



NORWEGIAN
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Longing for something in between

An empirical study on dilemmas Christian multicultural youth encounter in
their congregations

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Preface

What prompted this study was my interest in a particular group within the churches of Oslo—multicultural youth and young adults. I personally see great potential in this group of multicultural, Christian youth when it comes to developing congregations that are relevant to the challenges of today and tomorrow. At the same time I think it is important that the churches they attend understand the dilemmas these youth face and that they respond to these in a good way. Hopefully this thesis will contribute in this regard.

This study would not have been possible without the contributions of several people. First and foremost I wish to thank the youth and young adults who willingly shared their experiences with me through questionnaires and interviews. Discussions with these young people were the best part of conducting this research! Thanks also to the leadership group in Kristen Multikulturell Ungdom (KMU) who gave me access to their group. I was welcomed with open arms everywhere I went!

Thanks to my supervisors, Geir Afdal and Harald Hegstad, who guided me through the project and gave appropriate advice at each stage in the process. They helped me to avoid being overwhelmed and thereby made me able to complete my thesis. My sister, Hildegunn Valen Kleive, was a great support and gave me many helpful responses. I've learnt to trust her good judgment even more than before. Thanks too to John Krahn for his invaluable help in reviewing the English in this document and for his encouragement and good advice. I would also like to thank Rune Fiskerstrand and Victor Calvert who set aside time for interviews about the immigrant church landscape in Oslo.

And finally, thanks to my mother, Eilei Valen. This study would never have been completed had I not been able to simply jump on a train and come home to write undisturbed and receive the love and care of three square meals a day and much more!

Thanks to all of you; now my master's thesis is completed!

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Youth with a Christian and immigrant background have received very little attention from researchers in Norway. In this study, they are the main focus.

The four chapters comprising the introduction will point out some of the reasons for studying this particular group and present the research questions and research strategy. I will also seek to sketch a rough picture of the immigrant church landscape, drawing in some of the research from this field. In these chapters I will also focus on the group *Kristen Multikulturell Ungdom* (KMU) and multicultural youth in general.

Throughout this study quotations taken from the interviews will be labeled with the following codes:

- F-te = female teenager
- M-te= male teenager
- F-tw = female in her twenties
- M-tw = male in his twenties

Chapter 1: The Research Question and Background

Background

In recent decades, the number of immigrant churches¹ in Oslo has grown dramatically. Out of a total of 212² congregations, 99 are immigrant churches. From 2000 to 2010 almost 85 % of the *new* congregations in Oslo were immigrant churches. These facts alone are enough to support the assertion that the church landscape has changed significantly in Oslo during the past decade.

A new generation is growing up in this changed landscape. One group within this generation is of special interest to this study: youth and young adults with immigrant parents. The persons interviewed in this study have spent much, if not all, of their lives in Norway. They live in and around Oslo in an environment which is often dissimilar to the environment one or both of their parents experienced growing up. This group interacts with people from different cultures on a daily basis.

From this group I have chosen to study youth who attend church. Some have found their place in an immigrant church, others in varying non-immigrant churches. In either case these youth will often have *multiple* cultural identifications. This study will take a closer look at how the youth handle the dilemmas that arise in their churches as a result of their multiple cultural identifications.

As we will see in chapter two, some master theses have focused on the degree of integration of immigrants in non-immigrant churches. Others have presented specific immigrant worship communities. But the situation of the *young multicultural Christians* has received only a few remarks or paragraphs within these reports. My hope is to shed some light on this specific group and explore some aspects related to the dilemmas that can arise in their

¹ Defined as churches where the worship services are held in a language other than Norwegian.

² Statistics are taken from the DAWN 2010 report. See more about this report in chapter two.

churches. Hopefully this will catch the attention of other researchers who can help to broaden the understanding of this multi-faceted group.

Pastoral care is not mentioned in the research question. Still the findings of this research should be of interest for all whose pastoral care includes young multicultural Christians. At the end of this thesis I will therefore point out some of this specific group's assets and challenges that may be helpful from this perspective.

Research Question

The youth in this study belong to various churches. Some attend typical immigrant churches, others more multicultural churches or various non-immigrant churches. Wherever they find their place, they have to relate to different cultures and different ways of expressing the Christian faith. Sometimes the youth are not ready to comply with the cultural and/or religious expectations they meet in their congregations. In these situations dilemmas arise and it is these which create the backdrop for the main research question of this project:

How do Christian youth with integrated plural identities deal with dilemmas they face in the churches they attend and how do these experiences influence how they participate in their congregations?

In the following section each part of the research question will be defined:

Integrated plural identity

Additional facts concerning the youth in this study can be found in chapters four and six. Here I will just explain the term "*integrated plural identity*", a term I have borrowed from Sissel Østberg (2003). She studied young Norwegian Pakistanis and how their identities developed. Navigating in their context of cultural plurality, they developed a multicultural competence which resulted in what Østberg calls the *integrated plural identity* (2003: 103-104). For Østberg this concept involves the ability to bring out different sides of themselves in different contexts and present themselves in various ways, and to be able to do this

without splitting up the personality. Their self-understanding is integrated, not divided. They have only one undivided “self”³ (Østberg 2003: 46). Although Østberg’s research was focused on Muslim families, her findings regarding Muslim youths’ identities are relevant to the Christian youth of this study. Both the complexity and the sense of being *one* “self” shone through during my interviews.

But being both plural and integrated in their identities does not prevent the multicultural youth in this study from facing dilemmas which arise in their churches. On the contrary it may even cause some of the dilemmas, and this is exactly what this thesis seeks to explore.

Choice of dilemmas

I chose to use the word *dilemma* in the research question since *conflict* in many cases is too strong a word and excludes situations where the youth and their churches are in fruitful dialogues. Yet the word *dilemma* can contain outright conflicts too if these arise.

