# The Role of Religion in the Lives of the Last Soviet Generation in Lithuania

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# THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN THE LIVES OF THE LAST SOVIET GENERATION IN LITHUANIA [1]

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**Abstract**
This paper contributes to the academic debates about the compatibility of religion and modernity and reveals the way Soviet modernization has affected the religious values of the last Soviet generation in Lithuania. It discusses the role and dynamic of religion, intergenerational transmission, and the manner in which religion becomes or does not become a resource for an individual's social mobility. The article, focusing on the last Soviet generation (b. 1970–1985) living in Lithuania, is based on analysis of 88 narratives of representatives of this generation. Trends of religious individualism, critical engagement with institutional religiosity and conformity with religious identification with being a Roman Catholic are evident from the narratives of the last Soviet generation. The research data showed that less educated informants placed more emphasis on the importance of religious values in their lives, while more educated ones critically engaged with religion's role in their lives, those of previous generations and Lithuanian public life.
**Keywords:** religion, generations, religious socialization, social mobility, post-communist society

## Introduction

This paper contributes to the academic debates about the role and dynamic of religion in contemporary societies and their transmission via generations. It examines the way religion becomes or does not become a resource for individuals' horizontal or vertical social mobility. The paper contributes to the ongoing debates on the compatibility of religion and modernity, revealing the way Soviet modernization affected the religious values of the last Soviet

generation in Lithuania. The concept of "generation" in this article refers to the sociologist Karl Mannheim, according to whom it describes a group of people sharing a common location in the historical dimension of the social process. This group of the population shares a specific range of potential experience, predisposing it for a certain characteristic mode of thought and experience, and a characteristic type of historically relevant action.[2] As Wade Clark Roof puts it, every generation is distinctive, and yet it also shares much with its forebears; generational identity, values, and outlook are all formed out of processes of cultural exchange and negotiation. Similarly, according to Roof, religion becomes a source of continuity across generations, as custom and tradition show, while at the same time the cultural adaptability and diversity of new forms, both personal and social, are equally observed.[3]

The last Soviet generation, born between 1970 and 1985, refers to the last generation born in the Soviet Union. Its members undertook the active part of their family life (partnership formation, childbirth and child raising, and marital life) under the contextual conditions of the emerging neoliberal capitalism and social transformations in the decades from 1990 onwards. The last Soviet generation experienced social, economic, and political transformations–the fall of the Soviet Union and the restoration of the state of Lithuania in the 1990s. The gradual shift from a dominant worldview of scientific atheism in the late 1980s to the return of religion to the public sphere, the re-emergence of Roman Catholicism as the national Church and increasing tendencies of religious individualism were among the changes that might be related to the religious worldviews of this generation. The research project "Families, Inequalities and Demographic Processes," which investigated the life possibilities and choices, patterns of family lives, and social mobility of the last Soviet generation, included questions on religious values and their role. A total of 88 qualitative semi-structured interviews were conducted with representatives of the last Soviet generation in Lithuania in 2018 and 2019. The semi-structured interviews included questions about their religious values, beliefs and practices, religion in childhood, everyday religion, transmission of religious values, and attitudes toward the public role of the dominant Roman Catholic Church. In this article, based on the empirical data I will try to answer the following questions: what religious values does the last Soviet generation hold? What are the effects of religious values on the everyday life of this generation? Is religion transmitted from generation to generation, and if so, how, and how do

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[2] Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in P. Kecskemeti (ed.), *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), 276–320.
[3] Wade Clark Roof, "Generations and Religion," in Peter Clarke (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 632.

the socio-political transformations affect these processes? Has religion become a resource for social mobility among representatives of the last Soviet generation, and if so, how?

The article is divided into four parts, in addition to the the introduction and conclusion. The first part discusses the question of compatibility of religion and modernization, focusing on the effects that Soviet modernization had on individuals' beliefs and practices, transgenerational transmission of religious values, and their consequences on the everyday lives in post-Soviet (post-communist) societies. This part of the article is based on a review of scholarly literature. The second part provides analysis and interpretation of the empirical data of the research into the last Soviet generation's religious identification and religious values. The third part discusses the religious socialization and transgenerational transmission of religious values among the representatives of the last Soviet generation. The fourth part discusses the way religion contributes to the social mobility of the last Soviet generation.

