality, custom, civil law, tradition, or public opinion. It is no longer a matter of family inheritance, but of conscious, personal choice; 2) a considerable part of the riches of culture is no longer specifically Christian and may even exert a negative influence on a Christian's moral life; 3) the Church will be a Church of the laity, where they will assume increasingly important roles and will take over many of the duties previously reserved to the clergy; 4) the clergy will no longer belong to the upper privileged levels of society; 5) the conflict will occur not so much between the Church and the State but in the conscience of the individual who is asked to make a choice between the values of the gospel and the dominant cultural mores. (Rahner 1963, 23-26)

Voas and Crockett (2009, 21) speak about religion having a generational half-life in Britain, and the same could be said of the situation in Ireland. There was an obvious sense of the generational decline of religion – from a very religious grandparent, relatively religious parents, to an occasionally religious student teacher. Many of the students mentioned the great faith and religious practice of grandmothers in particular, and while this might be behaviour that is admired and remembered fondly, it is not behaviour to be emulated. As mentioned previously, this was especially true when it came to attendance at Church – from a grandparent and/or parent committed to attending Church daily or weekly, to the student who went occasionally, sometimes under duress, sometimes when it suited, or when they felt that they needed to attend.

In this we are nearly at the point which Rahner makes first – that faith will not be what has been inherited, but what has been consciously chosen by an individual. He mentions this against a secularization background, which, in the case of Ireland, has been well documented here. Generational differences in religious belief and practise is

also in evidence where there was no religious practice from the parents' generation for whatever reason.

Although there was still a regard for the Church as an important facet of Irish life, there was certain disenchantment with religion, based principally on three issues. Firstly, the recent child abuse scandals within the Catholic Church and the publication of the Ryan (May 2009) and Murphy (November 2009) reports. These reports were mentioned either directly or indirectly by a number of the interviewees. On two occasions I mentioned child abuse in order to establish whether the situation in the Catholic Church had affected what seemed in the interview to be a strong religious identity and affiliation. One interviewee mentioned a scandal involving a bishop in the Church of Ireland. Secondly, students did have difficulties with some teachings of the Catholic Church, especially in regard to issues such as homosexuality, women and the Church, divorce and contraception. However these topics were not mentioned by as many students as I thought, leading me to the conclusion that these are topics that the interviewees do not consider as being important or that they no longer consider the position of the Catholic Church as having any relevance to their opinions or to their lives. With regard to these areas some students thought the Church 'out-of-date'. There was also ignorance of Church teaching on some of these issues. When asked on a few occasions if they knew the Church's teaching on a particular matter to which they had an objection, they were not able to say what exactly the Church's teaching was. Finally a number of interviewees mentioned the often sectarian nature of religious affiliation and the problem therein, both in Ireland and in the world in general today.

With regard to Rahner's point about a Church of the laity, this is not something that has been sufficiently developed in Ireland in the Catholic tradition. Only one student was actively involved in the management and leadership of her parish. Among the Church

of Ireland students there were none who were actively involved in the life of their parish.

Any comments regarding clergy personally known to the participants were neutral enough, which might point to Rahner's next point that the pedestal on which priests were once placed is well and truly consigned to the past. As regard the final point on the conflict which Rahner thought might exist between the values of the Gospel and the dominant cultural mores, the interviews show that for the most part the dominant cultural mores are winning out.

With regard to Christian culture, there is little evidence of it in terms of these interviews, and there is a distinct sense that although these students are intelligent and well-educated, there is a feeling that they lack even the rudimentary understanding of basic Christian doctrine. Many of the students had difficulty in articulating religious thoughts or sentiments. This, I think had less to do with the transcendent nature of religious consciousness, and more to do with lack the language or training to articulate what they were thinking.

Of the three indicators of secularization as defined by Casanova – differentiation of the religious from the secular; decline of beliefs and practices; and the marginalization of religion to the private sphere; the second was most in evidence in the interviews. The attitudes of some with regard to the role of the Churches in primary school might be evidence of the first of the three, but I don't think that for many of the students religion has been forced to the margins yet. Furthermore Taylor's comment regarding the 'shift to secularity' (Taylor 2007, 3) – belief in God as one option among many has not quite taken hold among the majority of the students.

One thing that was not much in evidence was the malaises of modernity of Charles Taylor (1991) or the wounded sense of belonging mentioned by Michael Paul Gallagher

(2005). The students were quite purposeful in their ambitions, enthusiastic for their future careers, and willing, for the most part, to engage in some idea of religious identity and see it as part of their life. As already mentioned they had a strong attachment to home and community, they saw the value of their family background and relied heavily on their social group, their friends and the college communities where they were students.

8.1.2 The Thick Description

The use of the ‘thick description’ of the three modes of identity informed by Rahner’s anthropology has meant that the voice of the student has come through from the interviews. One of the headings for the questions was ‘identity as dynamic configuration’, coming from DeRuyter & Conroy (2002); a construction from the characteristic or defining elements of identity. In the interviews what was narrated by the students was what they considered as defining and characteristic of their identity, either in general, or in terms of their being student teachers or being religious. This is why the use of a thick description allows for this dynamic configuration to come through. I have been struck and humbled by the level of trust given to me by these interviewees. Some of the students talked at great length and depth, which added considerably to the richness of the data. Take, for example, the social nature of identity. From the very beginning the students talked about the importance of family, friends and community on their identity formation and how this is still important to them. Added to this is the social nature of teacher identity and the relationship that the teacher will have to a classroom, a staff, a group of parents, etc. This is also part of religious identity, in that faith and religious identity finds expression in the community gathered in prayer, both in good times and in bad. All this finds its completion in Rahner’s Anthropology, when he speaks about the human being a being-in-the-world,

and as a being that is dependent. It is only through the human being's understanding of their place in the context of their community and only in the human being's knowledge of their being dependent, that a human being can understand their orientation to God. As human existence is fundamentally relational, so existence with God is fundamentally relational. The point of transcendental, the point of ultimate horizon is relationship with God. In a way this connects with Bauman's idea where identity can only "reach completion in the fullness of time – in infinity" (Baumann 2004, 10-11).

It is likewise with the knowledge explored and evident in these interviews. Aquinas states that all knowledge is grounded in experience and the beginning points with these interviews were areas that the students would understand easily, before we moved onto more complex concepts and themes. So the gradual layering of the identity theory under the teacher identity and then this under the religious identity allowed the student to gradually think and answer. Human beings rely on knowledge of the world from the experience of that which is around them. It is only from understanding these horizons that they can move beyond them towards an understanding of the point of ultimate horizon which is the transcendent.

The gradual construction and interpretation of the religious identity of the student teachers means that it can only be understood in terms of thick description. The reason for this is primarily because the religious identity of each person is unique, and while certain points of commonality might be observed from one person to the next, it is not something that can be quantified. In terms of methodology, it must always be approached in a qualitative manner, and only as a 'thick description'. If a researcher intends to undertake research through semi-structured interviewing, and where there are no closed questions, the researcher must be aware that no two interviewees will be the same, and research validity will demand that cognisance is given to as much of the data

as is allowable.

Another reason why religious identity can only be understood in thick description is because of the very nature of religious identity. Religious identity lies at the intersection of a number of disciplines - spirituality, psychology, anthropology, sociology, culture, etc. Teacher identity theory and emerging adult identity theory must also be added to the point of intersection. It is entirely the choice of the researcher as to how many of those disciplines are brought into the mix, but it is only through thick description that each one has the possibility of correct and appropriate treatment in the course of the research.

Finally, the thick description allows for one aspect of identity to augment another. It allows the common threads of each facet of identity to be explored and it allows for identity salience. It was for these reasons that thick description was used in this qualitative research.

It is neither possible nor worthwhile to provide a uniform description for the students that were interviewed, because of the diversity of answers and narratives contained in the interviews, so there are two ways that I want to approach this description. Firstly, I will outline some general points regarding a religious identity paradigm that have been drawn from the interviews, from Rahner, and from other authors cited in the literature review. Secondly, I have formulated a fourfold typology to describe the thirty students which has been drawn from two sources, Arnett Jensen & Jensen Arnett (2002) and Inglis (2007). The former is based on research into emerging adults, and the latter based on research into Irish citizens' religious identity. Therefore these typologies are useful here, but will be augmented and developed further by reference back to data from the interrogative stage.

8.2 Research Question II

The second research question is: How does a Primary School Student Teacher understand their Religious Identity? The first section will deal with how I thought they understood their identity and it references back to the literature review. I will also show how narrative has played an important role in elucidating their understanding of religious identity. Finally I have offered a continuum of typologies based on their understanding of their religious identity. The emphasis on the ‘continuum’ (Patton 2002, 457), means that all of the thirty interviews that I undertook can be placed somewhere along an imaginary religious identity line, and the parameters of the typologies can cover a particular section on that line, without being excessively rigid about the categories.

8.2.1 Understanding Religious Identity

One of the strongest points to come to the fore in the students’ understanding of identity is the importance of *the other*. This *other* came in the form of parents, family, friends, community and college, etc., and would seem to have a strong influence on the identity formation of these students. There was a great deal of evidence of the differences between them and their parents. The most obvious example of this was regarding Church attendance – their parents (or grandparents) were weekly attenders, the students were occasional attenders. Currie (1998) saw identity in terms, firstly of *relation* and *differentiation* and also in terms of *narrative*, or to use Ricoeur’s words, *sameness* and *selfhood* (Ricoeur 1988). Therefore there was an understanding of both of Currie’s points – the student perceived the origin of their experience (relational), but made a distinction between the origin and their actual experience. Taylor (1991) mentions the dialogue necessary in identity formation:

We are expected to develop our own opinions, outlook, stances to things, to a considerable degree through solitary reflection. But this is not how things work

with important issues, such as the definition of our identity. We define this always in dialogue with, sometimes in struggle against, the identities our significant others want to recognize in us. (Taylor 1991, 33)

It is a good pen-picture of what is found in the interviews. These students seemed to have the ability to talk about their religious identity and have played out the dialogue with the identities of their ‘significant others’.