I will not try to distinguish between dilemmas which are the result of the youths’ plural cultural identifications, and the more general generational conflict. Most often these are intermingled and very difficult to distinguish from each other.

Dilemmas can be found in many forms and contexts. In this thesis I will first look at some dilemmas which occur when the youth compare their lives with the context of their parents’ homelands and church-life there. Second, I will focus on dilemmas that can arise when attending immigrant churches and then non-immigrant churches.

Dealing with the dilemmas

As I present what I find regarding these dilemmas, the focus is at how Christian multicultural youth *deal* with them. Of special interest are strategies in dealing with the dilemmas which

³ Breidlid and Nicolaisen (2000) dispute Østberg’s term *integrated plural identity*. In their view the word *integrated* emphasizes too much the coherence or togetherness of the identity. They prefer Geir Skeie’s term *transversal identity* which they think allows also less strong feelings of coherence.

repeat themselves. I will pay extra attention to indications as to how these youth understand culture in relation to religion. I will also try to identify dynamics at work when they negotiate with their parents and congregations.

Influence on their participation in church

The last part of the research question concerns which consequences it has for the participation in their congregations that they experience these dilemmas. Special attention will be given to findings that show how they perceive their own role as a consequence of their experiences. Finally I will look at what qualities they appreciate most or long for in a church.

“Churches”

First and foremost I am interested in the dilemmas that youth in this study experience in *churches*. As we will see the youth sometimes switch from talking about the dilemmas they encounter in their churches to dilemmas within their *families*. When this happened it appeared that values and cultures that created the dilemmas in the church and at home were so interconnected that the youth hardly noticed they had changed the arena. For this reason material related to dilemmas within their families will not be eliminated but used as part of the basis for my analysis.

The youth of this study attend both immigrant and non-immigrant churches. There are many ways to define the term *immigrant church*, and some end up using other labels too (Thorsten Prill 2008:15). In this research the term *immigrant church* is sufficient and it is defined as a church where the main worship service is held in another language than Norwegian. Likewise all the churches in the material that use Norwegian as the main language are categorized as *non-immigrant churches*.

Research Strategy

I have chosen an empirical qualitative research strategy. Since I have chosen to focus on a field where I'm not so much interested in those issues which are easily measurable but rather the youths' interpretations and reflections around their experiences, a qualitative approach was the natural choice. Trying to understand the dilemmas from the youths' point of view makes me an interpreter of their interpretations, attempting to "*grasp the subjective*

meaning of social action” (Bryman 2008:16). This implies that the epistemological orientation of this study is *interpretive*.

Looking at social phenomena as constantly shaped and formed by people, constructionism is my ontological position in the understanding of *social* phenomena (Bryman 2008:18-21).

My main method for gathering information has been focus group interviews, conducted during the spring and early summer 2012. Hence the project qualifies as a cross-sectional design (Bryman 2008:62). I also used a self-completion questionnaire.

The theories chosen are suited as tools to explain the field I have entered and providing terms with which to interpret my findings (Bryman 2008:7). The gathered material was decisive in the choice of theories, and all parts of the design, both research question, material and theory, have influenced each other mutually during the whole process, hence my approach is abductive. More about the research design and methods is found in part 3.

Chapter 2: Some Earlier Research of Relevance to the Field

The general picture of the dynamics linked to immigrant churches in a community has caught the interest of many researchers. I want to take a brief look at some of the existing research because it can create a backdrop against which I can compare the findings of this study.

Research from the US

In a report from 2011, David A. Roozen relates his findings from a large survey⁴ of American congregations. One of these was “*a dramatic increase in racial/ethnic congregations, many for immigrant groups*” for the period from 2000 to 2010. The members in the “racial/ethnic” and especially the mixed congregations were also younger than in the “white” churches (Roozen 2011:5-6).

In the book *Religion and the new immigrants* Michael W. Foley and Dean R. Hoge explored the role of immigrant faith communities when it came to civic incorporation and the shaping of the ethnic and religious identities of the immigrants⁵. Foley and Hoge found that parents often turn to worshipping communities in order to communicate language and culture from their homelands to their children (2007:191).

According to research on immigrant congregations from various religions done by Ebaugh and Chafetz in Houston, all the congregations in which they had field work had one or more

⁴The Faith Community Today (FACT) series of national surveys of American congregations is a project of the Cooperative Congregational Studies Partnership (CCSP) hosted by Hartford Seminary’s Hartford Institute for Religion Research (<http://faithcommunitiestoday.org/>).

⁵ The book is built upon one of seven “gateway cities” projects funded by The Pew Charitable Trust. The “gateway cities” were Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, San Francisco and Washington D.C.

group for the teenagers and young adults. This was seen as a result of the parents' concern about amoral influence from the larger society and a wish to teach religion and reproduce ethnicity. The activities in immigrant congregations were Americanized to accommodate the preferences of the youth, but in general had low participation by the youth. Among those who actually did participate, the youth showed a tendency to emphasize religion more than ethnicity, relative to their parents. Important to these youth was also the support from friends in the congregation, especially when they felt excluded from their adolescent peer culture because of ethno-religious restrictions. Struggling to work out their own identity, they also sought each other's support (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000:125-129).

In spite of the support they could feel from their peers, they also could feel estranged by the expectations from the immigrant-generation in their churches. They kept comparing the youths' behavior with the behavior of youth in their country of origin. Other problematic issues were submission to elders and authority figures, and old-fashioned and all too predictable worship. More problematic still was the lack of opportunities to contribute in their congregations in ways that felt meaningful and important. The one congregation which gave the youth influence and opportunities to participate in the decision-making was much more able to hold on to the second generation than the others (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000:132-133).