## 1. Soviet Modernization, Religious Values and Their (Non-)Transmission

According to sociologist Vylius Leonavičius, Soviet modernization might be defined as a model of social relations within the modern society aiming at certain comprehensive development or hypertrophy of the elements.[4] Both the model of early modernization in Western societies and that of Soviet modernization of the Soviet period might be characterized by industrialization, urbanization, a complex division of labor, strong social differentiation, establishment of science and technology, a scientific ideology (the belief that it is possible to know reality objectively through natural sciences), and an optimistic conception of human history. Despite the similarities, some differences between these two models of modernization can be observed. The social contract idea as it is recognized in the Western model of modernization was exchanged with its imitation in the Soviet society. The Western modernization emphasized the concept of self, but in the process of Soviet modernization the concept of self-consciousness became collectivist and was supported artificially, according to Leonavičius.

Following Peter Berger and others, the secularization process has been evident in Western European societies, and was connected to the modernization process. Although Berger later[5] changed his mind about the relationship between modernization and secularization,

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[4] Vylius Leonavičius, "Sovietinė modernizacija: socialinės sistemos ir socialinio veikėjo sąvoka," (Soviet Modernization: Interaction of Social Systems and Social Agent) *Darbai ir dienos* 49 (2008), 219–233.
[5] Peter L. Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview," in *The Desecularization of the World: Resurgent Religion and World Politics,* Peter L. Berger (ed.) (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999).

empirical evidence from post-communist countries might actually be confirming his ideas that modernization leads to secularization despite the fact that Soviet modernization has been followed by *forced secularization*, as the American sociologist Paul Froese called it.[6] Like its Western equivalent, Soviet modernization included structural and societal differentiation and urbanization processes and introduced mass education and gender equality principles. However, the latter had a different practical meaning for women trying to reconcile family and work.

The impact of Soviet modernization on religion had effects on various levels of societal life. For religion, Soviet modernization meant restrictions of freedom of religion at the macro and meso level of societal life, and religion was forcefully removed from public life. Nationalization of religious property, denial of registration of religious organizations, repressions of the clergy and limitations on its activities were among the measures taken by Soviet authorities in the countries annexed to Soviet Union.[7] Such authoritarian policies led to the formation of a counterculture as an alternative to the dominant scientific atheism ideology, where religious organizations continued to pursue underground activities. This counterculture, according to Eva-Liisa Janus, included not only the dominant Christianity, but also other religions and esotericism.[8]

At the individual level, Soviet modernization, like its equivalent in Western societies, meant privatization of religion and the formation of individual religiosity, although in quite a hostile milieu organized by an authoritative regime. Religious life in the Soviet period became privatized and individualized and separate from communal life, and such trends have inevitably influenced religious life in post-Soviet society in Lithuania. The limitations placed on religious life during the Soviet period affected religious socialization, both within families and in religious organizations. The difficulties with religious socialization disturbed the intergenerational transmission of religious values during the Soviet period. The Soviet authorities introduced scientific atheism as the official philosophical worldview of the Communist Party. The Soviet era might be divided into different periods based on who was

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[6] Paul Froese, "Forced Secularization in Soviet Russia: Why an Atheistic Monopoly Failed," *Journal for the Social Scientific Studies of Religion* 43/1(2004): 35-50.

[7] Irena Borowik, "The Religious Landscape of Central and Eastern Europe after Communism," in James A. Beckford, N. J. Demerath III (eds), *The Sage Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (London: Sage, 2007), 654–669; Arūnas Streikus, "The History of Religion in Lithuania since the Nineteenth Century," in Milda Ališauskienė, Ingo W. Schröder (eds), *Religious Diversity in Post-Soviet Society. Ethnographies of Catholic Hegemony and the New Pluralism in Lithuania* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 37-76.