8.2.2 Role of Narrative

Narrative was evident throughout the interviews and the students were indeed the “tellers and interpreters of narrative” (Currie 1998, 2). It was, as Ricoeur puts it beautifully, “a cloth woven of stories told” (Ricoeur 1988, 246). The students entrusted me with a great deal of their thoughts and ideas. They recounted stories and experiences which had given them an understanding of their religious identity, as mentioned by Johnstone (1990, 5) regarding narrative structuring our sense of self and interaction with others. Taylor (1989) mentions narrative in the way we have constructed the moral life from the building blocks of our upbringing and experiences and some of the students, in talking about their parents seem to have inherited an understanding of what is “good, or worthwhile, or admirable, or of value” (Taylor 1989, 27). In some cases these values are far more important than the Church’s teaching on certain *moral* issues and in a few cases the moral life, as defined by Taylor, more important than a belief in God.

I mentioned in the literature review Brewer’s (2001) taxonomy of social identity: *person-based social identities* (located within the individual self-concept); *relational social identities* (the self in relation to others); *group-based social identities* (where membership of a group is integral part of the perception of self; and *collective identities* (the norms, values and ideologies of a particular group) (Brewer 2001). This taxonomy might prove useful to an understanding of religious identity, when the ‘group’ is taken

to mean a religious denomination, but I think that it is really only the first of these which can be found in the students answers. In terms of the person-based social identity, the student might ask the question, ‘who am I in terms of Christianity/Catholicism/Anglicanism?’ Some of their answers were very much based on their own individuated notion of religious affiliation, especially considering the section on being spiritual and not religious. In terms of relational social identity, the students are no longer dependant on their parents for their religious identity and have begun to ‘plough their own furrow’. In terms of the group-based social identities and collective identities, the students do not see themselves as an integral part of the group. Few are involved in any direct way with their parish so there is no active engagement in ‘shaping and forging the image of the group’. Finally, while the membership of the group is important to some, it is on the students’ own terms.

Early on as I was compiling the questions for the interrogative stage, I was concerned that the students might understand what I was trying to ask them in terms of both identity and religious identity. What I found in the interviews was a great deal of what Giddens refers to as *reflexivity*. Some students listed off traits and characteristics of this or that identity, but many had a consciousness of what these traits and characteristics meant for them, and not just at a shallow surface level. The students who spoke about their interest in charity work stand out in particular, and their inability to see connections with a religious identity does not take from it. The student who made the connection between their religious identity and teaching in a primary school also had a sense of this reflexivity and the “ability to keep a particular narrative going” (Giddens 1991, 54). Religious identity was centred around one’s attendance at Church on Sunday and it was very difficult to apply the Watts and Williams (1998) divisions of religious identity to this group of students.

8.2.3 Typologies

In creating a ‘continuum of typologies’ (Patton 2002, 457) I have returned to the Arnett Jensen and Jensen Arnett typologies of emerging adults’ religious identity: Agnostic/Atheist; Deist; Liberal Christian; Conservative Christian. Of the four used here the first two suits the Irish situation best. I certainly found students who were both atheistic/agnostic and deist. To try and categorise the denominationally adherent requires different typologies than Liberal Christian and Conservative Christian. While the ‘liberal’ moniker fits pretty well, I think that the conservative one does not, even along a continuum. To place the continuum in an Irish context, I have returned to the Inglis’ categories: Individualistic Catholics; Cultural Catholics; Creative Catholics; Orthodox Catholics. Inglis’ typologies are useful in terms of describing adult Irish Catholics, but not for the student teachers. Although there is a great deal of the ‘individualistic’ in what was said in interviews in terms of religious identity, the overwhelming majority of the students talked about the importance of community in its various manifestations in their lives, which would disqualify them from being overly individualistic. As regards the ‘cultural’ moniker, these students are critical of the institution and they may choose not to attend religious services, but they do not yet have to make a conscious decision to choose a particular religious denomination, as they are not in a position where they are responsible for the faith lives of their own children. I think that the terms ‘creative Catholics’ and ‘orthodox Catholics’ are closest to the descriptions of the student from their interviews. I have changed Catholic to Christian and I have changed Orthodox to Conventional to avoid confusion with the Eastern Churches. In the next section I will give some explanation of each of these typologies, which will be augmented with aspects specific to the students interviewed. The typologies of Irish Primary School Student Teachers are:

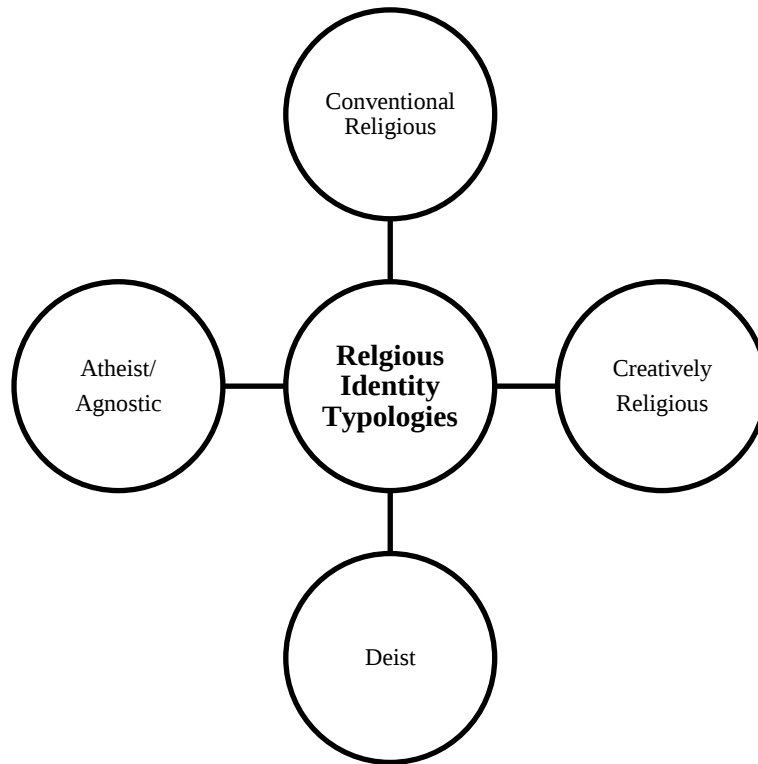


Figure 4 - Religious Identity Typologies

8.2.3.1 Conventional Religious

This is the largest of the four categories (2, 3, 8, 14, 17, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26, 28, 29, and 30). These students might be described as mainstream in both the internal and external sides of their religious identity. They saw the need to be both committed to and engaged with their religious identity. From the internal point of view their values, beliefs and perception were grounded on a Christian God and a Christian belief system, which externally they backed up with behaviours, experiences and actions that were Christian. Most of them spoke of religious identity and the aspects of it in very ordinary terms, learned from their families, augmented by the parish and community, and perhaps added to by school and college. They saw their faith and religious identity as something important to them, and they had an understanding of God and a sense of God's presence and action in their lives.

As the typologies are along a continuum, some are very serious and committed to their

faith, but most are very ordinary and matter of fact about it. As mentioned already, Sunday Church attendance features prominently in their lives, and for some it was the first and most important indicator of religious identity. Getting the students to think beyond this was very difficult. While they may not be as regular (daily or weekly) as some of their parents or grandparents, they see their attendance at Church as a combination of duty/obligation and personal choice. This duty/obligation is often more towards their parents and grandparents than to the teaching of the Church. This generational shift/decline in Church attendance is also true for the importance that they place on religion. Many of them come from families where the place and role of the Church was central and paramount, whereas this is not always the case for these students. They see religion as being an important aspect of their lives, but only one among many important aspects.

This group prays regularly and sees a value in it, both in terms of the comfort of prayer at difficult times in life and as assistance at times of exams etc. Prayer tends not to be set or conventional (rosary, psalms, or the Angelus), but something informal and for some a deeply personal conversation between them and God (Interview 22.7). The 'set prayers' were ones that they had said when they were children, but had now forgotten or had got out of the habit of saying. Many of these students did some charity work, but very few saw this as in any way a part of their religious identity. I wondered about that a great deal, and the only explanation was that no-one had told them that it should be seen as part of their religious identity, coming as it does from basic Gospel values.

That is not to say that these students do not question or have issues with Church teaching. However questioning can also be about exploring their personal faith, even in the midst of times of happiness and times of sadness (Interview 30.6).

8.2.3.2 Creatively Religious

This group was the next largest of the four groups (1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 20, 23, 25). They have a creative approach to their religious identity. While some are attenders at religious services, pray, and have an understanding of God in their lives, religion did not revolve around the Church attendance (Interview 6.10) and had more to do with being helpful and generous. Some of these students had difficulties with the Churches as institutions and were unwilling to follow Church teaching with regard some areas, and sought to carve out their own particular religious identity from a number of different sources. There was a sense that the Church was old fashioned and out-of-date with modern life, and that people did not need a ‘higher up’ (Interview 13.9), because they were independent. It might be summed up by the comment of one interviewee who said, “I think my religion is different to everyone else’s” (Interview 6.15). It is in this group that the decoupling of the spiritual from the religious is most evident, and as a result of this, the spiritual was seen very much in terms of a personally constructed thing, divorced from religious denomination and/or affiliation. There is a certain validity given to individuated faith in this group. Religious identity was something that was both personal and private, as opposed to something that was observed and celebrated as part of a community. One student spoke about the importance of “having faith”, but not necessarily “a specific religious body” (Interview 4.3). It was the importance of having something to fall back on. This ‘thing’ to fall back on could be anything. When Inglis described this group he mentioned alternative types of ‘spiritual elements’ – yoga, Eastern philosophies etc. However in the group of students, only one student mentioned ‘meditation’ (Interview 4.3) and none of the other alternative spiritual elements were talked about. Some of these students prayed – but not in the conventional ways and attendance at Church was occasional and/or very sporadic.

Often it was to avoid arguments or upsets at home. One student's comments were heartfelt in her looking to the sky and asking for help (Interview 7.13), but there was no sense of communal prayer or prayer with others.