Ebaugh and Chafetz also investigated the choice of language in the congregations and found a strong wish among the parents to transmit their native language to their children. Many of the congregations offered secular language classes or had the language teaching integrated in the religious education. Many also had services in English in an attempt to retain the second generation, but with very mixed results (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000:115-117).

A mapping of immigrant churches in Denmark

Moving from the US to a context more comparable to the Norwegian one, I turn now to a study mapping immigrant churches in Denmark conducted in 2008. *Folkekirkens*

mellomkirkelige Råd together with *Kirkernes Integrations Tjeneste (KIT)* initiated the mapping and a report based on the research was written by Elisabeth Krarup de Medeiros and can be found on the website they developed⁶. The research was led by a group consisting of representatives from a wide range of denominations and Christian organizations. They were surprised to find that the total number of congregations they found (212) was 60 more than four years previously. The growth in numbers of immigrant churches was explained by recent increase in number of immigrants. They also found that earlier immigrants now had found time to organize themselves and establish churches. Workers from Eastern Europe and international students contributed to the growth as did the number of FN quota refugees. Finally new converts completed the picture.

On the website where this mapping was presented they also recognized the challenge many immigrant churches faced when trying to facilitate their youth and children. As a result of this challenge KIT have started a nationwide youth association called *Foreningen af Unge Nydanskere (FUN)* to help the churches with questions regarding this.

Research on immigrant churches in Norway

Turning to the Norwegian context I will start with the *DAWN Report 2010*. This is a mapping done by an evangelical Christian organization called *Discipling a Whole Nation (DAWN)*⁷. The report from this mapping showed a rapid growth in the number of immigrant churches in Norway. The numbers for 2010 revealed a total of 212 Christian congregations in Oslo. 99 of these were labeled as *immigrant congregations* (DAWN 2010:4). Some of these churches belonged to for instance the Norwegian Baptist Union or other Norwegian free churches, but were still counted among the immigrant churches if the main service was held in another

⁶ www.migrantmenigheder.dk

⁷ DAWN Norge (Discipling A Whole Nation) is the Norwegian branch of a network of people whose aim is to equip Christian leaders and churches in their efforts to plant new churches. Research to see development in the field of church planting is part of what they do.

language than Norwegian. The situation for the second generation was mentioned as an issue in the report, but there was no research linked to it.

Kari Austigard wrote her master's thesis on the Spanish-speaking group in the Salem Pentecostal Church in Oslo. Her aim was to present a broad picture of this group and their contact with the larger society. She found that many of the children hardly spoke Spanish and would probably be lost to the church unless they found their place in the Norwegian-speaking Salem congregation (Austigard 2008:80).

Four years later *Ronald M. Synnes* wrote in his report for KIFO⁸ that the Salem church had special worship services for the youth, meant for the youth from both the Spanish-speaking group and the Norwegian-speaking group. The Spanish-speaking youth were in majority on these gatherings, and the Spanish speaking pastor worked to recruit more youth from the Norwegian-speaking group (Synnes 2012:54). Synnes also described four more immigrant churches in Oslo; Ethiopian Evangelical Church in Oslo, Filipino Christian Church in Oslo, Oslo International Charismatic Church and St. Olav's Church. Synnes's perspective was from Putnam's theory of social capital and the idea of bridging and bonding social capital. Issues regarding youth and children were only briefly mentioned as part of the activities in two of the churches; Salem and the Ethiopian Evangelical Church. Both churches had Sunday school for children and the language used was Norwegian.

A different approach to the younger is found in *Temesgen Kahsay's* paper. Here he describes Yewongel Berhan Church, the oldest of the Ethiopian and Eritrean Christian congregations in Oslo. In this church there is a separate Sunday service for the children, and it is held both in Amharic (one of the languages in Ethiopia) and Norwegian. They also hope to hire a part-time youth pastor and to incorporate the youth into their church community (Kahsay 2010:14).

⁸KIFO: Stiftelsen Kirkeforskning; a foundation for research about church, religion and life stance in the society, focused on empirical research.

Eveline Hansen's empirical study of the Chinese church in Oslo reflects a similar approach. Here the church provides Sunday school for the children in the language they are most familiar with; Norwegian. Sunday school is directly followed by a language school to teach the children (from within or outside the church) the Chinese language Mandarin. The youth also have their own gatherings parallel with the Sunday worship. Here too, the language is Norwegian. Norwegian is used because the youth are not familiar with Christian terminology in the Chinese languages. The gatherings are more informal and interactive than the main worship service, and the youth are actively engaged in planning and leading it (Hansen 2007: 54-56).

Research on integration of immigrants in non-immigrant churches in Norway

Some of the researches available from Norway are focused on how non-immigrant congregations integrate immigrants.

Signe Myklebust's study is one example. Twelve different congregations are the basis for her research, and through leaders and lay people Myklebust presents a wide range of practices intended to promote the integration of immigrants in these churches or create contact between immigrant and non-immigrant congregations. Children and youth as a point of connection are touched on only very briefly. She mentions the Presbyterian-Methodist Church (Ghanaian) where they acknowledged that Norwegian was the language their children were most fluent in, but still they wanted to use their native language, Akan, in church in order to teach the children the language. They had considered cooperating with the church that housed them, but the time schedule didn't work out (Myklebust 2009:5).

Johanne Garmann Gullaksen's master's thesis focuses on one congregation in The Church of Norway and its' attempts to integrate immigrants. It mentions Sunday school as an important reason for some of the immigrant mothers' choice to attend that specific church. Their children liked it there (Garmann Gullaksen 2009:52,59).

