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THE ROLE OF FORMAL BELIEF AND RELIGIOUS INDIFFERENCE IN ACCEPTING THE CONFORMIST SOCIAL ORIENTATION IN POST-SOVIET SOCIETY: THE LITHUANIAN CASE[1]

Abstract

The studies of present religious situation in Eastern Europe based mainly on quantitative surveys show differences from the Western Europe secularization process and detect more contradictory changes here, but they only draw inferences on the religious past about the post-Soviet situation in different Middle and Eastern European countries. The novelty of this study is to analyze how former social experiences have influenced the social life of present formal believers and religious indifferent in Lithuania, who are represented by numerous vague Catholics as well as an indefinite group of religious indifferent formed during the Soviet regime and due to the peculiarities of their social and personal experiences. Two types of empirical research methods (quantitative and qualitative) are used for the research question, applying the development principle in a sequence with the 'quantitative preliminary' and 'qualitative follow-up' for elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from one method with the results from the other one. This yields a better understanding of the religious attitudes and social behavior of this group. Meanwhile the complementarity principle, where two methods of empirical research are used to assess different aspects in forming a new social group of vague Catholics and religious indifferent, gives possibility to analyze how the experiences of the Soviet regime manifest themselves in their personal lives of the post-Soviet situation with forming a specific phenomenon in the direction of religious identity and general social orientations. On the basis of oral life histories three types of religious indifference are distinguished.

SŁOWA KLUCZE: kanoniczne wierzenia, różnorodność religijna, badania ilościowe, ustna historia życia, zbiorowa tożsamość religijna, społeczna orientacja, społeczny konformizm

KEY WORDS: formal belief, religious indifference, quantitative research, oral life histories, collective religious identity, social orientations, social conformism

Introduction

The reflection of the consequences of the Soviet regime on religious identity as well as social orientations is a topic of numerous sociological research based on quantitative surveys in Eastern Europe (Tomka, Zulehner, 2000; Tomka, 2005, 2006, 2011; Zrinščak, 2004; Pollack, Müller and Pickel, 2012) as well as in Lithuania (Laumenskaitė, 1993; Žiliukaitė, 2007). There are also studies that used qualitative research methods (interviews, testimonies, archive documents, letters etc.) to analyse the experience of the suppressive totalitarian regime of persons in different countries (Bauer, Inkeles and Kluckhohn, 1956; Humphrey, Miller, Zdravomyslova, 2003; Bertaux , Thompson, Ritkirch, 2006; Applebaum, 2012; Davoliute, 2012, 2013) , but still only few studies were oriented not follow how these experiences influenced personal life in the post-Soviet situation (Blebea Nicolae, 2003) The methodological novelty of this study is, above all, in *complementarity* where two methods of empirical research are used to assess different aspects of the research question, and the findings from one method used to elaborate or explain the findings of the other; the novelty is also in *development* where one method is used explicitly to assist another (Greene, Caracelli, and Graham, 1998; O'Cathain, 2010). In this study both methods will be undertaken in a sequence with 'quantitative preliminary' and 'qualitative follow-up' for elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from one method with the results from the other one. This will give a better understanding of religious attitudes and social behaviour and the underlying assumptions of cultural values.

The analysis of phenomenon of formal belief and religious indifference is based on the data of quantitative and qualitative empirical research conducted simultaneously in two time periods[2]. The quantitative surveys give a possibility to show the features of believers (involved, formal and nominal Catholics in traditionally Catholic Lithuanian society after the collapse of the Soviet regime) and unbelievers in their attitudes towards social challenges as well as their social participation. This will be the empirical frame for the analysis of this phenomenon in a more humanly concrete and sequential context of personal oral life histories of formal Catholics and religiously indifferent persons (a sample of 30 life histories). The second novelty of this study is that the qualitative research will analyse them in relation to their personal and social past, exploring what experiences in their lives during the Soviet regime have influenced their present religious identity and social orientations. Unlike the secular-

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[2] European Value Study of two waves in 1999 and 2008, and the national representative quantitative survey "Faith and religiosity in Lithuania, 2013" (conducted by I.E. Laumenskaite in collaboration with the public opinion and market research centre "Vilmorus Ltd."), as well as two-stage qualitative research using the biographical method that was carried out in 1997–1999 (in the frame of the International Research Project "*Aufbruch*: Social Positioning of the Christian Churches in Eastern Europe Before and After Communism", Pastorales Forum e.V., Austria, 19972000) and in 2013 (the project "Christians in Lithuania before and after rebuilding the Independence" conducted at the Lithuanian Catholic Academy of Sciences and funded by the Research Council of Lithuania - LIT-7–11).

ization process in Western Europe (Davie, 2012; Meulemann, 2004), the Lithuanian case has its peculiarities due to the outcomes of the former extremely rude religious persecution and the reality of the current rapid secularization process in religiously homogeneous society.

Peculiarities of the Lithuanian religious context

As a traditionally Catholic European society, Lithuania differs from traditionally Catholic Western European countries not only due to its later process of modernization, the long-lasting religious persecution of the Soviet regime with forcible laicization (much stronger than in Poland, Croatia and other countries of the former Soviet bloc that were not incorporated into the Soviet Union) and also because of belated Christianization. Lithuania was the last country in Europe that was Christianized in the late 14th–early 15th century after the long-lasting resistance against the invasions of the Teutonic knights. That still relates the national identity with the specific Baltic cultural and religious background as an important heritage, which was highlighted during the Soviet regime mainly by urban intellectuals as Lithuanian *laïcité* in opposition to the Catholic Church (Streikus, 2002, p. 258). The outcomes of forcible laicization and expulsion of Christian religious life from the public space, the present rapid liberalization of post-communist society, as well as the challenges of the globalization process reinforced the search for national and religious identity in the pre-Christian past that opened the door to national neo-paganism and other forms of New Age religiosity. It is easily combined with formal Catholic identification as a collective historical and cultural norm when almost non-practicing Catholics returned to the Church filling a religious void that appeared with an unexpectedly fast ending of the imposed Soviet regime.