8.2.3.3 Deist

This group (15, 16, and 18) believes in God and has an understanding of God, but sees it as separate from denominational affiliation in that as the title of the thesis suggests, "I believe in a God I believe in". This God in the case of the particular student was the God of the Christian tradition and there was occasional religious practice. One student called religion 'a joke'. Further explanation showed that this was in relation to the old fashioned nature of religion. God's presence was something that could be felt, rather than something taught by a specific religious denomination. Notions of God might not be conventional in terms of words or traditional images, but there is still an understanding of some 'other', which is greater than the human. Sometimes these alternative and/or personal notions of God were due to a lack of any knowledge regarding God or anything religious. Further evidence of an individuated religious identity was a student's habit of praying to people whom she had lost (died), as opposed to the religious convention of praying *for* a person who had died. In the case of the three students, all were baptised but had neither the intention nor the desire to be part of the Church.

As regard any other internal perspectives, values and perceptions were ones that they themselves chose and/or formulated, even to the point of view of "conjuring up" in their own head their individual beliefs (Interview 15.11). From this the external behaviours and actions were ones that might be described as culturally Christian, but with no basis in a lived or experienced religious affiliation. Francis *et al*'s (2008) definition of implicit religion might be closer to the evidence here – "persisting religious beliefs and

values, unsupported by church attendance” (Francis *et al* 2008, 239). The sociologist, Christian Smith refers to it as *Moralistic Therapeutic Deism* where God is not necessarily involved in the life of the individual except when needed. It is,

...about inculcating a moralistic approach to life. It teaches that central to living a good and happy life is being a good, moral person. That means being nice, kind, pleasant, respectful, responsible, at work on self-improvement, taking care of one’s health, and doing one’s best to be successful. (Smith 2005, 163)

8.2.3.4 Atheist/Agnostic

Of the thirty interviews, three students (5, 12, and 27) might be said to be atheist/agnostic. Even with the one student who did not believe in God, there was an acknowledgement of ‘something’. From an internal point of view, values could be described as humanist. Values were important such as respect, treating other well, etc. While these values might have been learned in a religious background (a Catholic post-primary school), the students had no affiliation to any religious denomination now.

One student began by stating that she was not sure if she was agnostic or atheist, but that she was fascinated by religion. Her attitude towards religion was somewhat superior - religion was reduced to that of a myth, and religious observance was floundering. She had many things to say about other peoples’ religious identity and less about her own.

One of the students spoke about the value of parish in terms of its ability to organise and rally people for worthy causes and town fetes, but the importance of the parish was no more than that. I would describe it as a secular-humanist parish, where the welfare of the members were paramount, but the understanding of who this group was extended no farther than this. This was similar to his views on the Marian shrine at Lourdes – there was no evidence of God there for him, “just people” (Interview 5.12)

8.3 Research Question III

The third Research Question was, “how does their (student teachers’) religious identity influence their teaching religion in Primary Schools?” The emphasis of this question was on the relationship between religious identity and teaching religion, and I will outline the findings below.

8.3.1 Religious Identity and Religious Education

I want to begin with some remarks regarding the students’ own religious education. I think that their attitude towards Religious Education stems not only from what they learned and how they were prepared at college, but also from how they themselves were taught and how the subject was approached during their own primary and post-primary education. The attitude to Religious Education from teachers that they encountered during teaching practice also has a bearing. Some of the answers given gave their experience of the religious education received at primary, secondary and third-level. Many of the interviewees had themselves been taught using the current the Catholic Primary School Religious Education Programme (*Alive-O*); the programme they were expected to use when teaching. The role and position of religious education in secondary school described by some of the students, and prior to the introduction of Religious Education as an exam subject, was particularly disheartening.

As regards religious education at College, some students did not have a lot of complimentary things to say. There was a sense that they were not served well by those lecturing and teaching religious education. Evidence of this might be seen in the fact that they are far more concerned with religion teaching methods than as an occasion to deepen their own knowledge and stimulate their religious imagination. As said earlier, they were students with enquiring minds, well-disposed for the most part to things religious and spiritual, but their Colleges of Education were lacking in providing

courses to assist them in advancing this religious and spiritual dimension. In a similar vein, the provision for spiritual development at College level was one that was lacking for many of the students.

When referring to his volunteer work in Kolkata, one of the students stated that being a teacher was about being “a caring person that leads children towards the right path” (Interview 23.7). It sums up what many of the student saw as their role as a teacher, and this would reflect Coll’s (2008) desire to maintain a focus on the deeper motivations and understandings” (Coll 2009, 141). Many of their comments were aspirational, which is understandable considering that for the most part they only had experience of teaching during the limited sessions of teaching practice. Much of what they refer to calls to mind the ‘lay-theories’ and embedded archetypes referred to by Sugrue (1998), the *ideal identity* referred to by DeRuyter and Conroy (2002) and the three teacher identities according to Sumura & Luce-Kapler (1996). The evidence that the student teachers saw this as an extension of their faith and spirituality (Coll 2009, 141) was very limited, and very few students saw their own faith and spiritual life being extended into the classroom, either directly or indirectly. However, Coll’s evidence from Scotland of teachers as ‘Church’ or ‘Witness’ was not very evident among the student teachers. This is very obvious in the difference in answers given by the third year and fourth year students. As full time teachers, the fourth year students had an appreciation for the teaching profession and the hard work done by teachers, and they were more realistic about what could be achieved in the classroom on any given day. These theories and ideals are the way many people being to forge an identity within any profession or place in life. What is evident in the interviews, even at a preliminary stage in the lives and careers of these student teachers is analogous to Olsen’s (2008a) comments on the sociocultural model of identity,

...that people are both products of their social histories, and – through things like hope, desperation, imaging, and mindfulness – move themselves from one subjectivity to the next, from one facet of their identity to another, and can in some limited sense choose to act in certain ways considered by them to be coherent with their own self-understandings. (Olsen, 2008a, 24)

The student teachers spoke a great deal about their social histories and during the interviews interpreted that history in terms of their teaching. Family, community, experience of religious education, “the various interdependencies” (Olsen 2008, 4) all seemed to have an influence on their teaching.

What I found in the interviews was a limited understanding of their religious identity in these ideal identities and lay theories. Only a few students could understand the idea of bringing that identity into the classroom. For some students teaching religion is one subject among many, and not one that should be seen to be any different. Some students had a positive experience of teaching religion and had enjoyed what they had done on teaching practice. Some had picked up on the negative attitudes of teacher toward religious education and the *Alive-O*. Students who were in as a substitute teacher rarely found that the regular teacher had left religious education work to be completed.

There was an almost universal dislike for the *Alive-O* programme in the interviews. As one student suggested, “I didn’t really find that (*Alive-O*) good so...I found myself kind of like making it up myself, like not really following the book but more...doing things that I thought would be beneficial to them” (Interview 19.17). There was no sense that what might be beneficial to the pupils would be to follow a prescribed programme. This opprobrium for the programme seems now to be passing down from one generation of teachers to the next. Some students picked it up from their experience in college and the fact that they were rarely ‘examined’ on how they taught the religion programme during teaching practice. Some students saw it as being ‘old-fashioned’. It

was a point in the interviews where I wanted to ‘stand up for the programme’, partly because I had been involved in its production, but partly because some of the comments warranted explanations. When a student suggested there was not much in the programme apart from the prayers she had done, I pointed out the art, the poetry, the music, etc. The student’s reply was that, “it was all very boring” (Interview 18.11). These attitudes and comments seem to negate any possible good that might be found in the programme. Then there was the student who said that, “I don’t do prayers” (Interview 5.11). How can one teach a religious education programme without the element of prayer? Where the responsibility for this lies is unknown, but it makes the successful teaching of religious education in schools very difficult.

Student 14 pointed out something that should be kept in consideration when speaking about teaching religion. She said that some of the pupils had found one religious concept very difficult to comprehend and had surmised that there was very little religious culture in the home or the school. Leaving aside the school, the role of the home in terms of religious education cannot be underestimated either to good or to ill. If the only place where children are receiving religious education is the classroom, when it places an onerous burden on the teacher.

Unlike many of the other subjects at primary level, religion seemed to be the only one where the interviewees seemed to be able to pick and choose what they taught. Lennon (1999) in outlining an understanding of professionalism speaks about specialist knowledge, autonomy and the contribution of the teacher’s own knowledge. With regard to the answers around the teaching of a specific religious education programme it might be suggested that there is a lack of professionalism with some of the student teachers. Their willingness to impart ‘specialist knowledge’, acquired at college is limited. In the absence of a desire to teach the prescribed programme, the student

seems to be willing to teach anything else. This usually came in the form of the answer, “I taught a Bible story”. I did not ask for details or an account of what this involved, but I did wonder if there was any catechetical process in this ‘telling a story’ or was it just ‘story-time’ which happened to use a Bible story. Other students mentioned that they had taught ‘World Religions’. Again, the exact content of this type of lesson was not explored in the limited time of the interview. One student’s reason for teaching this was because, “you don’t have thirty kids who are Irish Catholic...most of the time I’d do Judaism” (Interview 18.19). Here it might be said that the student teacher is bringing her own knowledge to the classroom, but evidence with regard to their answers about religious education in their own primary or secondary school would indicate that this knowledge is limited enough. I was also conscious of being defensive and not giving validity to the students’ answers, regardless of my personal opinions. For the most part, I let them continue.

As regards lesson content, some students thought that they knew what was best and most suitable for the pupils. One student said that she thought teaching about Christ’s death would not be something that the pupils could relate to, as her experience as a child had been that she had not been able to relate to it. With regard to the level of autonomy in the classroom, an attitude of teaching anything that one liked could continue unchecked for years, thereby undermining the gradual and progressive nature of a denominational religious education programme.

One student did make a distinction between his own ideas and the obligations of the programme. He mentioned that he would pray with the pupils at various times during the day, which was something that he felt, “he had to do for the children and that I should give them sort of a perspective on God and give them the opportunity to pray” (Interview 23.5). In a sense there is a separation of the religious practice of the teacher

and his duty or commitment to the class.

One student was worried about ‘forcing her beliefs on the children’ but saw her returning to Church as a good example for the pupils she was teaching. This was one of the few comments which in some way linked the religious identity of the teacher with their class. Other students mentioned the concern about forcing their beliefs (Interview 2.17 and 8.11) or ‘inflicting beliefs’ as mentioned by another student. I found that the students who worried about this were ones who, for the most part, professed a belief and had a religious identity and so were happy to stick to the programme as laid out. One student felt that her own personal beliefs would come out in the lessons, even without meaning to. I got the sense that this comment came from a point where the student was a believer, was comfortable with her faith and saw it as an important part of her life. It is only a matter of logic that this would then extend into every aspect of her life, including her teaching. These answers resonates with the two dimensional approach of Pohan & Aquilar’s (2001) regarding personal beliefs and professionalism. While, for the most part, these students do not display a huge disparity between their personal beliefs and their professionalism, it is a matter of unease.