Stian Holtskog's master's thesis takes a closer look at two churches, a Ghanaian immigrant church and a congregation in The Church of Norway. Both congregations share the same church building. His study focuses mainly on the particular phenomenon of two congregations sharing same space and how this situation influences their understanding of each other and the unity between them. As part of this study he also briefly looks at the

situation for the youth. The Church of Norway congregation experiences that the young families with children often stay in the area for only a short period of time. As a result, the stable core of the congregation consists mostly of retirees and seniors. The Ghanaian congregation has more youth and children but experience that their children feel alienated by the language and worship style used by their parents. To solve this problem the Ghanaian congregation looks for youth leaders who can use both Norwegian (and English) and Twi, the language used by the youths' parents (Holtskog 2012:34-35).

Turid Ekeland's master's thesis (2011) is a case study looking at a Lutheran Free Church which received many immigrants and was developing as a multicultural congregation. She found several characteristics of the church that contributed to this development. One was a common understanding among the members that the church was for everyone. Another was the spiritual and diaconal fellowship of the members in everyday life. A third characteristic was the congregation's diaconal care for people in need as well as basic agreement on a theological platform. Ekeland also found an expressed confidence that the Holy Spirit would guide and equip both the individuals and the church as a whole, and that each member had a mission to fulfill. Characteristic for this congregation was also the pattern of initiatives coming from the grassroots level, and a supportive leadership who view themselves as "gardeners", not as commanding "generals". The children and youth were not a topic in Ekeland's study.

Research in Norway that can be said to have any relation to *Christian* multicultural youth is mostly found in various master theses, and even in these youth is not the main focus.

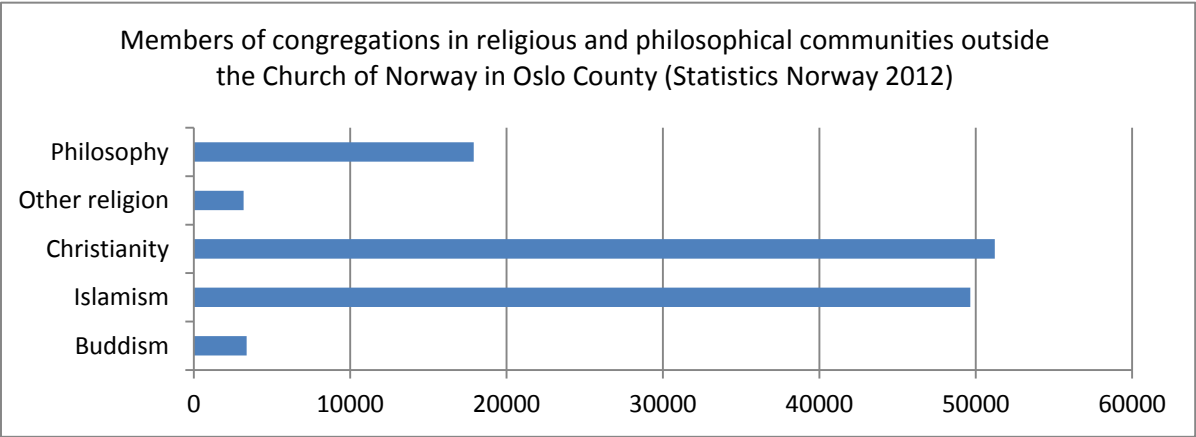
Chapter 3: Immigrant Churches in Oslo

Numbers related to immigrant churches

Akan, Amharic, Arabic, Assyrian, Cantonese, Chin, Congolese, Coptic, Croatian, Dari, English, Farsi, Finnish, French, Geez, German, Icelandic, Karen, Korean, Lingala, Mandarin, Nigerian, Oromo, Polish, Portuguese, Romani, Spanish, Swedish, Swahili, Tagalog, Tamil, Tigrinya, Urdu, Vietnamese.

If you arrive Oslo and speak one of these languages you will also be able to find one or more churches where one of the above languages is spoken in the worship service (DAWN 2010:7). Since 11 of the 19 sample respondents attended immigrant churches, I want now to present some typical features of immigrant churches in Oslo.

Statistics Norway reports that at the beginning of 2012, 19% of the population in Oslo was members of religious and life stance communities outside The Church of Norway⁹.



41 % of these are members in Christian congregations. The numbers published on Statistics Norway’s website do not give a clear picture of how large the portion of the immigrant churches is in relation to the total number of Christian congregations.

⁹Article published 4th of December 2012 at Statistic Norway: <http://ssb.no/kultur-og-fritid/statistikker/trosamf>

DAWN registered 46 new congregations in Oslo during the last ten years (2000 – 2010). Of these, 39 were immigrant churches (DAWN 2010:5). This means that, when counting new congregations, 85 % of the growth during this period was within immigrant churches¹⁰.

Based on *congregations*, it is very clear that it is the immigrant churches that are contributing most to church growth in Oslo. To relate the total number of new congregations to the number of *members* in each of these turned out to be a difficult task. Regardless of the uncertainties concerning *membership* numbers, the information available concerning the number of *congregations* still confirms the assertion that the immigrant churches represent both growth and change in the church landscape of Oslo.

The age distribution in the immigrant churches was also not published, and I was unable to determine whether the members are younger than the average in non-immigrant churches, as is the case in the US (Roozen 2011:5-6). Stian Holtskog's study (2012:34-35) may indicate that this may be the case, but this is only one example.

Growing concern about children and youth

Rune Fiskerstrand's experience with immigrant churches, based on his work in *Kristent Interkulturelt Arbeid* (KIA)¹¹, is that the immigrant churches approach their children and youth in a wide variety of ways. He senses a growing concern among the churches on this issue. Fiskerstrand attributes the wide variety of approaches to differences in culture as well as to differences in what resources are available to the churches in terms of money, location, personnel, time and so on.