[8] Eva-Liisa Janus, "Some Aspects of Religiosity in Estonia," in Detlef Pollack, Olaf Müller, Gert Pickel (eds), *The Social Significance of Religion in the Enlarged Europe. Secularization, Individualization and Pluralization* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 169.

the Soviet leader–Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Gorbachev. During these periods, religious life was handled by diverse policies and the strengthening of scientific atheism was supported by secular rituals and ceremonies. However, even in the face of restrictions on religious life during the Soviet period, previous research showed that the decision of some individuals not to practise religion during this period has been influenced by various factors, including aspects of the Soviet modernization process, such as urbanization, scientific ideology, the establishment of science, and technology.[9] As social research on religious life during the Soviet period showed, individuals tended to use diverse strategies if they wanted to practise their religion, which depended on their participation in public life and work.[10]

The Soviet period in Lithuania lasted for 50 years, from 1940 till 1990. The generation born before the Soviet period therefore had to adjust to a new way of life, face an education permeated with the ideology of scientific atheism, question the previous way of life, and find new ways of transmission of their religious values and traditions to the following generation. As previous research has shown, the latter generation faced education with scientific atheism that questioned their religious convictions and led to choices between religious privatization or instead focusing on their career issues, raising children without a strong emphasis on religion. Those who wanted religious socialization for their children conducted it either at home or in underground religious organizations.[11] In general, the social and political context together with life course choices influenced religious socialization of successive generations living under the Soviet regime.

Various social researchers have examined the question of how forced Soviet secularization influenced contemporary religious life in these societies. However, the answer to this question depended on the way the researcher defined religion, the means of evaluation of the Soviet period and its policies of religion, and the level of societal life that was being analysed. The tendency to emphasize the *religious vacuum* during the Soviet period and its immediate change after the collapse of the Soviet Union seems to be exaggerated.[12] Obviously, analysis of state-religion relations during the Soviet period reveal removal of religion from the public sphere, which also affected the organizational and individual levels of societal life. However, the impact of religious antagonism in the Soviet public policy does not necessarily

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[9] Milda Ališauskienė, Ina Samuilova, "Modernizacija ir religija sovietinėje ir posovietinėje Lietuvoje," [Modernization and Religion in Soviet and Post-Soviet Lithuania], *Kultūra ir visuomenė* 2/3 (2011): 67-81.
[10] Ibid., 79.
[11] Ibid.
[12] Pippa Norris, Ronald Inglehart, Sacred and Secular. Religion and Politics Worldwide. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, 111-132.

lead to the abolishment of religion, and research on that period reveals a more complex situation.

Marat Shterin correctly observed that religious life in post-Soviet society can both support the classical secularization theorists and provide empirical data contradicting these views. Based on the Russian case, Shterin states that the social insignificance of religion is the outcome of modernization. However, he also argues that the vitality of religious life in Russia can be interpreted as "the inherent need for religion, boosted by the religious market that has emerged".[13]

Evaluations of religious life under the Soviet regime lead to generalizations about the diversification of religious socialization and transmission of religious values to the following generations. Previous social research into generations and religion in Western society, starting with examination of the Baby Boomer generation, showed diversity of religious identifications and practices among them, as well as a shift towards religious individualism and "seeking rather than belonging".[14] The social context of the Baby Boomer generation– the influence of conformist, anti-communist culture of the Cold War and the social movements of the 1960s– should also be taken into account when interpreting empirical data.[15]

Robert Wuthnow found that representatives of Generation X, i.e. the generation following the Baby Boomers, were divided religiously on lines that corresponded closely to their marital status. Married individuals were more likely to attend church and choose more conservative denominations. Non-married representatives of Generation X rarely practised religion.[16] Research showed that the representatives of families who had gone through divorce were more inclined towards religious conversion.[17] Parental divorce is linked to less frequent involvement of children in organized religiosity, and at the same time has no impact on subjective religiosity (prayers and feelings for the sacred).[18]

Empirical evidence about the trends of secularization in contemporary societies as well as increasing religious individualism might question whether religion and its values still play

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[13] Marat Shterin, "Secularization or De-secularization? The Challenges of and from the Post-Soviet Experience," in Detlef Pollack, Olaf Müller, Gert Pickel (eds), *The Social Significance of Religion in the Enlarged Europe. Secularization, Individualization and Pluralization* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 143-166.

[14] Wade Clark Roof, *A Generation of Seekers: The Spiritual Journeys of the Baby Boom Generation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1993).

[15] Wade Clark Roof, "Generations", 617.

[16] Robert Wuthnow, *After the Baby Boomers: How Twenty- and Thirty-Somethings Are Shaping the Future of American Religion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

[17] Leora E. Lawton, Regina Bures, "Parental Divorce and the 'Switching' of Religious Identity," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40/1 (2001): 99-111.