The dominant Catholic Church in Lithuania gained social respect during the Soviet occupation as the only legal institution that openly resisted the religious persecutions and communist ideology. The situation of religion during the Soviet regime in Lithuania (from an international perspective and the sociological point of view) was interpreted as an example of "secular monopoles" with forcible control even on the level of private practice (Codevilla, 1983; Martin, 1987). In Lithuania after the collapse of this regime in a short time several legislative changes happened: the law on the separation of the Church and the State (the principle of neutrality) was adopted in 1990, to be followed by other agreements: on the possibilities of the Church in the sphere of education, chaplaincy in the military and the restitution of property expropriated by the Soviet regime, which is still complicated. For the juridical regulation of the relations between religion and the State, the law of religious communities as organized religious institutions with differentiation of their public possibilities according to the level of their state recognition was also enacted during the first period of Lithuania's Independence. Nine traditional religions and denominations started to rebuild their structures and activities in the country and international organiza-

tions. Long-lasting restricted participation in church services gradually turned into its opposite, and the number of citizens who considered themselves Catholics increased from 57% in 1990 to 73–79% during the following 7–9 years (Laumenskaitė, 2003; Žiliukaitė, 2000). Does it point to the present model of European religiosity, named as "vicarious" religion or "fuzzy fidelity"? (Davie, 2010; Bruce, Voas, 2010). How is it related with active belonging to the Catholic Church and involving Christians in social life, when the dominant Lithuanian identity is to consider oneself a Catholic mainly because of the historical and cultural tradition?

Conceptual considerations

What does it mean to be a Catholic?

The historically long-lasting and still widespread understanding of being a Catholic in Lithuania (75–79% of the adult population) means first and foremost to be baptized and to belong to a traditionally Catholic nation[3]. To the older generation this signifies the experience and strength to survive staying a Catholic during almost two centuries of Russian occupation (especially in the period of the Soviet regime). A usual answer to the question "Why are you a Catholic?" points to the historical-cultural tradition: "Our parents and grandparents were Catholics, so we are Catholics as well". But this also points to the predominant collective identities – both Catholic and Lithuanian (the same applies to Polish Catholics), which were typical of traditional society, but are challenged by modern one. The new wave of European secularization and post-modern irreligious mentality has above all influenced the younger generations; however, it does not change the dominant Lithuanian religious identity: the persistent cultural obligation of parents or grandparents is to baptize a new born child and in many cases ensure him/her the possibility to receive the First Communion. Everything else in the child's religious life is left to his/her free later decision without taking into consideration the influence of the contemporary social and mass media. If the Church considers baptism an obligation, her efforts to involve the parents in the preparation of their children for the First Communion are of little success. Due to that more than 20%[4] of the population as well as nominal Catholics think that to be a Catholic means only to be baptized without further obligation to attend the Church. But the largest group is Catholics with formal or casual Catholic identity – those who attend church mainly on religious feast days (Christmas, Easter), go to a confession once a year but do not participate in church life more than that. This

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[3] Data of a national representative quantitative survey "Faith and religiosity in Lithuania, 2013" (conducted by I. E. Laumenskaitė together with the public opinion and market research centre "Vilmorus Ltd."), where N=1400.

[4] *Ibidem.*

is the "normative" attitude for 45% of Catholics[5]. In comparison with other traditionally Catholic European countries (Jakelic S., 2010), these "occasional" or "feast" Catholics comprise the largest part (almost a half) of the Catholics in Lithuania, what confirms the still existing collective religious identity, more common to Eastern European countries.

Irreligion and unbelief as social compliance or/and conformity

The notions of *irreligion, unbelief, disbelief, non-theism* and *atheism* are still used with different contents influenced by the theoretical framework, social context and sociological tradition (Borowik, Ančić, Tyrała, 2013; Zuckerman, 2007; Zrinščak, 2004, p. 223). In this analysis we will apply a wider notion of *irreligion* (irreligious) to describe religious identity and attitudes that characterize those who consider themselves Catholics – naming them as formal (casual) or nominal due to their minimal or almost non-existent church practice, vague understanding of superior power (God) and other characteristics of religious identity. The notion of *unbelief* (unbeliever) will be used in the case of absence of Catholic (Christian) identity (according to the person's own identification of his/her unbelief and no religious practice). The latter category will be used only in the analysis of qualitative research data if the facts of the informant's life and his/her own identification permit this distinction. The notions of *atheism* and *atheistic behaviour* will be applied to describe the ideology and actions of the Soviet regime that had a definite content and manifestations in the past and also appeared in the informants' life histories. Those who identified themselves as unbelievers, and there were no their life events and behaviour to contradict such self-identification, they could be named non-theists if they did not proclaim or impose atheism as a worldview on others.

Usually the concept of *social conformity* is dominant in the analysis of religious and general social attitudes as well as behavioural models, and manifests itself in sharing similar beliefs and standards of behaviour. It can be a reflected attitude but most often is un-reflected as a response to the social impact of the social group to which a person belongs, as well as general social conditioning (Ridgeway, 2000, p. 400). Finally, it is the internal acceptance of a definite social influence in the process of socialization and often in its complexity manifests itself as *social conformism*. Religious conformity is typical of a historically collective religion and manifests itself conditioning a religious (Catholic) person with either formal, rare religious practice, or even religiously indifferent and nowadays even irreligious person. It is characteristic of the generation born in the later period of the Soviet regime in Lithuania, when forcible exclusion of religious life, which matched with continual atheist socialization in school, finally became a common experience. However, conformity was not only religious, but also social, and finally turned

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[5] *Ibidem.*

into conformism regarding the Soviet reality and its definite social patterns without any interest in political and social participation – an ambivalent stultifying existence (Štromas, 2001, p. 225; Putinaitė, 2007, p. 175) oriented mainly to private life with concern for one's material well-being. *Compliance (*Ridgeway,2000; Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004), as a particular kind of response to mainly external pressure was a reaction typical of the generations who lived during World War II and the post-war period of armed resistance to the Soviet occupation. They lived in fear of repressions, but the majority remained in internal opposition to the new political system and ideology. Because of Soviet persecutions, religious identity could not be expressed publicly and in many cases gradually turned to socially vague religious attitudes with rare or even non-existent religious practice. This was most typical of teachers and intellectuals who secretly celebrated Christmas and Easter at home, baptized their children and even took the sacrament of marriage if they were urged by parents or somebody in their families. Social orientations in many cases became even more compliant with the existing regime due to personal needs and interests to survive and to have larger social possibilities and rewards (Klumbys, 2009). Internal opposition to the political system in most cases was expressed in the duality between official behaviour in public and non-official behaviour in the non-public sphere, discontent with the political system in "kitchen conversations" and manifestations of "thinking in one mode, speaking in another one, and acting in the third one"(Klumbys, 2008), An exception was the opposition of the Catholic Church to religious repressions based on strong religious identity and anti-Soviet national resistance (Girnius, 1989; The Chronicle of the Catholic Church in Lithuania, 1989), which expressed the importance of religious attitudes in relation to social ones. Therefore, the research on formal and informal behaviour as well as religious attitudes during the Soviet occupation allows us to see not only the specific process of secularization in Lithuania, but also the role of religious identity in the formation of social orientations in Soviet and post-Soviet society.

The general situation of beliefs and religiosity in Lithuania as a context of personal religious identity and social orientations in post-Soviet society

The changes of the role of religion in contemporary society in general could be reflected in the frame defined by Peter Beyer, who divided the approaches of eminent scholars of this field into three categories: "religious comeback" by Berger and Habermas, "religious transformation" by Taylor and Casanova, and "alternative scenarios" by Bhargava and Modood (Beyer, 2013, p. 664).