One of the answers that I found particularly pertinent to this research question was the student who told me that in religion she had done a lot of discussion. This discussion worked well in the classroom, but the point that was interesting was that the student felt that she was learning from the pupils and what they had to offer to the discussion. Student 11 had a similar experience with the inquisitive nature of the children and their awareness of their faith and their belief on God.

I would like to make one remark regarding school patronage and management which is a current issue. With the arrival of a new government in Ireland in February 2011, the Minister for Education and Skills, Ruairi Quinn immediately launched the Forum on

Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector (April 2011) under the chairmanship of Professor John Coolahan. While this happened after all the student interviews had taken place, it is clear from some of the responses in the interviews that this was an issue that was on the minds of some of the students. The reform of the denominational system of school patronage and management has been a topic of public conversation and debate for a number of years and this is alluded to on more than one occasion by interviewees. As in the case of personal justification of underdeveloped religious opinions and attitudes, one student mentioned the role of the Churches in schools. When asked, ‘what exactly was the role of the Churches with regard to the management of the school’, one interviewee was unable to tell me, although she was adamant that the Church had no place in primary schools.

Finally for a number of students, their religious identity was not about teaching religion, but about the attitude they had when dealing with the children in their classes: instilling empathy, praying with the children, and bringing religion into other subjects. For Student 19 there was no way of separating religious identity from the other aspects of her identity and so there was no way of separating her teacher identity from her religious identity and that when teaching, “it’s not just the religion part coming out, just kind of all of me” (Interview 19.17).

Chapter 9 - Conclusion

9.1 Thesis Summary

This study is a contribution to the field of student teacher religious identity and teacher education. It was conducted with a small cohort of Irish students at three Colleges of Education in the Republic of Ireland at a particular time, of which twenty-two were in their third year of study and eight were in their fourth year. These students are well educated and for the most part articulate. They represent neither the entire population of emerging adults in Ireland, nor the entire student teacher population, but there is richness in what they have said in the interviews and a great deal that can be learned from them. What might be claimed, methodologically, is that this is a small study which is a contribution to theory rather than to statistics.

My overriding dynamic was to research identity, which leads to self-understanding, which leads to narrative. This narrative then forms the basis of the interview stage of the research. This was a study in which identity was perceived in a socio-cultural rather than cognitive/psychological framework. There are three research questions – What characterises the religious identity of a Primary School Student Teacher? How does a Primary School Student Teacher understand their Religious Identity? How does their religious identity influence their teaching religion in Primary Schools? I began with placing the study in an historical and social context, thereby explaining and describing both the world that the vast majority of these teachers grew up in and also the historical situation which has left Ireland with such a unique modal of government funded denominational primary education. I also explained what was required of teachers in school under Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland patronage in terms of their respective religious education programmes.

The literature review covered three distinct parts: Identity Theory, Teacher Identity, and Religious Identity. In terms of identity theory, I postulated an identity metanarrative

which was drawn from the literature: that identity had elements of both the internal and external and that it was a combination of both the individual and the relational. Identity was dynamic in terms of role, and also by the way it assimilates and accommodates. Finally it was reflexive, so that it was examined and considered over the life of the individual. The two areas of literature reviewed with respect to teacher identity were role and professional identity and, because these were student teachers, emerging teacher identity. Much of what was discussed here can also be referred back to the elements of the identity metanarrative. Finally religious identity was discussed – in terms of the public and the private dimensions of religious identity.

As the first research question dealt with what characterises religious identity, I sought to create a ‘thick description’ and turned to the writings of Karl Rahner. With his Theological Anthropology, Epistemology and Pastoral Theology, I hoped to provide richness to the description of religious identity and the possibility of bringing a deeper level of questioning at the interrogative stage. Rahner’s anthropocentricity and subsequent description of the human being as an existential unity, as transcendent, as responsible and free and as dependent gives a greater philosophical richness than is possible in identity theory. His epistemology is grounded in the importance of experience in the life and understanding of the human being and his Pastoral Theology situates this study in the context of the lived reality of the student teachers and the various religious denominations to which they may or may not belong.

From these elements just described I constructed a theoretical framework which would be broad enough to encompass what the data might reveal. I framed the research as an intrinsic, revelatory, and configurative and as a single case study. This type of case study allowed for description, explanation and interpretation rather than theory generation. As I was interested in thick description, I was drawn to methods which

would best facilitate this and, based on a double hermeneutic, hoped to interpret the interpreted faith lives and religious identity of the student teachers, and which in Ricoeur's words would be, "a cloth woven of stories told" (Ricoeur 1988, 246)

With due regard for ethics, confidentiality and researcher positioning, I conducted the thirty interview between November 2010 and March 2011. These were then transcribed and I spent summer 2011 with the collected data which was manually coded and discussed in chapter 7. The data was analysed and the research questions were answered in chapter 8, which offered a thick description of these student teachers and a continuum of identity typologies, and some findings regarding the relationship between student teacher religious identity and teaching religion in the classroom. These findings are summed up in the following section.

9.2 Major Findings

- The first finding is the importance of the use of 'thick description' when undertaking research of this kind. It was imperative that the voice of this particular group of students was heard, understood and acknowledged and I this is accomplished here.
- Findings regarding the first two research questions:
 - The students can be placed along a fourfold typology: conventional religious; creatively religious; deist; agnostic/atheist. The vast majority of the students fitted into the first two categories.
 - For the students, religious identity is very individuated and there is a separation of the spiritual from the religious. There is a decline of religious practice, which was seen as a matter of choice rather than obligation.

- There is a gradual generational decrease in religious practice. While the religious practice of parents and grandparents is admired, it is not something to be emulated.
- While religious identity might be individuated, the importance of ‘the other’ was prominent with these students and they still relied on their family, college community and home community.
- Many students were still well-disposed to the Catholic Church and an important facet of Irish life, although some issues regarding the Church are very much in the mind of the students. Traditional issues like divorce or contraception were hardly mentioned, leaving one to surmise that they are not issues that the students have a problem with.
- Some students had difficulty in articulating Christian thought or sentiments and there was a lack of religious language/articulation. This might be attributed to poor religious education at primary and secondary level.
- Findings regarding the third research question:
 - Attitudes regarding teaching religion come from three sources: their own educational background; what is taught in the Colleges of Education; attitudes picked up during Teaching Practice
 - Consequently there is a general dislike for *Alive-O* programme, which is sometimes unwarranted and not grounded in any evidence. For them, it is old-fashioned and boring and they have difficulty with the concepts.
 - As a result they are happy to teach whatever they see as appropriate and pick and choose the topics. Teaching religious education and the content of the classes is a matter of personal choice, rather than curriculum led.
 - There is a conflict between an emerging professionalism and their personal attitudes to teaching religion. Some of the students lack the specialised knowledge in religious education which marks them as professionals.
 - There is a limited understanding of bringing a personal religious identity into the classroom, or bringing a religious identity to the other aspects of the classroom.

9.3 Major Recommendations

The findings would indicate four recommendations in the area of Teacher Education.

- Religious Education at the Colleges of Education should not just be a preparation for teaching religion in the classroom, but should assist the student teachers in expanding their own knowledge, considering the gaps in knowledge that might exist from a poor primary or secondary religious education.
- While a College of Education is not a seminary or place of religious formation, some opportunity to assist students with developing their understanding of a religious identity would assist them in teaching religion in the classroom, should they be open to the idea. If a College of Education has a particular denominational ethos, then it would naturally follow that the students would be assisted in exploring this ethos in their own development.
- Teacher Education should include work on reconciling personal beliefs and professionalism, so that student teachers can negotiate this difficult terrain of a prescribed religious education programme and what they personally felt competent and comfortable teaching in the classroom, thereby avoiding phrases such as, “I don’t do prayers”, “I don’t want to force my beliefs on the pupils”, etc.
- Student should be assisted in exploring how their religious identity is not just confined to the teaching of religious education but is something that might permeate their entire school day.

9.4 Limitations

The limitations of this research fall into two categories – limitations with the sampling and limitations in the methodology.

9.4.1 Sampling Limitations

Of the five colleges of Education in the Republic of Ireland, only three permitted me to interview their students. While there is no reason to suggest that the students in the other two colleges would answer any differently to those from the three that did, it would have been a more comprehensive study if all five Colleges of Education had

been willing to take part. I also did not interview any students from the Hibernia course, which has become increasingly popular in recent years. Students on this course tend to be a little older, often coming to teaching as a second career and their narrative would have enriched the data. I also did not interview students who were studying the eighteen month diploma course at the Colleges of Education that provide this course. Again these students tend to be older and coming from other professional and academic qualifications and their narrative may have provided richness. There were two other students who were not included in the research – students at Colleges of Education in Northern Ireland or students from abroad. Considering the research undertaken by Coll (2009) this might have been beneficial as a comparison with the case study of Irish student teachers.

With regard to limitations within the sample, the age profile of the students, which were all but one in their early twenties, might have impacted on the findings. There was some homogeneity in their experiences and in the narrative from the interviews. Some of the interviews went better than others. For the most part I was confined to no more than two interviews per day, but on occasions when, due to circumstances of availability, I was obliged to conduct more than two interviews, I found myself tired and perhaps not as attentive to everything that the student was saying, thereby possibly missing something mentioned casually in the interview, which if explored more may have been significant. Limitations of time also meant that I was unable to redact interviews immediately and therefore subsequent interviews did not benefit from my experience of earlier interviews.

9.4.2 Limitations in Methodology

I chose case study for the reasons mentioned earlier, and interviews seemed to me to be the best method of data collection. However other methods may have been useful and

in not including them, I acknowledge the limitations in the research which their absence might indicate. I did not employ textual analysis to any documents from the Roman Catholic or Church of Ireland Bishops or their commissions and secretariats for Education. While these documents are mentioned, in particular with regard to the philosophy behind Catechetical and Religious Education Programmes, they were not analyzed at any great length. This was also the case with documents from the Congregation for Catholic Education at the Vatican. Early on in the preparation for the data collection I thought of asking student teachers to keep a diary of thoughts regarding teaching religious education. I was concerned that this might be too time-consuming for student already busy with their course work. Furthermore, as it was indicated to me informally that this was one of the reasons why a college had declined my request to interview students, I dropped the idea altogether, and this robbed the research of the richness of the immediate comments and thoughts of teachers in the classroom. As most of the teachers undergo observation during teaching practice, I decided against requesting permission to observe the student as they taught religious education. I acknowledge that all these limitation may have an impact on the findings.