[18] Jiexia Elisa Zhai, Christopher G. Ellison, Norval D. Glenn, Elizabeth Marquardt, "Parental Divorce and Religious Involvement among Young Adults," *Sociology of Religion* 68/2 (2007): 125-144.

a role in social mobility. Typically, social mobility literature regarded society as a uniform construct, and failed to register the geographical intersections of region, city, and place with the social categories of class, gender, and ethnicity.[19] Mobility is predominantly understood in a horizontal rather than the vertical sense common within the social mobility literature. According to the dissociative thesis, social mobility is seen as a disruptive experience: mobile individuals can no longer identify with the class of origin, but do not fit in their new social class either.[20] For this reason, they might feel socially isolated, stressed out and frustrated. Socially mobile people experience dual isolation because they are poorly integrated into either social class.[21] Lack of acceptance and integration might lead to feelings of deprivation and frustration, and religion might be seen as an answer or a means for coping within this situation. The results of research on contemporary religion and its ability to help to cope with poverty were positive.[22] The research showed that search for the answers in religion might lead to an increase in intensity of religious practices and emphasis on religious beliefs.[23]

Research on the relationship between social mobility and religion has been more fruitful in religious diverse societies than in religiously homogenous ones.[24] Upward social mobility has been documented among Roman Catholics in the United States.[25] The research showed that Catholic values related to work and money contributed to relatively high saving and portfolio behavior that facilitated mobility. The results provided an important insight into the process by which childhood experiences shape adult well-being, particularly adult wealth ownership. Social research data from the US showed that trends of stratification –upward and downward mobility–differed among diverse religious groups. Upward mobility was higher among liberal Protestants and Jews. Downward mobility was higher among moderate Protestants or Catholics.[26]

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[19] John Urry, *Sociology beyond Societies. Mobilities for the Twenty-first Century.* (London, New York: Routledge, 2000), 3.

[20] Sam Friedman, "The price of the ticket: Rethinking the experience of social mobility," *Sociology* 48/2 (2013): 352–368.

[21] Pierre Bourdieu, *The State Nobility: Elite Schools in the Field of Power* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 10.

[22] Megan Rogers, Mary Ellen Konieczny, "Does religion always help the poor? Variations in religion and social class in the west and societies in the global south," *Palgrave Communications* 4/1(2018): 1-11.

[23] Inge Sieben, "Child-rearing values: The Impact of Intergenerational Class Mobility," *International Sociology* 32/3 (2017): 369-390.

[24] Marianne El Khoury, Ugo Panizza, "Social Mobility and Religion: Evidence from Lebanon," *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion* 16/1 (2005): 133-160.

[25] Lisa A. Keister, "Upward Wealth Mobility: Exploring the Roman Catholic Advantage," *Social Forces* 85/3 (2007): 1195-1226.

[26] Darren E. Sherkat, *Changing Faith. The Dynamics and Consequences of Americans Shifting Religious Identities*, (New York and London: New York University Press, 2014), 138-139.

Research on social mobility, education and religion in contemporary Scotland showed that within younger cohorts there was no religious difference in social status, and that in older cohorts Catholics were generally of lower status than Protestants and the non-religious. Social fluidity did not, however, vary among religious groups, even for older cohorts, and did not change over time. The reason for convergence in the social status of religious groups over time was probably the equalizing of educational attainment among the groups: there was no evidence for any of the cohorts that the labor-market rewards for education differ by religion.[27]

The relationship between social mobility and religion are under-researched in post-communist societies. Such societies underwent radical political democratization and neoliberal economic transformations, and the impact of these changes on individuals' life choices and social mobility patterns remains a challenge for social researchers. The specific social structure and planned economy during the Soviet period allowed mainly for in-class social mobility as a part of social experimentation with social classes in these societies. The antagonistic regime policies toward religion in the former Soviet Union eliminated the function of religion to become a resource for social mobility. However, with the socio-political transformations these societies went through, the function of religion to become a resource for social mobility might have been restored, and it therefore needs further investigation.

In the following section I will discuss the issue of religious identification and religious values of the last Soviet generation based on the collected empirical data.