The prevailing theory of inescapable secularization in the modernization process of contemporary societies in view of wide sociological studies is no longer considered axiomatic (Berger, 1999; Berger, Davie, 2008; Karpov, 2010), although the comparative European Values Study and World Values study launched in 1981 were methodologically based on this assumption.

In the Lithuanian case we have a more complicated situation: the country went through a specific Soviet modernization, which was accompanied by even more forcible laicization. This process finally led to the secularization of society, but in a different way: losing the possibility and then the capacity to participate in Church life and to practice one's Christian belief in a way adequate to Christianity and contemporary society. However, a tangible return to religious practice that in 1999 differentiated Poland, Croatia and Lithuania as traditionally Catholic post-Soviet countries together with the Orthodox Romania from mainly Protestant ex-Soviet bloc countries[6] is related with a specific process: the nation's strengthening religious identity, which was and still is strongly based on collective ethnic-confessional identification. It urged the older and middle-age generations to return to at least formal religious practice, which was suspended but not culturally lost during the Soviet occupation. However, it manifests itself mainly in following several traditional religious customs due to the cultural consideration that it is important to hold religious service for such events as birth, marriage and death (Halman, 2001, p. 80.) At least occasional religious practice is continued in families where parents practiced or now resumed attending church, but is decreasing in those where church is only attended during funerals or other exceptional events. By opening ourselves to the life of postmodern society and the European process of secularization, we have a specific phenomenon: ambiguous religiosity with still prevailing collective Catholic identity inherited from the historical past, and a postmodern individual dualistic religiosity as an outcome of Soviet religious repressions and the contemporary process of religious individualism mixed with elements of New Age religiousness.

Due to that reason, the most adequate instrument in the analysis of religious changes could be based on the approach of three corresponding theories, which are applied in analysing the development of churchliness and religiosity in post-communist countries (Müller, 2011). The decline of individual religious practice as well as the significance of the Church in personal life that is attributed to the secularization theory can also characterize Lithuania's situation; but simultaneously there is an opposite tendency to secularization – a latent individual need for religion, where a church affiliation and private religiosity have gained greater importance. It is also supported by the second theoretical approach in the tradition of Thomas Luckmann, who sees religion more or less explicitly as an anthropological constant. Due to that reason, religion now experiences a transformation towards its "invisible" variants, "characterized by increasing religious vagueness, syncretism and depersonalization of the concept of God, and a shift towards sacralization of the inner-self" (Müller, 2011, p. 22). As concerns the secularization approach, it would be adequate to use Jose Casanova's interpretation (Casanova, 2011) taking into account three theoretical aspects of secularization that point to different components of this phenomenon: differentiation or "emancipation" from religious institutions and norms of three main secular spheres (the state, economy and science); secularization as a decline

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[6] These counties had the smallest number of non-confessional population. Source: European Values Study and GESIS Data Archive for the Social Sciences, EVS 1999.

of religious beliefs and practices; and secularization as the privatization of religion (Casanova, 2011, p. 60). The latter aspect in Lithuania was described above. The emancipation of the state, economy and science from religious institutions as a social process started already in independent Lithuania in the period between 1918 and 1940. During the Soviet occupation it was radically maintained along with the suppression of religion even in private life and radical separation of the Church from all spheres of public life with a wide range of forcible atheistic propaganda, above all, in primary and secondary schools. Due to that reason, the decline of religious practice was already radical in the generation born between 1949 and 1958 (30% attended church on Sundays during their childhood, mainly in rural areas) and diminished even more in the generation born between 1969 and 1978 (57% attended church once a year or even not at all)[7].

A wide-ranging return to the Church after the collapse of Soviet regime was a contradictory phenomenon. For the most part, it was an appearance: religiousness hidden for decades became apparent as the process of filling the void that opened in people's worldviews and life practices. At the same time, it widely became a custom-religion that returned as part of the cultural tradition, which strengthened satisfaction, social attitudes, nationalism and, in the beginning, right-wing political attitudes, but little influenced personal and conscious interest in the knowledge of the Christian doctrine, adequate practices of faith and participation in church (parish) life. Therefore, for a further analysis of religious identity we cannot use the classification of Catholic believers according to the criteria of Ester, Halman and de Moor (Ester, Halman and de Moore, 1993) not only for the lack of participation of Catholics in church life (only about 3%), but also due to the main criterion of being a practicing Catholic. For that purpose, in the classification and cluster analysis we will use two doctrinally necessary Church requirements: regular church attendance and practicing the sacrament of reconciliation. These requirements can be applied only for the data of the national representative survey (N=1400) of 2013, where a larger scale of adequate questions on the Catholic faith and practice was used. The data of EVS will be used rather limitedly in this analysis, because the questions on religious matters were formulated in a manner compatible with different religions (in rather abstract ways) with the aim to evaluate the general role of religion as such for the process of modernization and, therefore, questions about the beliefs and practice of the Christian faith were too limited. Due to that reason, not all the indicators of the religiosity scale (Krech, Hero & others, 2013, p.8) constructed in EVS surveys will be used for this analysis either.

The general importance of religion (as very important in private life) diminished among the entire population from 15% in 1990 to 10% in 2008 with predominance of the answers "quite important" (34%) and "not important" (42%). Besides, the importance of God in one's life dropped from the average of 6.7 points in 1999 to 6.3 points in 2008 (among Catholics – from 7.4 to 6.9). Confidence in the Church among the general population gradually diminished as well from 15% in 1990 to 13% in 2008.

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[7] Data of the representative quantitative empirical research "Faith and religiosity in Lithuania, 2013".

Meanwhile, the identification of oneself as a religious person increased among the entire population from 47% in 1990 to 79% in 2008 almost analogously to the rise of considering oneself a Catholic; and among Catholics – from 72% to 93%.