¹⁰ The committee that gathered data for the DAWN-report does now work on an update and on creating a Norwegian website comparable to www.migrantmenigheder.dk in Denmark. In this committee are: Rune Fiskerstrand (Kristent Interkulturelt arbeid), Lemma Desta (Flerkulturelt Kirkelig Nettverk) and Mette Marie Bommen (integreringsleder i Baptistsamfunnet)

¹¹ KIA is a Christian organization that has worked among immigrants and refugees in Norway since 1974. Most of the immigrant churches in Oslo have at some stage been in touch with KIA.

Chapter 4: Multicultural, Christian Youth

There were 19 respondents to the questionnaire which together with the focus group interviews forms the base of this study. 17 of these were recruited from KMU, including all 12 who participated in the focus groups. This calls for a closer look at the group:

The KMU-group

KMU was initiated, and is run, by the youth themselves. In 2006 two brothers from Norway together with some friends attended a youth conference in Haag. They came back with a vision—to create a multicultural group for Christian young people in Norway. The group was named KMU, Kristen Multikulturell Ungdom [*Christian Multicultural Youth*], and it started with a summer camp in 2008 and one in 2009. Since 2010 they have had monthly gatherings in addition to weekends and camps.

The initiators were from Pentecostal churches and had African backgrounds. Since recruitment to KMU has mostly been through friends and family, those with African and Pentecostal backgrounds dominate KMU. At the same time KMU works to recruit new members from other churches and groups, and this is already reflected in the make-up of their group. On their website, www.multikul.no, they specifically state that the group is open for any youth, without restrictions, and they consciously work at being welcoming and inclusive to newcomers.

A typical Saturday gathering starts with workshops from 2-4 pm, led by volunteers from the KMU-group itself. Examples of activities are percussion, rap, dance, drama, baking cupcakes and so on. At 5 pm they start with games and entertainment after which they begin their worship together. They have established a team to lead the worship—Sifuni/KMU Praise, and the youth themselves also do the preaching, mostly by people from their leadership group. After the worship they mingle, play cards or table tennis, share snacks and socialize. The time and location for their meetings vary.

The term *multicultural* is a self-chosen label and they seem to use it with a certain pride. Sometimes they also use the term *foreigners*, but this term seems not to have the same positive connotations (see chapter 16).

Identity issues - feeling Norwegian or as a foreigner?

Trine Anker's doctoral dissertation (2011) is based on research in a multicultural primary school. Her target group is younger than those in this study, yet it is interesting to cast a quick glance on how they define themselves. Anker found that the boundaries between who was perceived as *Norwegian* and who was perceived as a *foreigner* were not at all fixed. In general factors such as country of origin, color, home rules, food, religion, looks and language defined who could call themselves Norwegian. To cross the boundaries in either direction was associated with increased status. But not all those with an immigrant family background considered it ideal to be associated with the Norwegian group (Anker 2011:130).

In *Hildegunn Valen Kleive's* study on youth from high school she too discovered that in many cases becoming "too Norwegian" was looked down upon by students with Muslim family backgrounds. Kleive gives examples of how some values which these youth linked to being Norwegian were embraced if these values were thought to be in correspondence with the Quran, while others were undesirable as they were thought to contradict Islam. Religion was the decisive factor. Culture needed to take a second place (Valen 1999:85-94).

A report from *Norsk Institutt for forskning om oppvekst, velferd og aldring (NOVA)*¹² by Frøyland and Gjerustad shows that immigrant youth in Oslo often consider themselves as foreigners. Half of all the youth in Oslo born in 1992 participated in this research. Among the immigrant youth who were born in Norway or came here before the age of seven, more than 60 percent feel as foreigners most of the time. The percentage is even higher for those who came to Norway *after* the age of seven.

At this point, this will be sufficient as a description of the target group for this research. More facts about the sample respondents are to be found in part three; *Research Design and Methods*.

¹² NOVA is one of Norway's largest institutions on the area of social sciences. It is run by the state and sorts under the Ministry of Education and Research.

PART 2: THEORY

Some of the dilemmas the multicultural youth face in their congregations spring out of opposing views on what belongs to the cultural sphere and what belongs to the religious sphere. This calls for a theory focused on religion and culture from a multicultural perspective, and resulted in the choice of Gerd Baumann's book *The Multicultural Riddle: Rethinking National, Ethnic, and Religious Identities* (1999) as a theoretical framework.

The youth in my study registered very different ways of practicing religion in the various contexts they were exposed to. At the same time, they had to make choices about how to practice their own faith. Stephen B. Bevans's book *Models of Contextual Theology* (2002) was therefore chosen to see to what degree the youth's dealing with this dilemma could be identified and explained by one or more of the models of contextualization in his book.

Finally David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken's book, *Third Culture Kids: Growing Up Among Worlds* (2009) was chosen because of their long experience with third culture kids and cross culture kids. In the cases where their definitions match the youth in this study, the findings in their book can serve as a tool to understand the attitudes and actions of the youth in this study.

Chapter 5: Perspectives on Culture, Contextualization and Plural Identities

Gerd Baumann and the multicultural riddle

The youth in this study do have more or less clear perceptions of culture and also of how it relates to religion. Yet the intention in this study is not an investigation of these perceptions as matters of their own. The focus is on the dilemmas the youth experience and how they deal with them. Since perceptions of culture and religion can *create* some of the dilemmas and since the youths' perceptions can play a role with regard to how they seek to *solve* the dilemmas, it is still of relevance to find a theoretical framework around the youths' perceptions of culture and religion. I found some of the concepts in Gerd Baumann's book *The Multicultural Riddle* (1999) as a usable in this regard; to explain the dilemmas and the youths' strategies to solve them.

Baumann's book is built up around the rethinking of three concepts as a basis for culture: nation, ethnicity and religion. The following is a presentation of what Baumann calls the *multicultural* understanding of *culture* and how this relates to *religion*.