## 2. Religious Identification and Religious Values of the Last Soviet Generation

Social scientists see identities as the qualities that individuals attribute to themselves, and distinguish social and self-consciousness identities. The source of social identity becomes gender, sexual orientation, citizenship, religion, etc. Social identity indicates how the individual is seen by others and the qualities attributed to him or her. Individuals may bear diverse identities at one time, combine them, and reconstruct themselves. The intersections of various identities might lead to inner conflicts, withdrawal from society, self- and group isolation. Meanwhile, religious identity might be chosen, and in contemporary Western societies there is an evident shift from inheritance of religious identity to choice.[28] In contemporary Eastern European societies, however, in the majority of cases religious identity

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[27] Lindsay Paterson, "Religion, social mobility and education in Scotland," *The British Journal of Sociology*, 57/3 (2006): 353-77.
[28] Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (New York: Doubleday, 1967).

is still considered to be the inherited one, as social research data reveals that identification with the usually majority religious denomination does not coincide with everyday religious life.[29] By providing an answer in the survey about religious identity, respondents were usually focused on what they were not, and not what they actually were.[30] Religious identity is used as a social marker mobilizing against others that are seen as a threat. Religious identity theories state that the mentioned mobilizations are strategies and might change over time and context. These are also rational efforts to obtain power over others.[31] The definitions of religious identities and their measurements have an influence on our knowledge about the groups. Religious identity might be liminal, and practices and religious identity might not coincide. Social research data shows the rather low importance of religion, engagement in its practices, and low level of knowledge about religion within Lithuanian society, despite the fact that the majority of the population consider themselves to be Roman Catholics.[32]

Our empirical data shows that religious identification in the last Soviet generation was typically Roman Catholic, emphasizing that "this is how it is and how it should be." The leitmotif of Roman Catholicism being a national religion, or, to be more precise, a national Church, is one of the explanations for religious identification with this particular religion.[33] As research on the role of religion in post-communist societies has shown, during the transformation period these societies were shifting towards the homogeneous religious field supported by the state privileged national Church. This also happened in Poland, Russia, Armenia, and Lithuania.[34]

As we see, further religious identification also has some content. "Do you believe in God?" was the first question we asked our interlocutors, and their responses were diverse. Women tended to speak more freely about their religion, beliefs and practices, while men were

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[29] Irena Borowik, Tadeusz Doktór, *Pluralizm religijny i moralny w Polsce* [Religious and moral pluralism in Poland] (Zakład Wydawniczy Nomos, Kraków 2001).

[30] Abby Day, Lois Lee, "Making sense of surveys and censuses: Issues in religious self-identification," *Religion* 44/3, (2014): 345–356.

[31] Abby Day, *Believing in Belonging. Belief and Social Identity in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

[32] Jolanta Kuznecovienė, Aušra Rutkienė, Milda Ališauskienė, *Religingumas ir/ar dvasingumas Lietuvoje: religijos sociologijos perspektyvos: mokslo studija* (Kaunas: Vytauto Didžiojo universitetas, Pasaulio lietuvių kultūros, mokslo ir švietimo centras, 2016); Rūta Žiliukaitė, Arūnas Poviliūnas, Aida Savicka, *Lietuvos visuomenės vertybių kaita per dvidešimt nepriklausomybės metų* (Vilnius: Vilniaus universiteto leidykla, 2016)

[33] Eileen Barker, "But Who's Going to Win? National and Minority Religions in Post-Communist Society," in Irena Borowik and Grzegorz Babinski (eds), *New Religious Phenomena in Central and Eastern Europe* (Krakow: Nomos Publishing House, 1997), 48-49.

[34] Anna Grzymala-Busse, *Nations under God: How Churches use their Moral Authority to Influence Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015); Ingo. W. Schröder, "The Elusive Religious Field in Lithuania," in Milda Ališauskienė and Ingo W. Schröder (eds) *Religious Diversity in Post-Soviet Society: Ethnographies of Catholic Hegemony and the New Pluralism in Lithuania* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 79–98.

more reserved in their answers. A quite typical answer was "I believe in God but am not practising," followed by a further explanation–"we are occasional Catholics, like the majority." Some religious interlocutors were also observed, including women who had become religious and practising after giving birth to their children, and other individuals disclosed their involvement in the Lithuanian Catholic Federation "Ateitis" (The Future)[35] as the crucial factor for their religious life. Possibilities to join and engage in the activities of religious youth organizations are a feature of the last Soviet generation that was not available for previous generations living under the Soviet regime, when religious organizations had to endure underground activities.