As the majority of the population consists of Catholics (79% in 2008–2013), it is reasonable to present other important indications of the religiosity scale separately for them.
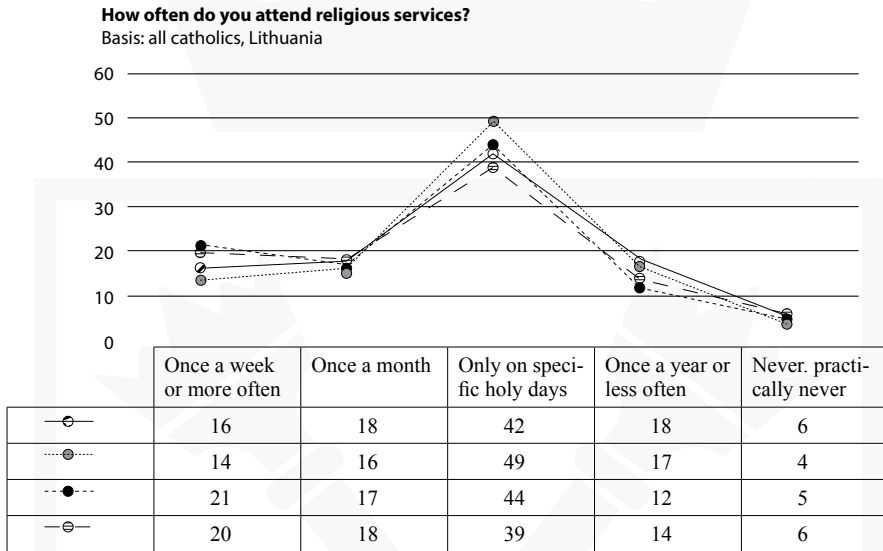
How often do you attend religious services?
Basis: all catholics, Lithuania

	Once a week or more often	Once a month	Only on specific holy days	Once a year or less often	Never. practically never
	16	18	42	18	6
	14	16	49	17	4
	21	17	44	12	5
	20	18	39	14	6

Figure 1. Church attendance of Catholics. Lithuanian data of EVS 1990–2008 and of representative survey "Faith and religiosity in Lithuania, 2013"

According to figure 1, almost a half of those who consider themselves Catholics (57% in 1990 and 75–80% several years later) practice their religiousness mainly during Christmas and Easter with traditional celebrations in families, which are gradually losing their religious content, and practice short and formal prayers only during these feasts (25% in 2013). That is expressed by commercial advertising, publications and broadcasts in mass media as well as oral testimonies. But a large part of Catholics in Lithuania (60% in 2013) also receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation at least once a year. Weekly participation in the Mass slightly diminished but stabilized with church attendance once a month. Differences of attendance depend not only on the age group (diminishing in younger generations), but also on the type of settlement (major differentiation is in cities where there is a larger number of those who attend church as well as more non-Christians and nonbelievers). But the answers to the question how those who consider themselves Catholics participate in church services

point both to prevailing contemporary individualized religiousness ("I silently pray regarding my own needs and difficulties" – more than 80%) and culturally normative Catholicity (a third of the chosen answers is "I go to Mass because as a Catholic I was taught to do so" and "I simply go to church and listen without getting involved").

Concepts of superior power
EVS. Basis: all catholics, Lithuania

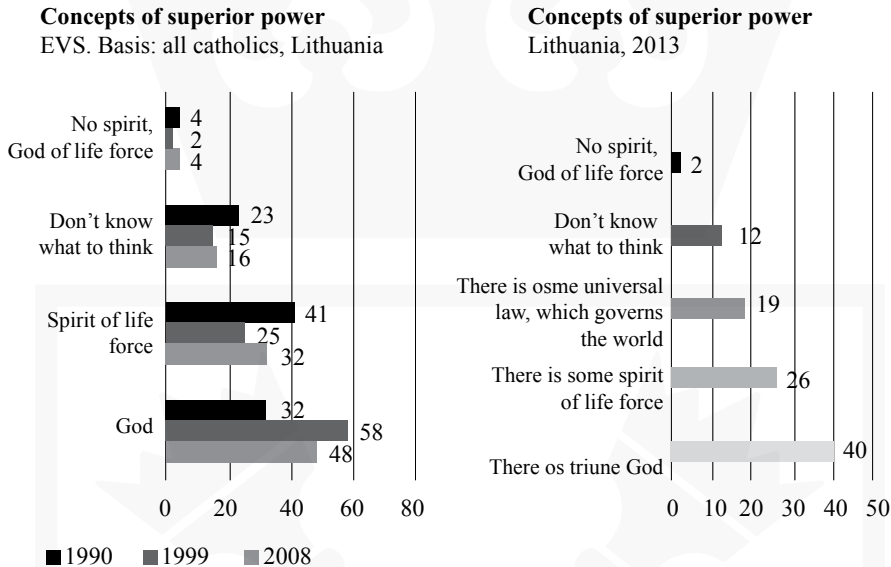**Concepts of superior power**
Lithuania, 2013

Figure 2. The statements those were closest to the beliefs of Catholics in Lithuania – the concepts of "superior power"

According to these statements (unlike the English version, the first statement in the Lithuanian questionnaire of 1999 and 2008 was not "personal God" but only "God"), the Christian concept of the personal God or the living triune God (in the national survey of 2013) is accepted by less than a half of those who consider themselves Catholics; others prefer the concept of spirit or life force more frequently used in New Age terminology, or some "scientific" concept.

The dominant vague Catholic identity also manifests itself in believing in reincarnation, which is common to a third of Catholics in Lithuania, with the same proportion of those who are not sure about it.[8] This points to a hypothesis that a larger half of Catholics do not distinguish between the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation of God and the concept of "reincarnations of the souls" taken from New Age religiosity, which is close to religious syncretism. The key question to identify the content of Christian belief was the personal conception of Jesus Christ ("Who is Jesus Christpersonally to you?"). Only 46% of those who consider themselves Catholics

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[8] Data of the national representative survey "Faith and religiosity in Lithuania, 2013".

acknowledge him as the Son of God/God who became Man; for a third he is only a human being, and 20% have doubts whether Jesus Christ existed as a historical person at all[9].

Summing up the presented part of empirical data, religious identity in Lithuania could be described as a two-sided phenomenon, both aspects of which are named as the European attitude toward religion: the first one is "belonging without believing" as Christian identification without an expression of faith that entails a distant shared memory, which does not necessitate a shared belief, but which – even from a distance – still governs collective reflexes in terms of identity (Hervieu-Léger, 2006, p. 48; Jakelic, 2010, p. 1–14); the second one is a "vicarious" type of religion – "believing without belonging" (Davie, 2000, p. 33) The latter concept is empirically useful approach to European secularization and more adequate in regard to religiousness of younger generations in Lithuania.

These types of European religiosity were distinguished in defining the predominant types of Catholics in Lithuania while singling out the groups by their participation in the Mass and receiving the Sacrament of Reconciliation (two main official requirements for Catholics) for their cluster analysis. We have distinguished three major groups: (1) earnest (active) Catholics with weekly or more frequent attendance of church service and practicing the confession several times a year – 13%; (2) formal or casual Catholics attending church service mainly during Christmas and Easter and practicing the confession at least once a year – 29%; (3) nominal Catholics with church attendance once a year or less often and not practicing the sacrament of Reconciliation – 43% of those who consider themselves Catholics[10].