Essentialist or processual view on religion

In Baumann's chapter on religion he describes how some view religion as baggage which you can take with you and unpack in any setting. There it is, just the same as always. This reifies the religion and Baumann labels it as an *essentialist* view. The *processual* view of religion is compared to using a sextant. This instrument gives you an idea of your position in relation to the context. Baumann refuses to use the compass as a comparison, because that indicates one objective point of orientation, and this, in Baumann's view, does not match with reality. When viewing religion as a sextant, the relational aspect is also included. Thus, for Baumann, a dialogical approach is crucial (Baumann 1999:78).

Anne Sofie Roald is the author of *Er muslimske kvinner undertrykt?* (2010). In this book she presents an expression used by Jan Hjärpe in his book, *The Islamic basket*. In principle the term can also be used within other religions. The "basket" is filled up with all the ideological traditions within the religion in question: principles, history, categories, holy books and other writings, terminology, rituals, stories, categories—in short, everything. And since it is a

basket, not a plastic bucket, some things will “leak” out while other things are added as time goes by. Different situations, places and times will decide what people take out of the basket and use, and what they just leave passively inside, maybe to be actualized in another time, place or situation (Roald 2010:18). This picture of the basket is equivalent to Baumann’s processual view of religion and can be used on cultures as well as religion.

Essentialist or processual view on culture

With this in mind we turn to Baumann’s concept of *culture*. Here too one can talk about an essentialist and a processual approach. The *essentialist* approach is to view culture as something you *have*. It is a fixed, reified package. But even if viewing culture as something fixed, we see that people develop multiple cultural identifications which allow them to, without thinking, crisscross between cultures. Here culture is something that is *made*. It is a dynamic process. This is what Bauman calls a *processual* approach to culture (Baumann 199:81-96).

Double discursive competence

Having said this, one would think that multiculturalists would opt for the processual view. But Baumann does not reject the essentialist view altogether. People seem to apply both essentialist and processual approaches simultaneously depending on what serves their purpose. This he calls having a *double discursive competence*.

“Culture is two things at once, that is, a dual discursive construction. It is the conservative “re”-construction of a reified essence at one moment, and the path finding new construction of a processual agency at the next moment” (Baumann 1999:95)

In addition to the double discursive competence Baumann emphasizes the *dialogical nature* of multiculturalism. Multiculturalists see every identity as a whole *set* of identifications. This leads to a way of relating to culture that is open to flexible adaptations and takes into account the context and each particular situation. Assuming that all identities and cultural identifications are dialogical by nature, Baumann sees cutting across each other’s reified boundaries as inevitable in a multicultural society. Culture becomes something negotiable. He describes it as an elastic web that adapts to the context.

“.... but the first thing about recognizing any culture is to recognize culture for what it is: Not an imposition of fixed and normed identities, but a dialogical process of making sense with and through others.” (1999:117)

Multicultural convergence

Baumann challenges his readers to think in multi-relational terms and poses the test-question to multiculturalist’s multi-relational thinking as follows: “Do we regard the so-called others as a necessary part of who we are?” (1999:124). When we think of who we are and what we want, the true multicultural way of thinking will include the so-called *others* as a *necessary part* of this. Yet this dialogical way of approaching each other does not express the desire to make all others conform to a new form of “monoculturalism”, but rather encourages the different parties to point in the same direction from their different angles. Baumann calls this “*the process of multicultural convergence*” (1999:126). Marianne Gullestad debates something similar in her book *Det norske sett med nye øyne* : “*This means that our shared experiences as Norwegians can be the shared experiences of being different*” (2002:78) (My translation).

People with multiple cultural identifications, use their double discursive competence in their everyday life and view each other as necessary parts of who they are. Over time they will create a multicultural convergence with other people and establish a unity and equality that gives place for the distinctiveness of each one.

Stephen B. Bevans and six models of contextualization

Contextualization is what the youth in my study practice when they find ways to express their faith in and across the many contexts they are exposed to. The youth do of course not act on the basis of a theory on how to contextualize their faith, but their practices may still be in correspondence with models developed by theorists. I will use Stephen A. Bevan’s (2002) six different models to see if the strategies the youth employ fall under one or more of his models. The models are descriptive in type, each representing a theological method, meaning that there are distinct theological starting-points and distinct theological presuppositions behind each of them (Bevans 2002:31). By using the models in this study it is not my intention to categorize the youth as belonging to one or more theological traditions. But the theological stand, even if it is not conscious, influences the view on culture, and

adding Bevans's models can complement the perspectives of Baumann. A short sketch of each model is as follows:

The translation model

This model relates to the gospel as an unchanging message which needs to be adapted and accommodated in different ways in each specific culture and context. That which is regarded as essential is kept, while that which is considered inessential can be shaped by local culture and practice. The translation model assumes there is a supra-cultural and supra-contextual content to the gospel, a sort of "naked gospel" which needs only to be given different "wrappings" when presented to different cultures.

The anthropological model

Using the anthropological model one does not study context and culture in order to translate the gospel *into* it, but in order to discover God's hidden presence *already in* it. The gospel may clarify and illuminate God's presence, but it is not inserted into the culture as something new and foreign. The strength of this model is that it takes human reality very seriously and regards it positively, the place where God can be found.

The praxis model

The praxis model focuses on social change. Contextualization is viewed very practically. Rationality and theory are not sufficient. *Action* must be part of genuine knowledge. God is one who reveals himself acting in history. As a person puts words to his or her faith, they are at the same time obligated to *act* accordingly. Reflecting on the action, one makes new choices which in turn result in new practices. These new actions lead to new reflections and so on. Reflection relates to both past, present and future actions and has liberation as its aim.