*"I believe in God, believe that there is higher power that is ruling everything, otherwise I believe life would be meaningless. But the confession, priests... I pray at home. And the oath sworn in front of God, that until God separates us and so forth, it is really important for me."* *(*Vaida, female, b. 1978*)*

Vaida's narrative shows another aspect of the religious values of the last Soviet generation. She questions the institutional aspect of religion, emphasizes the individual relationship with God and expresses a critical attitude towards organized religion and the clergy. This type of narrative shows the tendency amongst representatives of the last Soviet generation towards criticism of religion, particularly towards the Roman Catholic Church, as well as patterns of anticlericalism. Similar tendencies of criticism of religion were also observed in other European societies.[36]

The narratives of the last Soviet generation show that religion is seen firstly as a marker of rites of passage – baptism, first communion, marriage, and funerals. The leitmotif of changing one's religion can also be found in the narratives of the representatives of the last Soviet generation. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the borders opened and possibilities for mobility increased, bringing in intercultural partnerships and marriages. As some of our interlocutors said, they had to go through a process of inner discussions regarding whether to convert to another religion—typically Islam—although our sample did not include converted individuals. The narratives of those living in intercultural partnerships and marriages showed a tendency to rationalize everyday religious life, choosing religious education on rational

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[35] Lithuanian Catholic Federation "Ateitis" is a youth organization uniting Catholic schoolchildren, university students, and alumni.

[36] Jörg Stolz, Judith Könemann, Malory Schneuwly Purdie, Thomas Englberger, Michael Krüggeler, *(Un)Believing in Modern Society. Religion, Spirituality, and Religious-Secular Competition* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), 135.

grounds or based on convenience, a certain "separation wall" between diverse religious traditions on a daily basis, and adaptation to religious diversity at home.

Roman Catholicism is considered to be the religion of the Lithuanian population. The majority identify with it.[37] The process of religious socialization and religious patterns of everyday life, as well as the questions of whether religion, considered as a resource in the lives of the last Soviet generation, should be analysed in more depth, will be examined in the following section of this article.

## 3. Religious Socialization of the Last Soviet Generation and (Non-)Transmission of Religious Values

The religious socialization of representatives of the last Soviet generation (1970–1985 birth cohort) included both primary (home) and secondary (institutional) socialization when the subject of religious education was introduced into public schools in 1991. As the last generation of the former Soviet Union, this cohort also became the first generation to actually receive institutional religious socialization in public schools. During the Soviet period, institutional socialization almost in underground Roman Catholic Church circles also served religious socialization of the previous generation, and in some cases for the analysed one too. However, during the period of late Brezhnevism, sometimes identified as an era of stagnation, persecutions of religion were softened, and thus more people were able to practise religion within the territory of the Soviet Union.[38] The religious socialization of the last Soviet generation has also been affected by later developments in the socio-political area. Religious socialization's theoretical approach to the way individuals become religious is more relevant when discussing empirical data from Lithuania, as its society is religiously homogenous. Religious socialization theories explain religious continuity rather than religious change, and the case of Lithuania shows religious continuity and transmission of religious values from generation to generation.

Our empirical data shows that the last Soviet generation was typically socialized into religion with the help of the generation of their grandparents. This generation demonstrated

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[37] Dalia Ambrozaitienė, Rasa Balandienė, Natalja Nikiforova, Eglė Norušienė, Edita Onichovska, Vanda Vaitekūnienė, Julija Važnevičiūtė, and Asta Vildžiūnienė, *Lietuvos Respublikos 2011 metų gyventojų ir būstų surašymo rezultatai* (Vilnius: Lietuvos statistikos departamentas, 2013).

[38] Sonja Luehrmann, "The Spirit of Late Socialism and the Value of Transformation: Brezhnevism through the Lens of Post-Soviet Religious Revival", *Cahiers du Monde Russe* 54/3–4 (2013), 543–563.

aspects of life with religion with their own example–faith and knowledge about it as well as participation in rituals.