Formal or "religious feast" Catholics in general could be described by a trend in the European process of secularization called "belonging without believing". They are working-age men and women, usually descending from rural areas or small towns, from families with practicing members; married and mainly in the church, most have basic or vocational education; they attend church service to pray privately for their personal needs, pray less than once per week, understand their belief as formal church attendance or coming to church to sit in silence for a conversation with oneself; they do not participate in parish life and do not share their faith with others, usually having no experience of personal Christian conversion, and understand their Catholicity as a cultural norm accepting it in a conformist manner.

"Nominal Catholics" who constitute the majority of those who were categorized according to the two above-mentioned criteria consider themselves Catholics only because they were baptized; they are often young men (up to 44 years old), usually born in a town or a city, frequently not married or married once and not in the church, have lived in cohabitation before, and many of them are divorced, usually without children; they seldom have somebody in the family who practices the Catholic faith, understand their belief as a conversation with the inner self, mainly do not pray, attend church on rare special occasions, and usually think that Jesus Christ was only a man or doubt

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[9] *Ibidem.*
[10] *Ibidem.*

whether he ever lived; they are also not interested in Christian issues and do not think that the Church is necessary for their Catholic identity. They can identify themselves even as "believing without belonging" or hardly believing (religious) at all.

The two latter groups among those who consider themselves Catholic are more oriented to private life and individual well-being almost without any orientation to social participation (especially nominal Catholics – 80% of them do not take part in any voluntary activity). The religious factor has a certain influence on the respondents' attitudes to solidarity (both general and towards socially excluded people), civic morality and support of political community. Those who never or almost never attend church expressed lesser compassion for aged, suffering and socially excluded people, which, in its turn, increased in younger generations already in the first decade of independent Lithuania – in 1990–1999 (Žiliukaitė and Ramonaitė, 2006). The same tendency of decrease is observed in the dynamics of attitudes towards charitable actions based on moral motives, and the opposite tendency – towards charitable actions based on the motives of individual interest (Žiliukaitė, 2007, p. 49–69). Non-religious younger generations exhibit a more expressed tendency to private interests and private life, with growing permissiveness regarding illegal civic actions (tax cheating, claiming state benefits to which one is not entitled, accepting a bribe in the course of one's duties, avoiding to pay a fare in public transport). It was also expressed in value orientations regarding family life and the value of a human being (attitudes to abortion and euthanasia).

Little orientation to social participation and general preference for individual well-being could be explained, on the one hand, by the outcomes of the former repressive system (distrust and disinterest in social life, lack of personal capacities to take initiative and responsibility): "Soviet citizens could be described as *negatively atomized*. The institutions on which they relied were informal units that depended upon diffuse face-to-face ties that lacked legal recognition" (Rose, Mishler, Haerpfer, 1997, p. 90), and on the other hand, by a certain decline of generalized social trust in society considering that most people can be trusted (from 32% in 1990 to 25% in 1999). This can be explained as disenchantment with current political and economic changes in comparison with former large expectations about life in free society and an independent state. Lithuania is distinguished among other European countries by the lowest participation in voluntary work – non-government organizations and movements (Adam*,* 2008; Žiliukaitė, Ramonaitė, Nevinskaitė, Bersnevičiūtė, Vinogradnaitė, 2006, p. 28–29; Primožič , Bavec, 2009) – low average trust in national and EU institutions, low general satisfaction with life and rather low assessment of national economy, corruption in juridical services and public health sector, as well as low value judgment of personal happiness in comparison with other traditionally Catholic European countries (Laumenskaitė, 2003; Tomka, 2006, p. 255). The new radical atomization of society is proved by a very high suicide rate in Lithuania (Varnik, 2012) – especially among males, – which contradicts Durkheim's theory but shows that even Catholicism in this case does not work as a factor opposite to this social process. The suicide rate was already high in the last decade of the Soviet regime and having dropped in 1990, radically increased five years after Independence.

We can hypothesize that being a formal and especially nominal Catholic (baptized and attending church only on the main Christian feasts or the occasions of someone's baptism, marriage or funeral) could be treated as a new form of unconscious social compliance and conformity due to the heritage of collective cultural identity. This matches with orientation mainly towards private life as a pattern of socio-historical *habitus* (Bourdieu, 1980; 1989) and the corresponding dispositions for social behaviour. How it is expressed in personal lives of unbelievers and religiously indifferent people (the majority of the latter were baptizedand received formal, minimal religious formation in childhood) and how it depends on the experience of their religious or atheist socialization and religious identity? These matters will be described in the analysis of oral life histories collected in 1997–1999 and 2013 (the time-periods of the above-discussed empirical qualitative surveys).

Method, subjects and results of qualitative research

The focus of biographical analysis is not only the reconstruction of intentionality (in this case religious and social), which is represented as an individual's life course, but also the embeddedness of the biographical account in social macro structures that is emphasized by many scholars in qualitative research (Thompson, 2000; Bornat, 2008; Merrill, 2009; Humphrey, Miller, Zdravomyslova, 2003). On the other hand, definite personal experiences that influenced their life decisions are open to constant recreation in the light of the present, and hypothetically explain their former and current attitudes in the context of social life. The research of oral life histories seeks to reveal the *continuity of religious identity* analysing its factors or its possible change.

The main novelty of this research is the religious and social experience of religiously indifferent people (unbelievers and formal/nominal Catholics) in the entire context of their personal life both during the Soviet regime and the radical social transition of Lithuania after its collapse while inquiring into the factors of their religious identity and social orientations. What describes a new type of a religiously indifferent person and unbeliever in the post-Soviet traditionally Catholic country when the practicing of religion became legal and even socially desirable? Even today (more than two decades after the restoration of Lithuania's Independence) it was complicated to persuade people belonging to the latter group to be interviewed about their beliefs and social involvement in the course of their life. Those who withdrew from the interview usually were men who were socially active during the last stage of the Soviet regime and are now prolonging their social activity and career mainly by having joined the Social-Democratic Party. They preferred not to speak about their Soviet past and the ways to adapt to the new social situation. Social cautiousness or even fear of being different and non-conformant with socially predominant orientations – a "culture of distrust" (Sztompka, 1996) – is still the historically inherited social attitude of the majority due to the deficiency of cultural resources for trust and, especially, due to the low predisposition to trust that formed early in life (Uslaner, 2008).

Formal Catholics and religiously indifferent persons interviewed in 1997–1999 (a sample of 18 life histories) were respondents with predominantly Soviet social experience (especially the older ones) who lived only 7–9 years in the context of the national religious revival and officially permitted religious practice, responding to it passively (attending church only on major religious feasts or hardly attending at all) and remaining in doubtregarding religious matters. Those who were interviewed in 2013 have a longer social experience of post-Soviet liberal and generally postmodern society but, nevertheless, both groups have a comparable predominantly religious identity. Life histories based on the biographical method were collected as conversations with interviews lasting 1.5–4 hours each. A comparative analysis of those two samples was made using Qualitative data analysis software NVivo 10.