9.5 Areas of Further Research

The areas of further research might be seen in two ways – either work that I would be interested in undertaking in the future, or work that others might find useful having considered the content and findings of the research. Personally, the areas of further research are somewhat indicated by the limitations previous discussed.

I would be interested in continuing the research in the other Colleges of Education in Ireland, both North and South, and also further afield in the United Kingdom, America and Canada. I would still be motivated by the three research questions, and think that

the data gathered and interpreted would have a contribution to the area of student teacher religious identity in the wider world.

I would like to create a longitudinal study from this research and would be interested in interviewing these students in the future, perhaps at five year intervals for a number of years. The data indicated small differences in the answers given by the fourth year students compared to the third year students, and I would be interested in interviewing these students in the future to see how the area of religious identity has changed and/or grown and/or developed over the years since college.

The findings and recommendations would indicate that I am interested in teacher education and curriculum development, in particular with regard to a deeper understanding of the place of faith and spirituality in the lives of student teachers. While I am not currently employed in any of the Colleges of Education, I would encourage anyone who is to create the space where the richness of religious identity might be explored, challenged, and discussed as something that is valuable to the faith life and future teaching life of students. While the Colleges of Education are not seminaries or houses of formation, they should be places where these profound realities can be acknowledged and helped to grow.

9.6 To Conclude...

The opening section of this thesis has the Matthew Arnold poem, *The Buried Life*, which contains the lines:

*But often, in the world's most crowded streets,
But often, in the din of strife,
There rises an unspeakable desire
After the knowledge of our buried life;*

What I hoped to find in this research was evidence of the 'buried life'. Not 'buried' in the sense that it is gone and forgotten, but in the sense that it is a source of life that

comes from deep within the students. It is a life which knows and acknowledges the presence of the divine within it, even if that presence is far from the surface of that life. I hoped to explore the knowledge that these student teachers might have of that life, even among the ‘crowded streets’ of their lives and emerging careers.

This group of students provided a rich canvas of stories, comments, thoughts, ideas, and aspirations. No two students were the same and all contributed greatly to this research. The thick description given here is evidence of the horizon of ultimate concern – the transcendent. God is present in their lives as they seek to make meaning of their spiritual side. God is present as they move along the transitioning moments of their lives, and is present in their moments of happiness and trouble. Their understanding is at times shallow and on occasion profound. They struggle to make meaning and sense of the transcendent, but it is the willingness to enter the struggle which is the strongest evidence for the presence of God in their lives.

For the most part and based on the evidence of this research that, these students are thinking deeply. What was obvious from the interview analysis was maturing young people, some still in transition, some still finding their place in life, and some who were well on their way. What is left to say is that their religious identity is rich and varied, sometimes strong, sometimes vulnerable. It does not contain indicators of the religious identity as seen in the past – this is not the religious identity of their parents. It is an identity forged by their experiences and done in dialogue with the community of their family, friends and colleagues. It is at times reliant on the *other* and more so the product of their choices, their decisions and their judgements. It would be easy to stereotype a group of college students as being this way or that, but this research has shown a rich and diverse group who confound many of the stereotypes and bring fresh insight to the study of religious identity.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Sample Letter to Principals/Presidents of Colleges of Education

Appendix 2 – Ethics Statement

Appendix 3 – Student Information Sheet

Appendix 4 – Informed Interview Consent Form

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Appendix 7 - Codes Used in Data Analysis

Appendix 8 – Codes as Used in Data Analysis

Appendix 1 – Sample Letter to Principal/Presidents of Colleges of Education

To: Principal, College of Education

Dear _____,

My name is John-Paul Sheridan. I am a part-time PhD student at Trinity College, in the School of Education. I am a priest of the Diocese of Ferns and the Diocesan Advisor for Primary School Catechetics and I lecture part-time at Froebel College of Education.

I write to request permission to interview a group of third year students as an aid to the research that I am conducting as part of the PhD at Trinity College, Dublin.

My area of interest is the religious identity of primary school student teachers, explored through the spectrum of the Theological and Philosophical Anthropology of the theologian, Karl Rahner. The provisional title of the thesis is: *The Theological Anthropology of Karl Rahner as a Method to Investigate Religious Identity Typologies in Irish Primary School Student Teachers*. My research question is as follows: how will an understanding of their religious identity have an influence on the future teaching of the required religious education programme by primary school pre-service teachers?

The aim of this research is in two parts:

- To investigate religious identity typologies in primary school student teachers from the theological anthropology of Karl Rahner. I will add to it from literature on identity theory, teacher identity and religious identity. The objective is to form a rich, thick description of religious identity from these theories, but with a particular focus on Rahner.
- To examine any link that may exist between their understanding of religious identity and their teaching of religious education.

There has been very little written in this area and I hope that this research will have something to offer to an understanding of Irish primary school teachers from one specific angle – their religious identity. I hope that it might contribute to how teachers are prepared for the teaching of religion in the classroom. While those who teach religion in the teacher training colleges

might train student teachers to impart the facts of religious education, helping them to become aware of their religious identity it is another matter entirely. Finally, I hope that it will make a contribution to the area of teacher education in the light of the mandatory teaching of religious education in Irish primary schools.

I am asking to interview ten third year students. I would like to opportunity to talk to the entire group of third year students and invite them to participate. From this I hope to choose according to *purposeful random sampling*. The reason for this is to permit bias within a purposeful category.

I hope to conduct a series of semi-structured interviews. I will also ask interviewees to keep a brief diary during teaching practice on issues relating to religious identity, teaching religion etc. This research is conducted solely as part of my doctoral work and is not funded by any other person or organization.

Informed consent, in which the participants will be given full information about the possible consequences and dangers, will be obtained from those who are chosen to be interviewed. Participants will also have an opt-out clause, should they choose to withdraw from the interviews.

Participants will be given a copy of the summary report of the findings.

I have attached the ethics statement to this letter, which outlines issues with regard to confidentiality and anonymity, data collection and storage, and informed consent. This is the statement which will be given to all those who express an interest in becoming involved.

Should you have any queries, or wish to talk to me at any length, please don't hesitate to contact me, and I would be happy to discuss the research project. You might also wish to speak to my supervisor at Trinity College, Dr. Aidan Seery

Yours Sincerely

John-Paul Sheridan

Encl.1

Appendix 2 – Ethics Statement

Confidentiality and Anonymity

- Confidentiality will be observed at all times. Every effort will be made to protect the identity of the interviewee, through the use of pseudonyms. Any facts or indicators that might lead to the identifications of an interviewee (including college that the participant attends) will be altered, without affecting the integrity of the research.
- A careful study of transcripts and the written text will be undertaken to insure that nothing in the interviews could be traced back to the participant.

Data Collection and Storage

- Interviews will be conducted in a neutral venue that will be mutually agreed.
- Interviews will take an hour to an hour and a half. If required there will be follow-up interviews and/or meetings for issues of clarification
- Interviews will be transcribed and access to those transcriptions will be limited to myself and my supervisor, Dr. Aidan Seery, at the School of Education in Trinity College. Participants will be given a copy of the transcript of their own interview. No one else will have access to the material.
- Data files and other written material will be stored by me in a secure location in my home. Electronic material will be stored on an external hard drive and will be stored in the same location. It will be kept for a maximum of five years after completion of the PhD and thereafter destroyed.
- On completion of the study, participants will be given a summary of the findings.

Informed Consent

- Voluntary informed consent will be required of each participant at interview stage. It will allow the participant freedom to withdraw from the study at any stage.

Appendix 3 – Student Information Sheet

Student Teacher Religious Identity and Primary Education

*The Theological Anthropology of Karl Rahner
as a Method to Investigate Religious Identity Typologies
in Irish Primary School Student Teachers*

“The shift to secularity ...consists, among other things, of a move from a society where belief in God is unchallenged and indeed, unproblematic, to one in which it is understood to be one option among others, and frequently not the easiest to embrace” (Charles Taylor *A Secular Age* 2007, 3).

In Irish society today, belief in God and by implication a religious identity is something that can no longer be taken for granted. For student teachers in a college of education where they are trained for the teaching of religious education, an understanding of a religious identity may or may not be important. This research is aimed at investigating religious identity in student teachers - how will an understanding of their religious identity have an influence on the future teaching of the required religious education programme by primary school pre-service teachers?

I hope to use some of the writing of the theologian, Karl Rahner to investigate religious identity as well as some of the literature on teacher identity, and religious identity.

I am interested in what you might have to say about your religious identity. I will be talking at the end of class on Monday, April 19th, and in September I hope to do interviews with students who are willing to participate.

I would appreciate your help.

Rev. John-Paul Sheridan
School of Education
University of Dublin
Trinity College

sheridj@tdc.ie

Appendix 4 – Informed Interview Consent Form

INFORMED INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM FOR PHD THESIS

TRINITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN

January 2010

Study Title: *The Theological Anthropology of Karl Rahner as a Theory to Investigate the Religious Identity of Irish Primary School Student Teacher*

Researcher: John-Paul Sheridan, PhD candidate – Trinity College

Purpose of the Research:

- To investigate religious identity typologies in primary school student teachers from the theological anthropology of Karl Rahner. I will add to it from literature on identity theory, teacher identity and religious identity. The objective is to form a rich, thick description of religious identity from these theories, but with a particular focus on Rahner.
- To examine any link that may exist between their understanding of religious identity and their teaching of religious education.

What You Will Be Asked to Do In the Research:

- Take part in an interview lasting an hour to an hour and a half. You will be asked a series of prepared questions in relation to your personal faith, your religious identity, your emerging identity as a teacher and the teaching of religious education in the classroom as you have experienced it so far.
- To keep a short diary during your next teaching practice

What I Hope from the Responses

- This research is not simply about church attendance, ascent to dogma, the current problem of organized religion...etc. I would like that participants would have the

opportunity to look at their religious identity from a more rounded view-point

Risks and Discomforts:

- I do not foresee any risks or discomforts with your participation in this research. You have an opportunity at any time to withdraw from the research, should you wish.