The synthetic model

This model has a positive view of what cultures can learn from each other, and its practitioners are marked by the readiness to include elements from other contexts into their own. It is a synthesis of the above mentioned models well. Other cultural contexts and theological expressions are considered a resource which can be both inspiring and challenging. One can borrow and learn from others without losing one's own uniqueness. It actually helps to do so. Something one applies to own context and cultivates it, other things

needs to be resisted. The openness and dialogue in this model suits a plural world as it takes into account the universality of Christian faith. The danger is an indifferent relativity as one tries to be open to all and everything.

The transcendental model

The authenticity of the individual's religious experience is the focus of this model. The question is how well one can manage to express one's religious experience. When you are able to express this very genuinely and authentically, then other people with the same experience and context will be able to recognize what you're talking about. Then contextualization has happened. The idea is that the basic cognitive operations are the same across cultures. It is only the concepts and images with which one uses to express the experience that are different.

The countercultural model

Users of the counter-cultural model want to confront the culture/context. When the gospel takes root within a context it inevitably also challenges it and purifies it. It calls people to a u-turn and will inevitably offend cultures as there are always elements within a culture that are in conflict with the gospel. Through the challenge of the gospel, the aim is not conflict but liberation and healing. The model does not present an *anti*-cultural view, but it wants to engage the culture and context with respectful yet critical analysis. The Christians live **in** the world and are supposed to challenge it by the way they conduct their lives.

Pollock and Van Reken: some perspectives on plural identities

Above I have chosen two theoretical frameworks looking at culture and religion from a multiculturalist view and from a more theological view. The choice of David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken's book *Third Culture Kids* (2009) is from a different perspective. Pollock and Van Reken also deal with culture and different dilemmas that the youth encounter, but the focus of their investigation is on which effect it has to experience a cross-cultural upbringing. This is of relevance in this study as the research question also includes the perspective of how their experiences influence the youths' participation in church.

As early as the 1950's, Ruth Hill Useem introduced the term *Third Culture Kid* (TCK).

According to her definition a TCK is a child who accompanies a parent into another culture.

The *third culture* refers *not* to individual ways of combining the cultures exposed to and thus

creating a new one, but to a certain culture that is *common* to those who experience what it is to enter cultures different from their parents' original culture(s).

David C. Pollock and Ruth E. Van Reken studied the TCKs further and now categorize TCKs as a subgroup of the more general *Cross-Cultural Kids* (CCKs) (2009: 31). Pollock also presents a more specific definition of TCKs:

"A Third Culture Kid is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents' culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK's life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background." (Pollock and Van Reken 2009:13)

TCKs live with the expectation of eventually returning to their parents' original homeland and culture. Therefore the wider term CCK may be more appropriate for the larger part of the youth in this study:

"A cross-cultural kid is a person who is living or has lived in – or meaningfully interacted with – two or more cultural environments for a significant period of time during childhood (up to age 18)". (Pollock and Van Reken 2009:31)

The sub-groups within the CCK definition are also, in addition to the TCKs, children of minorities, immigrants, and refugees. Bi- and multicultural and bi- and multi-racial children also belong in this group. Among the youth I interviewed we find CCKs of different kinds, and in the larger group of KMU even more of the subgroups are represented.

In the introduction to their book Pollock and Van Reken say that they use the term TCK as it is this specific population they have studied for years. However, based on the feedback they have received from CCKs of all backgrounds, they indicate that many of their findings apply to CCKs in general.

"What is it we are studying in the traditional TCK "petri dish"? Bottom line: it is here we can begin to see the first results of a great, but not yet fully explored, cultural shift of our changing world – the difference between being raised in a monocultural environment or a many layered cultural setting." (2009: XII)

Selected parts of their findings, those that may be relevant to understand the youth in my study, are summed up in the following and described in form of benefits and challenges:

- Most TCKs develop an expanded worldview. They have a strong awareness that people can look at the same things in very different ways. Being able to see things from different perspectives is a very useful skill in being a bridge-builder where one seeks to help people understand each other. A corresponding challenge is confusion as to where their loyalty should lie.
- In a new situation, the TCK needs only a short time to find out how to blend in. Adaptability is an important tool. Yet the flip side of the coin comes to light when TCKs' switching between behaviors in different settings results in confusion as to who they really are.
- As mentioned above, developing observational and cross-cultural skills and the ability to be sensitive to the more hidden aspects of cultures can make the TCKs good bridge-builders.
- Because they know what it means to be a newcomer themselves, TCKs can effectively help others in their struggle to understand their new environment and to settle into it.
- A strong feeling of self-reliance is also part of the positive baggage a TCK carries with him or her. They have been exposed to change and have learned to cope with new situations.

PART 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

When I first started this project, I was interested in which pull/push factors were involved in multicultural youth deciding whether to stay in a church or not. I was especially interested in looking for common characteristics of those churches which managed to attract or retain this group of youth.

When making choices regarding the design of this research, it soon became apparent that my first research question would have demanded research on a much larger scale than a master's thesis would allow. I scaled down the project and decided to do a qualitative study based on qualitative interviews. The sample frame would be young multicultural Christians who attended church. Consequently the firsthand perspectives of pastors, parents, other groups within the churches as well as youth who dropped out of their churches, had to be excluded. Including all of these would have provided a broader understanding, but having to scale down the project I chose to narrow it down by focusing on the perspectives of the youth.

The first part of this chapter will be devoted to providing a closer description of the respondents. The second part says something about how the material was gathered. The third part looks at how the research material was processed and the methods used in analyzing it. The fourth and final section in this chapter considers the quality of the research.