Slightly more than a half of the religiously indifferent informants in both samples (in total, 30 persons) are women. However, more males than females were involved in Soviet ideological activity. An important demographic characteristic of these informants is the historical period when they were born and received their primary (as well as religious) socialization. A little less than a half of the irreligious informants surveyed in 1997–1999 were from the 1936–1945 birth cohort, having an experience of Soviet occupation or/and war shock in their early life. Three men were born in the first period of independent Lithuania, so at the beginning of the Soviet regime and repressions they were mainly adolescents. More than a half of religiously indifferent women interviewed in 1997–1999 were born in 1966–1975 and lived their conscious life in the late Soviet period with predominant conformity to the regime accepted already as natural. Five irreligious respondents among the twelve interviewed in 2013 were also born in that period, which could influence their religious identity. Others were born in earlier historical periods and were affected by more radical social changes and atheistic propaganda. It influenced their participation in the structures of the occupational regime. After its collapse their former religious and social attitudes haven't changed or only partly changed because of religious and social *habitus* formed in their early life. This qualitative research will focus, on the one hand, on the *genetic analysis* of narrated life histories reconstructing the biographical meaning of experiences at the time they happened and the chronological sequence of experiences in which they occurred; and on the other hand – on the thematic fields (Rosenthal, 1993), which are the most important for the analysis of the content and change of religious identity, and which appeared in every oral life history (or were revealed in its analysis as concepts).

a. The main thematic fields of life events and social contexts of irreligious persons' life experience

The general early matrix of this qualitative research was oriented towards a special focus on the informants' religious identity and social orientations. It gave the frame for the main concepts that were specified during the analysis of life histo-

ries. They are presented in the order of priority according to the influence on religious identity and its changes in relation to social orientation.

The most important factor that differentiates religious and religiously indifferent informants is *the primal religious experiences* in childhood and possible later life experiences that challenged the personal belief and religious practice. Its analysis gave the basis to distinguish three different types of irreligiousness among this group of religiously indifferent informants, and correlated with other concepts as factors of religious identity and social orientations both during the Soviet regime and afterwards. Its essence is the existence or absence of some personal experience in relation to God due to the religious behaviour of family members or/and due to the further life challenges that may have led to existential questions (only in few cases they led to religious conversion after the collapse of the regime).

That primary factor is related to the second one – the *influence of atheistic propaganda and personal relation to it.* Atheistic propaganda, especially in primary and secondary school, was one of the first steps in enforcing Soviet ideology. This made an influence on the young generation, especially when there was fear and little religious practice in their own families or, even more importantly, an openness to conform to the new regime and hopes for better social perspectives:

> You felt as if somebody pressed you from above: 'Do not say anything, be silent'. We felt that we had to fear something. In the family it was explained that now we couldn't go to church, because the communists had come, and they did not believe in God. And in school it was always emphasized that science had already proven that God did not exist, so religion was only an ancient prejudice. And then at home: 'Don't raise any questions, be submissive – you can't do anything. We have to live like that now'.'So the child tried to follow his parents' position or to trust more what was said in school and even accepted that his parents were already old-fashioned. (Vladas, 1936)[11]
>
> We had a teacher of history, who was an active Komsomol member himself and constantly repeated: 'All these priests and their companions assaulted our ancestors with the sword...' and constantly spoke negative things about Christianization in Lithuania that according to him was a great disaster to us. In the end he usually added: 'As to me... I am a pagan as our ancestors were'. (Dovilė, 1971)

In some cases religious indifference was influenced by a *negative interaction with people of the Church* (mainly priests who refused to consider the complicated situation or were seen in disreputable shape). In most cases it did not provoke a cause for dis-conversion or the loss of faith (Barbou, 1994, p. 106–121), except when the person already had some doubt about it and usually had little or only perfunctory religious practice in childhood; in that case, the existing ideological pressure and social fear led to more strongly expressed irreligiousness. The enforcement of Soviet propaganda and possible mistrust in the Church often operated upon religious identity together with the *social and religious family background* and *experiences of political violence in personal, parents' or even grandparents' lives*. Persons from poor families

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[11] Here and herein after excerpts from the informants life histories used in quotations are signed with pseudonyms but the real birth year of the informants is given.

whose members had little or formal religious practice were discontent with their eve-ryday conditions of former life and often frightened at the experienced partisans' actions during the complicated period of post-war Lithuanian partisan resistance against the Soviet regime (somebody in family suffered from them), and directly or indirectly participated in the actions of Soviet military forces. Due to that they were more active-ly involved in the process of the local establishing of Soviet structures and the "bright future" of Soviet life that most of them, at least initially, believed in (Štromas, 2001, p. 212–213). Therefore, they mostly became fully indifferent to Catholic identity, ceased any possible religious practice and even opposed it due to the obtained social status.

But if any violence of the Soviet forces was experienced (family members were deported, killed or forced to emigrate), a hidden personal disapproval of Soviet ide-ology was formed, but in most cases it was not expressed in any social actions due to fear and the wish to survive:

> That period left a memory of fear because I had to keep the fact of my deported father secret. When I left to study I was afraid to receive a bad mark and lose my stipend. What will I say to my mother when she can't help me materially? My basic goal was to fight my way out of that poverty, to graduate from the institute, to begin to work, maybe to carve out a ca-reer (Vytautas, 1936)

That could be matched with earlier or later *social orientation* to participate in the Soviet political-ideological or educational system due to social pragmatism that was usually explained by "seeking a better life for one's family and especially children" (Ona, 1935) as well as by "the effort to do good to people by taking socially respon-sible positions", which was often specified: "Why did we join the Communist party? For the career, to receive a better position that it could award. After all... this did not change the individual's way of thinking – you remained as you were before" (Veroni-ka, 1944). This attitude and behaviour could correlate in several cases with a minimal and secret religious practice (occasional church attendance, baptizing children, tak-ing the sacrament of marriage) and celebrating Christmas during the Soviet regime. After its collapse a usually vague religious identity was expressed in the same way with possibly greater church attendance for formal participation in major religious feasts without looking for a personal relation with God and deeper knowledge of the Christian faith. The main orientation and interests are concentrated on one's private life and family well-being, which is matched within-group criticism of political reali-ty and even its ignorance noticed by many informants. All that gained ground already since the late Soviet period and today has reappeared as a form of social conformism (Klumbys, 2012, p. 255–256; Putinaitė, 2007, p. 77).