Benefits of the Research

- The research may assist in the education of student teachers in the future in the area of religious education.
- Participation in this research may give you an opportunity to think about your own faith and religious identity and its importance or otherwise in your life and future career.

Voluntary Participation

- Participation in this research is entirely voluntary. Willing participants will be picked according to purposeful random sampling. Therefore agreeing to participate may not necessarily mean participation.
- Participants are free to refuse to answer any question put to them, and are at liberty to withdraw from the research at any time.
- Agreeing or declining to volunteer, refusing to answer questions or withdrawal from the research will not affect your academic career and will have no standing with any college authority either now or in the future.

Confidentiality

- Confidentiality will be maintained to the fullest extent possible by law.
- Every effort will be made to protect the identity of the interviewee, through the use of pseudonyms. Any facts or indicators that might lead to the identifications of an interviewee (including the college that the participant attends) will be altered, without affecting the integrity of the research. All information you supply during the research will be held in confidence.
- Anonymity will be scrupulously maintained. All data will be securely stored by me and the only other person who will have access will be my supervisor.
- A careful study of transcripts and the written text will be undertaken to insure that nothing in the interviews could be traced back to the participant.

Data Collection and Storage

- Interviews will be conducted in a neutral venue that will be mutually agreed.
- Interviews will take an hour to an hour and a half. If required there will be follow-up interviews and/or meetings for issues of clarification
- Interviews will be transcribed and access to those transcriptions will be limited to myself and my supervisor, Dr. Aidan Seery, at the School of Education in Trinity College. Participants will be given a copy of the transcript of their own interview. No one else will have access to the material.
- Data files and other written material will be stored by me in a secure location in my home. Electronic material will be stored on an external hard drive and will be stored in the same location. It will be kept for a maximum of five years after completion of the PhD and thereafter destroyed.
- On completion of the study, participants will be given a summary of the findings.

Questions about the Research

Are you happy that after reading this and listening to the presentation you understand fully the nature of this research? If you have any questions about the research in general or about your participation in the research, please feel free to contact me at the following contact points:

John-Paul Sheridan 053-9129288 (Home); 086-8561526 (Mobile); sheridj@tdc.ie

Consent Form

If you agree to participate in this interview, please sign below:

I _____ consent to participate in the PhD thesis research conducted by John-Paul Sheridan. I have understood the nature of the research and am willing to participate. My signature below indicates my consent

Participant

Date

I can be contacted at: _____ (e-mail address)

I acknowledge the consent given by _____

Researcher

Date

Appendix 5 – Points Mentioned at the Beginning of the Interview

- 16 questions headings
- Avoid using personal details – names, parish names, religious denomination, county, college etc.
- Take your time when answering the question – don't feel that you have to answer immediately, just because the recorder is running.
- If you don't wish to answer a question, please state this. No explanation is required.
- Answer honestly – I am interested in your thoughts, ideas and opinions & not what you think I might like to hear.
- If I look up or down, or write stuff, don't worry.
- I also might repeat myself, don't worry.
- Are you comfortable? If at any point you are feeling uncomfortable, or wish to stop the recording, please feel free to state this.

Appendix 6 – Interview Questions

- Background
 - Tell me something about your background: family, parents, siblings, upbringing, rural/urban?
 - Tell me something about your schools
 - How have you managed the transition from home and school to college and what were the major challenges?
 - What are your interests, hobbies, etc.?
 - What have been some of the influences on your life so far? People, ideas, interests.
- Identity
 - If I was to say the word ‘identity’ to you. What kind of ideas/thoughts come to mind?
 - What are some of the aspects of your life that you would point to personally and say – “That’s part of my identity”?
- Identity as Dynamic Configuration
 - What has stayed the same with you and what has changed in the last few year in terms of identity?
- Rahner – Product of That Which Is Not of Ourselves
 - What are you a product of?
 - Education
 - The experience of life?
 - Family/Friends
 - What is self-constructed?
- Rahner – Questioning
 - When it comes to your own life, what are some of the things that you are likely to question?
 - If you question, where does the questioning lead to?
 - Have you ever wondered what life is all about?
- Rahner – Being-in-Relation and Social Identity
 - What groups do you belong to? What are you like in those groups?
 - Are you a leader or a follower?
 - Explain some of the relationships that are important to you.
 - Has your time in college enhanced your understanding of relationship?
 - Did you feel part of any community as you were growing up?
 - Do you see the college as a community?

- Do you have any sense of what community means to you?
- How do you create it, maintain it, or destroy it?
- Self-Understanding/Concept – Ricoeur/Teacher Identity/Emerging Teacher Identity
 - What made you want to be a teacher?
 - Who or what were the influences, role-models?
 - Did your social nature have any bearing on your choice to become a teacher?
 - Tell me something about your experience of teaching practice?
 - How have your attitudes to teaching changed over the years of teaching practice?
 - Are you a teacher?
 - What makes you a teacher now?
 - Apart from college and teaching practice, what else do you need to become a teacher?
 - What things about teaching matter to you most?
- Religion in Ireland Today
 - Would you talk a little about religion in Ireland today?
 - Do you think that Ireland is still a country where religion is important?
 - What do people do instead of religious practice today?
- Religious Identity – General
 - Is religion a good thing? (Smith)
 - Is religion a personal thing or a social thing, or what the relationship between the two is?
 - Some people say that they don't go to Mass, but are very spiritual.
 - Do you agree/disagree with that?
 - How are they religious, instead of attendance at Mass/Services?
 - If someone said to you "I am a religious person", what would that mean to you?
 - Apart from attendance at church, what are the things, actions, attitudes that characterize someone as being a religious person?
 - If I was to ask you about a religious person, would you have someone in mind? Tell me about them?
- Religious Identity – Specific
 - Was religion important in your family when you were growing up?
 - Have you reacted towards or against that background?
 - Are you or have you been in the past, involved in your parish at home?
 - How important is religion to you in daily life? (Smith)
 - Do you give to charity, do any charity work or volunteer?
 - On what occasions do you pray?
 - Do you rely on your spiritual side at any points in your day?

- Have there been any major turning points in your life?
 - Has religion played any part in those turning points? (Smith)
 - Do you feel close to God? Do you think God is close to you? (Smith)
 - Do you ever talk about religion to your family/friends?
 - Do you think you are a religious person?
 - Do you do anything that develops your own faith (Coll)
 - What are some of the religious aspects of your life that you would point to personally and say – “That’s part of my identity”?
 - Does your religious side have any part to play in that identity?
- Identity as Dynamic Configuration
 - What has stayed the same with you and what has changed in the last few years in terms of religious identity? How have your attitudes to religion changed over the years?
 - Do you see any link between your own religious identity and the parish you come from, or for the wider society?
- Rahner – Product of That Which Is Not of Ourselves
 - Has your religion had any part in who you are as a person?
 - Is there anything spiritual that attracts you that is not from your particular faith tradition; something that you have discovered yourself?
- Images of God/Imagination
 - If you were to use a word or phrase to sum up your understanding of God, what might it be?
 - Do you have a religious image at home/that you wear? Where did you get it from?
 - What image of God sits most comfortably with you?
- College and Religion
 - Talk a little about religious education in the College of Education?
 - Did you enjoy religious courses in College?
 - Was your time at College nourishing for your spiritual side – prayer, Mass, religious services?
- Religious Teacher Identity
 - Are you currently teaching religion in your class? What is it like? Do you think it has any effect on you?
 - Is your faith a private matter when it comes to teaching in school?
 - Does your religious identity have an influence on your teaching – even if you are not teaching religion?

- Identity Salience
 - How do you view your religious side in respect of the other sides of your identity?
 - What makes your religious identity different to other aspects of your identity?

Appendix 7 – Codes Used in Data Analysis

AF	Affect	EX	Experience(s)	PT	Parent
AO	Alive-O	EXL	Experiences in Life	PV	Private
AT	Attitudes	FA	Faith	PY	Prayer
AU	Authority	FL	Follower	QU	Questioning
AYT	Are You a Teacher?	FM	Family	QQ	Quotation
B	Bad	FR	Friends	R	Role
BE	Bible	G	Good	RE	Religious Education
BF	Boyfriend	GD	God	RL	Religion/Religious
Bullying		GP	Groups	RNS	Reasons
C	Comment	HM	Homosexuality	RP	Replaced
Cert	RE Certificate	ID	Identity	RS	Relationships
CG	Change/Changes/ Changed	IM	Image	SAL	Salience
		IN	Influences	SC	Scandals
CGD	Close to God	IP	Important	Science	
CH	Church	LD	Leader	SCH	School
CHT	Characteristics	MS	Mass	SF	Self
CL	College	ML	Morality/Morals	SL	Social
CLN	Child/Children	M	Mother	SP	Spirituality
CM	Community	N	No	SPnRL	Spirituality not Religion
CN	Constructed	N/C-TP	Needs Apart from College & TP	SPT	Sport
CNsf	Self Constructed			Sunday	
CSA	Child Sexual Abuse	NY	Not Yet	SY	Society
CT	Celtic Tiger	OBJ	Object	TG	Teaching
CU	Culture	P	Place	TGmm	Teaching Matters Most
CY	Charity	PB	Public	TP	Teaching Practice
D	Dad	PD	Product	TR	Teacher
DK	Don't Know	PH	Parish	WW	What Made You Want
DS	Discussion	PL	Personal	Y	Yes
DV	Divorce	PN	Person	YU	You
ED	Education	PP	Parish Priest		
EV	Environment	PR	Priest		