The narratives reveal that, during the period of socialization, the generation of the parents of the last Soviet generation was typically not religious, sometimes believing but not practising. The importance of the grandparents' generation and its impact on religious socialization is emphasized in the narratives.

*This* [Catholicism] *is transmitted from parents and grandparents. I was baptized, taken to first Communion, learned the Bible and accepted it. (...) This is what you have to do. (*Adomas, male, b. 1970*)*

*I took first Communion because of my grandmother, she wanted it very much and later the Confirmation Sacrament, too. Because my grandmother, my father's mother was very active religiously... My parents, they were not married in church and they were not practising. (*Dovilė, female, b. 1980*)*

*My grandmother was religious, she went to church because everyone did. She motivated me to go to church, bought me sweets and ice cream, sometimes even gave me money after I went to church. (*Domas, male, b. 1978*)*

As the narratives show, the religious socialization of the last Soviet generation was typically initiated by the grandparents and motivated by various means, while the parents' generation seemed not to be involved in the process. The narratives also show the social context where the last Soviet generation received its religious socialization: above all, the mechanism of social control imposed by the society–"this is what you have to do."

*It* [religion] *took little space in my life. I was baptized when I was eleven, because the religion teacher found out and organized it. (*Antanas, male, b. 1981*)*

The role of institutional religious socialization is also evident from the narratives of representatives of the last Soviet generation. Antanas's narrative shows that his baptism was initiated by his religion teacher. As noted above, this generation was the first to receive institutional religious socialization at public schools, where religious education was introduced in 1991. From 1993, teachers of religious education were trained at state university – Vilnius Pedagogical University. Social control over the religious socialization of the new generations was supported by the state, privileging Roman Catholicism as the religion of the majority of the population.

Patterns of religious socialization of representatives of the last Soviet generation reveal a tendency to view Roman Catholicism as a sacred canopy of Lithuanian society, to use Peter Berger's term, where religion as a system of symbols and beliefs provides meanings for an

individual's life, although not as a lived religion, as the further empirical data illustrates. The trends of privatization of religion and individual religiosity are evident from the informants' narratives about their religious practices.

*If someone chooses to attend church every Sunday, good for her. For me it is more important to prepare pancakes for my children on Sunday. (*Lina, female, b. 1981*)*

*If I believed, I would transmit my faith, but if I do not believe then it is not fair. Even despite the pressure we received from my mother (*Domas, male, b. 1978*)*

*We go to church every Sunday and the children do not have questions about it. If we are away, the children go to church on their own. (*Vytautas, male, b. 1981*)*

*As parents we have the duty to raise our children according to our faith. (*Paulius, b. 1976*)*

The narratives reveal trends of religious individualism and conflicts while trying to reconcile family obligations to transmit religious values to the following generation. According to Stolz et al., one of the areas where religious and secular competition arises in contemporary societies is leisure time, and thus Sunday becomes a leisure day instead of a day dedicated to spiritual and religious needs. The other area of religious and secular competition is children's upbringing, in which parents search for answers regarding the balance between religious and secular upbringing. Life-cycle rituals are another area of religious and secular competition.[39] The narratives of members of the last Soviet generation provide a good illustration of religious and secular competition and the tensions arising around it. At the same time, the narratives of representatives of the Soviet generation also showed that there are at least three types of relationship with the practising of religion and transmitting this pattern of behavior to children. The indifferent type of representatives of the last Soviet generation questioned the preferences of religious practices versus quality family time. The non-believers thought it would not have been fair to take their children to church. The traditionalist type emphasized the obligation to educate children according to their religion.

Differences in the attitudes toward children's religious socialization depending on the informants' education can also be observed in the narratives. Informants with higher education were more open to different options of religious socialization and emphasized the choice of children to be made when they mature. Informants with a professional or non-university degree were stricter about children's religious socialization and emphasized their parental duty to socialize religion into their religious values. While defining religious socialization, Sherkat

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[39] Jörg Stolz, Judith Konemann, Mallory Schneuwly Purdie, Thomas Englberger, *(Un)Believing in Modern Society. Religion, Spirituality and Religious-Secular Competition* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), 44.

indicated that during this process individuals "are taught what to valueby their parents, grandparents, siblings, and other trusted relations".[40]