The majority of religiously indifferent informants did not speak or were inclined to avoid speaking about any existential confusion regarding their social preferences and their personal perplexity due to the dramatic events that occurred in their family or the lives of their children (divorces, alcoholism, suicide etc.). In describing or re-flecting on their choices, the informants usually explained: "Times were hard", thus justifying in a different way their stronger or more moderate ideological and social conformity: "Religious belief inherited from parents confronted atheistic ideas im-

posed in school – how was it possible to match them? I think that an individual takes from one or another attitude the points that he needs" (Vladas, 1936). "My largest worry during the Soviet times was the question 'What should I do, should I go to church when my parents die and other family members decide to bury them with religious ceremonies? Thanks to God my father died already in the present times, but when during Soviet period my mother died, we asked to celebrate the Mass in early morning, and my husband who was a Party secretary did not enter the church..." (Veronika, 1944).

b. Types of religious indifference and general social orientations

In the results of the analysis of informants' oral life histories and while trying not to lose their *Gestalt*, we could distinguish three main types of religious indifference that will be described further (Picture 1). In general, they are characterized by the absence of personal experience in relation to God and a definite concept of a human individual that usually belittles one's existence and the meaning of life. This could even manifest as culturally accepted and formally practiced religiousness in childhood due to the insistence of parents – mainly the mother or/and grandmother (in reciting the rosary, saying one's prayers and, in the Soviet times secretly taking the First Communion), which was disproved already in adolescence by accepting the atheistic or "scientific" worldview. However, a possible casual religious or more cultural practice both during and after Soviet religious persecutions still was expressed in family gatherings for the celebration of Christmas Eve (Kūčios). In Lithuania that is a culturally transmitted way of sharing Christmas bread with or without a short prayer and eating special dishes together.

Even during the Soviet regime Christmas Eve was celebrated with a family meal despite a possible risk to be incriminated with anti-Soviet behaviour. "We closed our windows and gathered to eat Kūčios in our parents' house. I remember once that a rattat startled us. Mother went to open the door... There was our neighbour who dared to bring us kūčiukai (small pieces of specially baked bread) that we already also had" (Elena, 1943).The students who did not manage to return home to their families that usually lived in the country side for this feast used to gather in somebody's room in the dormitory to have this supper behind the closed doors because ideological control during that evening was strengthened "They were caught in the act on that evening... But then we did not even punish these students-girls, because we ourselves ate Kūčios on Christmas Eve at our parents' home. The dormitories were full of kūčiukai and other Christmas Eve dishes that students brought with them from home..."(Monika, 1945). Usually such practices of celebration were and still are the only manifestation of their culturally inherited Catholicity, which is expressed in religious *habitus* without any other practice and a vague understanding of Christian faith (reduced to family celebration of Christmas and Easter, baptizing children, religious funerals and seldom going to church to sit in silence or meditation).
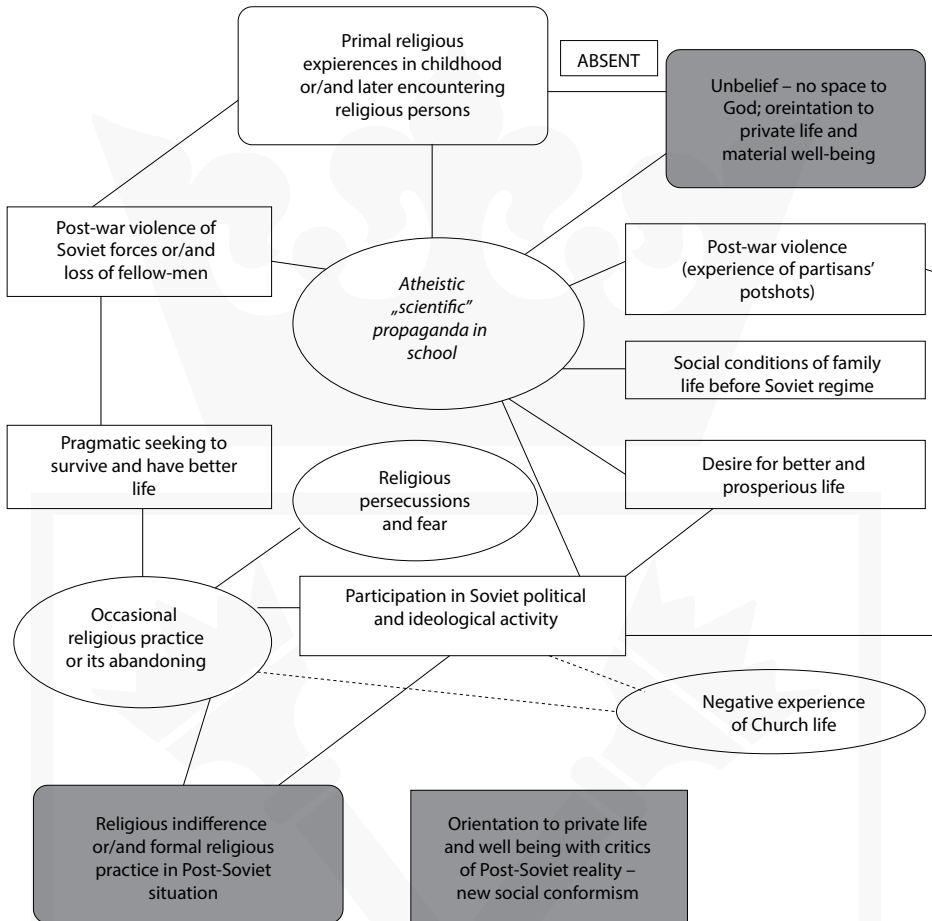
Picture 1. Personal and familial social experiences in informants' life histories, which formed an orientation towards religious indifference and social conformism in post-Soviet society (the Lithuanian case)

The first type of religious indifference could be distinguished on the basis of life histories of several of those informants who themselves or their family members participated in the Soviet ideological system. They belong to that part of the older generation that actively conformed to the system by becoming party members and taking some responsibilities in Soviet structures (teachers, participants of atheistic propaganda and other professionals with official positions). These religious indifferent informants were baptized in early childhood, usually had some experience of formal religiousness in their families and joined the Soviet organizational system with a sincere zeal to be its part (speaking about positive Soviet social achievements and even spying upon school children and colleagues who attended church on religious feasts

etc.) Meanwhile with the collapse of the regime many of them became *active Catholics usually seeking positions in the structure of the politically and ideologically changed social system* with the same zeal (many teachers in the life history of Dovilė, 1971) or finally orienting themselves to their private life and survival in the present social situation. They tried to describe their former activity justifying it by the necessity to "live, have a job and maintain a family" (Ona, 1935) or even "to do good to the ordinary people in these complicated circumstances"(Veronika, 1944; Monika, 1945; Juozas, 1949). Except in the case of religious conversion (Monika, 1945) they still did not have and even understand their lack of personal relation to God, and found their formal Catholic practice sufficient.