Appendix 8 – Codes as Used in Data Analysis

Alive-O (6)	Close to God (52)	Child Sexual Abuse (19)	God (26)
ao 07.17	cgd 10.09		
ao 15.15	cgd/gd 03.05	csa 02.02	gd 01.09
ao 18.11	cgd/gd 07.14	csa 03.01	gd 02.10
ao 18.20	cgd/gd 13.13	csa 03.02	gd 05.10
ao 23.18	cgd/gd 17.15	csa 06.08	gd 05.11
ao 26.09	cgd/gd 23.06	csa 07.10	gd 06.13
	cgd/gd-dk 20.08	csa 07.12	gd 09.10
	cgd/gd-n 12.12	csa 08.08	gd 12.11
	cgd/gd-y 01.06	csa 09.06	gd 18.12
Are You a Teacher (20)	cgd/gd-y 02.07	csa 09.08	gd 24.04
	cgd/gd-y 04.06	csa 09.10	gd 24.10
ayt 02.18	cgd/gd-y 06.13	csa 11.14	gd 30.13
ayt 10.06	cgd/gd-y 08.08	csa 13.09	gd/im 01.09
ayt 19.09	cgd/gd-y 09.10	csa 14.08	gd/im 03.07
ayt/cht 10.06	cgd/gd-y 11.09	csa 15.13	gd/im 08.09
ayt/cht 14.05	cgd/gd-y 15.13	csa 16.08	gd/im 11.10
ayt/cht 17.09	cgd/gd-y 16.11	csa 23.08	gd/im 13.14
ayt/dk 11.05	cgd/gd-y 19.14	csa 25.09	gd/im 14.09
ayt/n 22.05	cgd/gd-y 22.07	csa 26.08	gd/im 15.14
ayt/y 01.15	cgd/gd-y 24.08	csa 29.12	gd/im 20.10
ayt/y 05.07	cgd/gd-y 25.10		gd/im 21.05/13
ayt/y 06.07	cgd/gd-y 26.08	Celtic Tiger	gd/im 21.13
ayt/y 08.04	cgd/gd-y 28.07		gd/im 25.12
ayt/y 09.06	cgd/gd-y 29.11	ct 01.02	gd/im 29.13
ayt/y 12.08	cgd/gd-y 30.12	ct/rl 12.09	in/gd 23.10
ayt/y 14.05	cgd/gd-y.cm 21.12		pd/gd 06.14
ayt/y 15.08	cgd/yu 07.14		pd/gd 09.11
ayt/y 16.07	cgd/yu 13.13	Close to God (continued)	
ayt/y 17.09	cgd/yu 17.14		
ayt/y 20.05	cgd/yu-n 04.05	cgd/yu-y 15.13	
ayt/y 21.08	cgd/yu-n 06.12	cgd/yu-y 16.11	
	cgd/yu-n 08.08	cgd/yu-y 19.14	
	cgd/yu-n 12.12	cgd/yu-y 22.07	
	cgd/yu-n 20.08	cgd/yu-y 24.08	
	cgd/yu-n 21.12	cgd/yu-y 25.10	
	cgd/yu-n 23.06	cgd/yu-y 26.07	
	cgd/yu-y 01.06	cgd/yu-y 28.06	
	cgd/yu-y 02.06	cgd/yu-y 29.11	
	cgd/yu-y 03.04	cgd/yu-y 30.12	
	cgd/yu-y 09.10	cgd/yu-y 28.06	
	cgd/yu-y 11.09	cgd/yu-y 29.11	
	cgd/yu-y 14.08	cgd/yu-y 30.12	

Needs other than College and TP (22)	Leader/Follower (29)	Questioning (31)	College (10)
n/c-tp 01.14	fl 03.08	qu 05.03	
n/c-tp 02.15	fl 06.05	qu 05.04	cl/cht 07.02
n/c-tp 03.11	fl 08.03	qu 07.06	cl/cm 03.08
n/c-tp 05.07	fl 09.04	qu 07.12	cl/cm 03.09
n/c-tp 06.07	fl 10.04	qu 08.03	cl/cm 13.06
n/c-tp 08.04	fl 11.03	qu 10.04	cl/cm 17.07
n/c-tp 09.06	ld 01.11	qu 12.04	cl/cm 20.04
n/c-tp 10.06	ld 04.09	qu 14.03	cl/cm 21.07
n/c-tp 11.06	ld 07.06	qu 15.05	cl/cm 22.03
n/c-tp 13.08	ld 14.03	qu 17.04	cl/fr 19.07
n/c-tp 14.05	ld 15.06	qu 18.03	cl/id 27.04
n/c-tp 14.06	ld 19.06	qu 19.05	
n/c-tp 15.08	ld 20.04	qu 21.05	
n/c-tp 16.08	ld 22.03	qu 23.11	Charity (25)
n/c-tp 17.09	ld 23.09	qu 26.02	
n/c-tp 19.09	ld 23.13	qu 26.03	cy 05.10
n/c-tp 20.06	ld 24.05	qu 27.03	cy 06.11
n/c-tp 26.05	ld 26.03	qu 29.12	cy 07.13
n/c-tp 27.05	ld 29.05	qu 30.06	cy 08.07
n/c-tp 28.04	ld=fl 02.12	qu/au 01.10	cy 10.09
n/c-tp 29.07	ld=fl 05.04	qu/be 01.10	cy 14.07
n/c-tp 30.10	ld=fl 07.06	qu/ed 09.04	cy 15.12
	ld=fl 12.05	qu/fa-gd 14.03	cy 17.13
School (3)	ld=fl 16.05	qu/ml 01.10	cy 20.01-3
	ld=fl 17.06	qu/n 16.04	cy 20.09
bullying 09.03	ld=fl 18.04	qu/pl 13.10	cy 23.05
bullying 12.07	ld=fl 21.05	qu/rl 02.11	cy 23.07
bullying 13.05	ld=fl 25.05	qu/rl 03.08	cy 26.07
sch 05.10	ld=fl 30.07	qu/rl 08.03	cy 29.10
sch 27.04		qu/rl-sch 12.06	cy 29.11
	Community (11)	qu/rl 07.16	cy 29.12
			cy/rl 01.05
	cm 04.10		cy/rl 02.05
	cm 05.06		cy/rl 20.09
	cm 06.01		cy/rl 20.10
	cm 14.04		cy/rl 30.12
	cm 16.03		cy/rl-id 29.10
	cm 19.07		cy/sp 15.12
	cm 24.06		cy/tg 04.09
	cm 27.04		cy/tg 17.14
	cm/cht 09.05		cy/ex 12.04
	cm/cht 29.06		
	cm/pl-sl 22.04		

Religious Identity - General (24)	Mass (15)	Prayer (17)	Spirituality not Religion (26)
rl/id 01.06/07/08	ms 08.06	py 01.05	spnrl 01.04/7
rl/id 02.08	ms 11.08	py 02.06	spnrl 02.03
rl/id 03.05	ms 12.09/12	py 03.04/06	spnrl 03.03
rl/id 04.06	ms 16.09/10	py 04.05	spnrl 04.03/11
rl/id 04.11	ms 18.17	py 06.11	spnrl 05.03/09
rl/id 06.09	ms 23.08	py 07.13	spnrl 06.10
rl/id 06.11	ms 24.07/09	py 09.09	spnrl 07.10/12
rl/id 06.13	ms 25.08	py 11.08	spnrl 08.06
rl/id 08.11	ms 26.01/06	py 13.13	spnrl 09.07
rl/id 09.09/13	ms/cht 17.11	py 14.07	spnrl 10.08
rl/id 12.14	ms/exl 13.13	py 15.13	spnrl 11.07
rl/id 13.13/14	rl/id-ms 09.07	py 16.10	spnrl 12.10
rl/id 14.08/10	rl/id-ms 12.11,15,16	py 17.14	spnrl 13.10/12
rl/id 18.17	rl/id-pl,ms 22.06/08	py 18.15	spnrl 14.07
rl/id 19.05/09		py 22.07	spnrl 15.11
rl/id-pl 21.11/12	Religious Identity - Characteristics (6)	py 23.05	spnrl 16.09
rl/id 25.11		py 26.07	spnrl 17.11
rl/id 26.08	rl/id-cht 06.14		spnrl 18.11
rl/id 27.03	rl/id-cht 06.14	Parish (6)	spnrl 19.11
rl/id 30.12	rl/id-cht 08.07		spnrl 20.07
	rl/id-cht 09.07	ph 02.05	spnrl 21.09
Religious Identity - Family (2)	rl/id-cht 17.12	ph 03.04	spnrl 22.05
	rl/id-cht 22.08	ph 07.13	spnrl 23.03
rl/id-fm 01.05	rl/id-cht 25.10	ph 08.07	spnrl 24.08
rl/id-fm 03.06		ph 17.13	spnrl 25.08
	Spirituality (7)	ph 21.11	spnrl 26.06
Faith (2)			spnrl 28.05
	sp 02.06	Church (3)	spnrl 29.08
fa/pl 06.09,	sp 02.06		spnrl 30.11
fa/pl 19.14	sp 02.06	ch/gaa 07.11	
rl 6.09,6.14	sp 02.06	ch/gaa 07.11	Morality (8)
	sp 05.09	ch/gaa 07.11	
Religious Identity - Bible (2)	sp 19.13	ch/gaa 07.11	ch/gaa 07.11
	sp/pl 06.12	ch 19.12	ch/gaa 07.11
rl/id-be 02.06	sp/pl 21.12	ch 25.09	ch/gaa 07.11
rl/id-be 03.05	sp/pl-cht 23.05		ch/gaa 07.11
	sp/pn 15.11		ml 23.03
Religious Identity - Change (3)			ml/hm 01.07
			ml/hm 13.09
rl/id-cg 13.04			ml/hm 15.13
rl/id-cg 19.15			ml/sc 01.01
rl/id-cg 23.08			rl/ml 01.03
			rl/ml 02.09
			ch/ml 09.14