Important agents in the religious socialization of both the representatives of the last Soviet generation and their children were grandmothers. Social pressure from the grandparents' generation as questions of transmission of religious values arise seems to be very typical according to the narratives. Representatives of the last Soviet generation were religiously socialized by their grandmothers, while their parents were committed to public life and career. As the children of the last Soviet generation are born, their grandparents, who were not religious when their children were raised, are now taking over the social pressure about performing the religious socialization of their grandchildren and rituals like baptism and first Communion. This empirical data allows us to link religious life with age. As other social research data indicates, as people get older, religion and its values tend to become more important to them, and being religious or spiritual at an older age also influences one's welfare.[41] The period of life of growing children, reconciliation of family and job seems to be very intense for contemporary individuals, and, as our empirical data indicates, their responsiveness for transmission of religious values decreases.

In the following section I will focus on the role religion plays in the social status, stratification and social mobility of the representatives of the last Soviet generation.

## 4. How is Religion Related To the Social Status and Social Mobility of the Last Soviet Generation?

The project "Families, Inequalities and Demographic Processes" and the empirical data that was gathered focused on the family relations, trends of procreation, subjective and objective evaluations of social status and social mobility. The role religion plays in these aspects of individuals' lives was not the direct aim within this project, and there were no questions asked about it. However, empirical data provided an insight into the role religion played.

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[40] Darren E. Sherkat, *Changing Faith:The Dynamics and Consequences of Americans Shifting Religious Identities*. (New York and London: New York University Press, 2014), 56.
[41] Susan H. McFadden "Religion, spirituality, and aging," in James E. Birren, K. Warner Schaie, Ronald P. Abeles, Margareth Gatz, & Timothy A. Salthouse (eds), *The Handbooks of Aging. Handbook of the Psychology of Aging* (Academic Press, 1996), 162–177; Joanna Malone, Anna Dadswell, "The Role of Religion, Spirituality and/or Belief in Positive Ageing for Older Adults," *Geriatrics* 3/2 (2018): 28.

Social research into relations between religion and social mobility has shown that individuals were seeking religious affiliation in order to be granted higher status in society. These findings were relevant for research into religiously diverse societies, where individuals applying a rational choice approach chose their religious affiliation based on rational grounds. Under such circumstances, religious affiliation may provide social connections to people with similar social status. However, religiously homogenous societies might question these findings, as religious affiliation usually has different grounds, for instance, the relations between ethnic, national, and religious identities. In Lithuania's case, the majority of society is affiliated with Roman Catholicism because of its relations with nation-building processes and resistance to the Soviet regime. Our empirical data shows that there is almost no relationship between religious identification and social status among the representatives of the last Soviet generation.

However, differences between social status and religion occurred while investigating religious practices. The more intensive religious practices were found among representatives of the last Soviet generation with lower education, with lower social and economic status, as well as those who are divorced and suffer poverty. Regarding social mobility, more religious were those who felt that they had remained on the same social level as their parents or had even descended. These informants saw religion as a shelter from the problems. As Rimas's (b. 1984) narrative showed, his family with two children suffers from economic shortages; he and his wife have to work a lot to keep up and need help with their children. The role of the religious community–Charismatic Catholics–is very important in providing childcare support for Rimas's family.

**Conclusions**

The Soviet regime's policy on religion and Soviet modernization affected the way religion was experienced in Soviet society, the way its values were perceived and the way they were transferred from generation to generation. Religious individualism and religious privatization were among the main effects of Soviet modernization on religion in the individual's life. The religious values expressed in the narratives of the last Soviet generation illustrate this. The religious socialization of the last Soviet generation and the following generations is a matter of social pressure from the generation of their grandparents, while parents typically emphasize the possibility of religious choice for their children. The role religion plays in the social status and social mobility of the last Soviet generation is scarcely

evident from the narratives and thus leaves the question about this relationship open for further investigation, preferably in the form of quantitative research.

The empirical data presented above provides a qualitative glimpse into the role religion plays among the representatives of the last Soviet generation. This data contributes to previous research that showed the decreasing role of religion in the younger cohorts in comparison to older generations in the post-communist society.[42] The last Soviet generation is the middle generation, and its narratives provide solid foundations to support these statements as well as to illustrate them.

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[42] Pippa Norris, Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular. Religion and Politics Worldwide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 119.

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