The second type of religious indifference is more typical of the younger generation that was born in the 1960s and 1970s and absorbed the general indifferent or even apathetic social orientations of the later period of Soviet reality and climate. They were secretly baptized, did not have any religious practice in their childhood, collectively joined the pioneer and, later, komsomol organizations, looked with indifference or ignored the atheistic propaganda in schools that had already lost its previous zeal and directed all their interest to private life and professional career. However, several informants who belonged to the older generation were born in religiously active families, practiced their faith not only in childhood but also occasionally during the Soviet period (usually when visiting their parents' families who lived in countryside), secretly took the sacrament of marriage and baptized their children. During the Soviet times due to their professional career they even had important positions in the Soviet organizational and ideological system, but tried to be restrained in expressing their social orientations and kept silent especially on religious matters. With the collapse of the Soviet regime they were affected by the general interest in social participation in national meetings and discussions, but finally did not join them actively. Both men of the older generation continued their professional career for a while but, like other informants in this group, were later disappointed with the changes of the new social system: "Part of socially active people at present are those who have turned their coats for pragmatic reasons and private goals, so not everything is as good as many have expected..." (Povilas, 1937); "Earlier, when some socially responsible people did bad things, others at least knew where they could complain about them (in the local committee of the Communist party); there were no such thefts or crimes as there are now, and at least some official order existed. But now we often use the word "democracy" whenever everybody wants, and no clear responsibilities exist..." (Vladas, 1936).

Part of the informants with this type of religious identity began to attend church more often, several of them because they met some religious people, and even addressed religious topics, but finally neglected them. They became mostly formal Catholics "like all the others" with a primary orientation to job, family and living everyday life. The younger informants expressed no interest in social civic or political activity as well as in participation in church life and even in questions of the Christian faith. The attitude "*to live like others*"encompasses all spheres of their life expressing a general orientation to social conformity: "as it is said,'needs must when the dev-

il drives'. Corruption is everywhere – in the entire world. So if you do not use it, you will remain a goof because others will improve their things and you won't. Moreover, we will all finally die and rot. And that's all..." (Veronika, 1944); "In the beginning I tried to be active, but then I hit the bottom, because all that makes no sense – too much of a nerve-wracking thing when you see how people seek to be in power and use it for their personal gains, and others – especially young people – emigrate looking for a job" (Drasius, 1973). Such attitudes mostly expressed in private circles gradually form a new social conformism.

The third type of religious indifference is expressed in personal unbelief or nontheism as a not publicly manifested orientation and action directed against the belief in God. This group of six informants (both men and women) differed from others in two essential aspects: they were not baptized or did not know about it, and nobody in their family or among their fellowmen practiced and personally witnessed the religious attitude towards reality as well as genuine religious practice in the early period of the informant's life: "There were even no questions or doubts about religious matters..." (Algis, 1967). "I am not baptized until now and there is no need for it. My grandparents from my mother's side were even 'red', as people say about those who were Soviet oriented, and my mother was a party member" (Vilma, 1957); "My mother was a Communist party secretary of our city, her sister was politically active as well, and there were no signs or symbols of religion in our home, I was even sceptical about it. All my friends (perhaps it was my choice) were from non-religious families as well" (Daina, 1959). In one case there was a church-going grandmother, but the atheist attitudes of the informant's parents and full acceptance and practice of atheist life and Soviet propaganda during the school period extinguished that first fragile religious experience of early childhood: "I remember conversations with my grandmother about God trying to explain to this old woman that God did not exist, that all religion was the opium of the people. And I was sure that it was really so" (Dovilė, 1971).

Finally, in the personal lives of these unbelievers no space was assigned for God's possible existence. Their social orientations were formed in most cases by their family life during the Soviet regime: "My mother worked in the sphere of sales and fulfilled the needs of socially important people... She used her official position to provide them with goods that were absent in shops, but no... she did not steal. To steal means to steal from individuals, but what she and others did was a normal thing – help, responding to people needs" (Algis, 1967). Meanwhile, when being asked additional questions, several younger informants expressed their moral orientations to behavioural life choices defining them in notions typical of secular humanism: "Life is meaningful to me when I can help somebody who has primal needs, do good, something nice to others..." (Drasius, 1973). However, social orientations both in the Soviet period and in the present time were evidently directed to their private lives, material well-being of their family without any social activity, and they usually expressed that in neutral or ironic attitudes to Soviet reality as well as in reserved or negative evaluation of the outcomes of the post-Soviet social transition: "It's better not to know, not to go deep into this reality, but to live your private life and do your work... because people do not feel protected, so they do not risk to meddle in" (Rimas, 1965).

Conclusion

The novelty of the present research into the influence of religious indifference on social orientations in post-Soviet society is, on the one hand, in using the *complementarity* of two empirical research methods – quantitative and qualitative – to assess the different aspects of the phenomenon and to explain the findings of one research for the other; on the other hand, the post-communist contradictory situation of religious changes and transitional social orientations is analysed in relation to the former Soviet experience, which itself is already widely investigated using qualitative research methods but not yet exploring the outcomes of that experience for the contemporary state of personal religious identity. The analysis of religious indifference and social orientations in the context of personal life experiences in both radically different political-ideological systems gives a possibility to understand the peculiarities of post-Soviet changes both in religious and social life, and the phenomenon of social conformism.

Lithuania's case is interesting in this perspective because of its collectivistic religiousness (the largest part of formal or casual believers among post-communist traditionally Catholic countries) and mostly negative evaluation of existing social changes: a low level of trust in social institutions, low voluntary activity and a negative attitude towards life in general (including high rates of suicide). How does it relate with a conformist orientation as a historically long-lasting social *habitus*?

The research permits to consider that the dominant formal and nominal Catholic identity is a complex phenomenon, which accommodates cultural heritage and social compliance that support and develop contemporary religious indifference. It can lead to a further increase in individualism and decrease in Christian identity both in the appreciation of a human person and social coherence. The analysis of life histories of religiously indifferent and/or formal Catholics discloses the roots and types of this phenomenon. A peculiar outcome of the Soviet regime is the type of complete religious unbelief formed by the absence of a social possibility to meet the reality of religious life and experience – the possible existence of transcendence through the witnessing of others. It established a life frame without any possibility of space for the personal God. This new type of religious indifference or individual non-theism is not typical of general Lithuanian culturally Catholic identity and is a specific case here. However, the influence and spread of the European secular worldview among the younger generation can turn this disbelief as a religious attitude that is matched with individualistic orientations to well-being and social detachment from the political reality into a new form of social conformism. Even if people still feel less socially secure and less indifferent to existential questions and God's existence in comparison with post-war generations in Western Europe, this social adjustment as compliance gradually becomes a historically inherited social *habitus* related with the prevailing concept of an individual and the social experience of oneself. Together with the other two types of post-Soviet religious indifference and/or formal Catholicity, the religious unbelief even more embodies that phenomenon and at least partly clarifies the above-mentioned social problems of Lithuanian society.

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