Identity (13)	Identity - External (9)	RE - Sundry (4)	RE in College (30)
id 04.06	id/fm 03.06	ch/ed 05.04	re/cert 05.12
id 05.02	id/fm 08.02	ch/ed 19.09	re/cert 18.19
id 06.03/04	id/fr 06.04/05		re/cert 27.08
id 10.02	id/pt 09.03	ch/r-ed 19.10	re/cl 01.13
id 13.03	id/fr 19.04	ch/rl-sch 21.10	re/cl 02.13-14
id 19.02/03	id/sl 04.09		rl/cl 03.04 -sp 03.09
id 21.04	id/cu 03.03	RE in School (13)	re/cl 04.10-11
id 24.03	id/cn-ed 01.08/09		re/cl 05.11
id 26.02	id/cn-gd 02.10	rl/sch 04.01/13	re/cl 06.15/16
id 29.03		re/sch 06.10/13	re/cl-ds 06.15
	Identity - Changes (9)	re/sch 10.07/8	re/cl 07.17
Identity Salience (15)		re/sch 11.09	re/cl-af 08.10
	id/cg 02.09	rl/sch 12.16	re/qu 08.08
id/sal 02.08	id/cg 03.06	re/sch 13.02	re/ds 08.09
id/sal 07.18	id/cg 04.07	re/sch 16.01	re/cl-qu 09.12
id/sal 13.16	id/cg 10.02/03	re/sch 18.18	re/cl 10.10
id/sal 15.14	id/cg 12.03	re/sch 19.01	re/cl 11.07/11/13
id/sal 16.14	id/cg 13.05	re/sch 20.10	rl/cl 12.14
id/sal 18.23	id/cg 14.02	re/sch 22.07	rl/cl 13.14/15 -qu.13.04
id/sal 19.18	id/cg 17.04	re/sch 25.12/13	re/cl 14.09
id/sal 20.12	id/cg 19.03	rl/sch 27.01	re/cl 15.14 - 09/10
id/sal 21.15	id/cg 26.02		re/cl 16.02/12/13
id/sal 22.10	id/cg 30.05	Teaching RE (13)	re/cl 17.15/17
id/sal 25.13	id/cg-fr 22.02		re/cl 18.18
id/sal 26.10		tg/tp-re 04.11	rl/cl 19.16
id/sal 28.08	Identity - Characteristics (12)	tg/re 05.07/12-13	re/cl 20.10-11
id/sal 29.14		tg/tp-re 12.13/15	re/cl 21.14
id/sal 30.13/15	id/cht 08.02	tp/re 13.16	rl/cl 23.15
	id/cht 12.03	tp/re 14.09	rl/cl 24.04
Identity - Self Construction (7)	id/cht 17.04	tg/re 15.15/16	re/cl 25.12
	id/cht 20.02	tg/re 16.13	re/cl 26.09
id/cn-sf 01.08	id/cht 26.04	tp/re 18.19	re/cl 28.08
id/cn-sf 02.10	id/cht 28.02	tg/re 20.11	rl/cl 29.13
id/cn-sf 10.03	id/cht 29.04	tg/re 25.12/13	re/cl 30.14
id/cn-sf 19.05	id/cht 30.04	tg/re 27.09	
id/cn-sf 27.03	id/cht 15.03	tg/re-sch 29.13	
id/pl 07.04	id/cht 16.03	tg/re 30.14	
id/pl 08.02/03	id/cht 21.03		
	id/cht 27.02		

Teaching (16)	Teaching Practice (17)	Teacher (9) (Characteristics)	Religion Role (24)
tg/ml 03.08 /af 03.10	tp/at 01.14	tr/cht 05.07	rl/r 01.02/05
tg/at 04.12	tp 04.12	tr/cht 06.07	rl/r 02.02
tg/cht 07.09	tp/at 05.06	tr/cht 08.04	rl/r 05.08
tg 09.01 /id 09.02	tp 06.02/06/08	tr/cht 09.06	rl/r 06.08
tg/at 10.06	tp 07.09/17	tr/cht 11.06	rl/r 07.10/14
tg/at 11.05 /cln 11.12-13	tp 08.04/10	tr/cht 21.07	rl/r 08.05
tg/at 12.07	tp 09.05	tr/cht 24.06	rl/r 09.06
tg 15.16	tp 10.06	tr/cht 29.07	rl/r 10.06
tg 20.05	tp 11.05		rl/r 11.06
tg/at 21.08	tp 12.07	Teaching - Why? (23)	rl/r 12.08
tg 23.17	tp 13.07/08		rl/r 13.09
tg/at 25.07/cht 25.07	tp 14.05	tr/ww 02.12/14	rl/r 14.06
tg/ex 26.04	tp 18.21	tr/ww 03.09	rl/r 15.05/08/09
tg 27.05	tp 19.08/17	tr/ww 04.09/12	rl/r 16.08
tg 29.07 /g 29.08	tp 20.02	tr/ww 05.05/06	rl/r 17.09
tg 30.09	tp 21.08	tr/ww 06.06	rl/r 18.08/09
	tp/at 22.04	tr/ww 07.02/07/08	rl/r 22.05
		tr/ww 09.05	rl/r 23.02
		tr/ww 10.04/5	rl/r 25.07
Teaching – Matters Most (17)	Religious Identity - Teaching (18)	tr/ww 12.06	rl/r 27.06
		tr/ww 14.04/05	rl/r 28.04
tg/mm 01.16	tg/fa-pl 02.17	tr/ww 15.07	rl/r 29.08
tg/mm 02.17	rl/id-tg 03.10/11	tr/ww 16.06	rl/r-fa 04.02
tg/mm 03.12	rl/id-tg 04.11	tr/ww 17.07/08	
tg/mm 06.08	rl/id-tg 05.13	tr/ww 19.07	Religion General (14)
tg/mm 08.05	rl/id-tg 06.17-18	tr/ww 21.07	
tg/mm 10.06	rl/id-tg 08.10-11	tr/ww 22.04	rl 02.02/03
tg/mm 12.08	rl/id-tg 09.12	tr/ww 23.13/16	rl 06.10
tg/mm 13.09	tg/fa-pl 10.11	tr/ww 24.06	rl 07.10/14
tg/mm 14.06	rl/id-tg 13.16	tr/ww 25.06	rl 10.07
tg/mm 15.08	rl/id-tg 17.17	tr/ww 26.04	rl 12.09
tg/mm 19.09	rl/id-tg 19.17	tr/ww 27.05	rl 15.10
tg/mm 20.06	rl/id-tg 20.11/12	tr/ww 29.06	rl 18.11
tg/mm 21.08-09	rl/id-tg 22.10	tr/ww 30.08	rl 19.11
tg/mm 23.20	rl/id-tg 23.19		rl 20.06
tg/mm 24.06	rl/id-tg 25.13		rl 21.09
tg/mm 25.07	rl/id-tg 26.10		rl 23.13
tg/mm 28.04	rl/id-tg 29.09/12/14		rl 24.10
	rl/id-tg 30.15		rl 27.03/08
			rl 30.01/11

Religion Replaced (6)	Religion Important (8)	Religion Characteristics (8)	Religion Personal/Social (29)
rl/rp 04.02	rl/ip 04.02	rl/cht 03.02	rl/pl 1.5
rl/rp 05.08	rl/ip 10.7/8/9	rl/cht 05.03	rl/pl 02.03
rl/rp 07.10	rl/ip 17.10	rl/cht 06.10	rl/pl 03.05
rl/rp 06.09	rl/ip 18.09	rl/cht 23.03	rl/pl 04.05
rl/rp 10.07	rl/ip 19.09-12	rl/cht 24.08	rl/pl 07.11
rl/rp 12.08/09/12	rl/ip 21.11	rl/cht 25.08	rl/pl 09.07
rl/rp 13.09	rl/ip 22.05	rl/cht 26.06	rl/pl 10.07
rl/rp 18.09/10	rl/ip 24.07	rl/cht 29.08	rl/pl 11.07
rl/rp 20/6	rl/ip 26.08		rl/pl 13.11/12
	rl/ip 30.10	Religion Good (15)	rl/pl 15.10
Religion Family (9)			rl/pl 18.10
	Religion Attitudes (4)	rl/g 03.02	rl/pl 23.03
rl/fm 01.04/05		rl/g 07.10	
rl/fm-ch 02.04	rl/at 02.07	rl/g 09.06	rl/pl-ip 23.05
rl/fm-n 05.10	rl/at 04.06	rl/g 12.09	
rl/fm 12.12	rl/at 17.16	rl/g 16.08	rl/pl-py 04.05
rl/fm 13.02	rl/at 28.07	rl/g 17.10	rl/pl-py 07.13
rl/fm 14.07		rl/g 18.10	
rl/fm 17.10	Religion Person (23)	rl/g 19.10	rl/pl-sl 02.03
rl/fm 18.08		rl/g 22.05	rl/pl-sl 03.02
rl/fm 21.10	rl/pn 01.03	rl/g 23.02	rl/sl-pl 04.03
rl/fm 23.04	rl/pn-cht 02.04	rl/g 24.07	rl/sl-pl 08.05
rl/fm 30.11	rl/pn-rl/pn-cht 03.03	rl/g 26.05	rl/pl-sl 12.09
	rl/pn-rl/pn-d 04.04	rl/g 27.07	rl/pl-sl 14.06
Religion Discussion (12)	rl/pn-rl/pn-fm 05.09	rl/g 28.05	rl/pl-sl 19.10
	rl/pn 06.10	rl/g 29.09	rl/pl-sl 20.07
rl/ds 01.07	rl/pn 07.12/15	rl/g 30.10	rl/pl-sl 22.05
rl/ds-fm 02.07	rl/pn 08.06		rl/pl-sl 23.03
rl/ds-fr 02.07	rl/pn 11.07	Religion Church (7)	rl/pl-sl 24.08
rl/ds 03.05	rl/pn 12.12		rl/pl-sl 30.10
rl/ds 04.06	rl/pn 13.11/12	rl/ch 02.05	
rl/ds 09.08	rl/pn 14.07	rl/ch 02.05	rl/sl 03.03
rl/ds 10.08	rl/pn 15.11	rl/ch 02.05	rl/sl 04.11
rl/ds 14.08	rl/pn 17.12	rl/ch 07.11	rl/sl 19.11
rl/ds 21.12	rl/pn 19.11	rl/ch 14.07	
rl/ds 23.12	rl/pn-chr 20.07	rl/ch 15.09	Religion Community (4)
rl/ds-fm 23.06	rl/pn-cht 21.10	rl/ch 16.09	
rl/ds 25.10	rl/pn-id,cht 22.06	rl/ch 19.10	rl/cm 05.09
	rl/pn-cht 23.04	rl/ch 27.08	rl/cm 11.07
Religion Images (4)	rl/pn 29.09/10	rl/ch-cnsf 15.12	rl/cm 15.12
	rl/pn-rl/pn-d 30.11		rl/cm 17.11
rl/im 03.07			
rl/im 09.11			
rl/im 12.13			
rl/im 23.11			