Chapter 6: The Research Design and Methods

The sample respondents

In part one of this study there was a presentation of the KMU group. KMU became the main sampling frame, the unit from which I recruited sample respondents that were young, multicultural and attending church. It was through my goddaughter, now in her twenties, that I first learned about KMU and gained access to it after she had discussed my project with the group's leaders. In KMU I met multicultural youth from various immigrant and non-immigrant churches all in one place. Due to the composition of the group my sample has an overweight of youth from charismatic churches with members of African background. I rejected the time-consuming task of contacting a whole set of different churches and gaining access to their groups of youth. Had I done so I would also have run the risk of meeting youth especially appointed by the leaders of these churches. As a result those appointed may have felt obliged to be ambassadors for their congregations.

I believe that my being introduced to KMU by my goddaughter provided a capital of trust that made it easy for me to carry out the gathering of research information. The group's leadership welcomed me to their gatherings and gave my project public acceptance. Through this leadership group I became a member of KMU's Facebook-group, and could communicate practical information linked to the research project there. In addition the KMU's leader commended me to the youth in their organization through their Facebook-site as a researcher interested in the youth of KMU. On their website they presented me and my project, and set up computer links to the project description and the consent form. On two occasions I was able to meet with the whole KMU group to present my project.

I chose to include a few of KMU's leaders in the interviews too. Since my study is not about KMU itself, I found no good reason to exclude them.

Apart from introducing me to the group and facilitating initial communication with them, the leadership group left the rest to me. At no point did they interfere in terms of whom I chose to contact, or when, where and how the interviews were performed. They made no efforts to influence the process of my study.

KMU has no membership registry which meant that my method of recruiting respondents was to be present at their gatherings and hand out project descriptions and consent forms. I also managed to recruit two persons outside KMU—one through KMU and another through a choir I had connections to. Of the 17 participants from KMU, 12 also participated in the focus group interviews. Most of the 19 youth live in Oslo; a few live just outside but still close enough to be able to come to the KMU gatherings in Oslo once a month.

Of the 19 respondents, 7 were young men, 12 were young women. Highlighted in the table below are those who participated in the focus group interviews and answered the research questionnaire. Those not highlighted only answered the questionnaire.

	<i>Age of each individual</i>	<i>Average</i>
All: 19	13 13 16 16 16 17 17 17 17 19 19 22 22 23 23 24 25 25	19
Boys: 7	13 13 17 17 22 24 25	19
Girls: 12	16 16 16 17 17 17 19 19 22 23 23 25	19

Note that the range in ages from 13 to 25 seems wide. The reason for this was twofold. First, in order to get as many as possible to fill out the questionnaire, I expanded the age-limit to match the age of those who most likely would come to the KMU gatherings. Second, I was interested in looking at to what degree age mattered in terms of how the questionnaire was answered. None of the 13 year-olds were represented in the focus group interviews, but the opportunity to sign up for it was the same for all (through the consent-form).

When asked about which countries they had lived in for more than one year, 9 of them answered that they had lived only in Norway. Of these 9 respondents, 6 were among the teenagers. In addition to having lived in Norway, the 19 respondents had lived in at total of 13 different countries. Of these 13 countries, there were 9 different African countries. The 3 remaining countries were Iran, France and the UK.

At the time questionnaires were filled out and the interviews done, the sample respondents attended a total of 16 different churches. Nine were immigrant churches. The remaining 7 churches were non-immigrant.

Ten of the 19 youth attended 9 different *non-immigrant churches*. The non-immigrant churches represented a variety of denominations. Five of the non-immigrant churches used

English in addition to Norwegian in their services. Eleven of the 19 youth attended 7 different *immigrant churches*. Almost all of these churches were some kind of Pentecostal/charismatic. Two of the 19 attended both immigrant and non-immigrant churches at the time of the study.

16 of the 19 had attended other churches before the church(es) they went to now. When searching for a correlation between the kinds of churches they attended before, and which they attend presently there were no obvious patterns found. All kinds of combinations seemed to appear in relation to language as well as denomination.

Methods used to collect material

The empirical data for this research was collected during the spring and early summer of 2012. First all the 19 youth filled in the questionnaire. Each one wrote the answers themselves and many of the questions were close ended, which therefore means that my questionnaire qualifies as a self-completion questionnaire (Bryman 2008:216). Given that some more open-ended questions were added to the questionnaire, and that I was present to explain the different posts and answer questions, it could qualify as a structured interview as well (Bryman 2008: 193). In this study it will be referred to as the *questionnaire*.

One could argue that this kind of method is more appropriate when using a *quantitative* research strategy, and to this I would agree. Comparing the answers to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire with the transcripts from the focus group interviews, this becomes clear. Some major issues that came up in the groups were mentioned just briefly in the questionnaire. Still the questionnaire was useful in gathering and organizing some basic facts that could easily be summarized and presented on an Excel spreadsheet.

This provided an overview of the 19 youth in terms of age, gender, patterns of church attendance, language used in the church(es) they attended and so forth. Adding the open-ended questions was intended to give me a first impression of some issues I wanted to raise in the interviews. Should something unexpected and interesting surface in the answers to these questions I would still have time to include this in the interview-guide.

I recruited interviewees for more in-depth interviews from among those who completed the questionnaire. The interview-guide which I developed was intended to serve more as a

reminder than a rigid list to get through. This method of conducting unstructured interviews is also known as qualitative interviews (Bryman 2008: 436). One of the interviews was done while I was still developing the questionnaire. At one point I noticed that two of the youth who had just completed their questionnaires at the same time, started to reflect together after having handed in their questionnaire forms to me. Reflecting on what I had witnessed, I realized that this kind of spontaneous interaction would not have been possible during the individual interviews which I had already conducted. My plan to do such interviews dissolved as I realized that focus group interviews would be a better method for eliciting the sort of reflections I had just witnessed. As a result I ended up with three long focus group interviews in addition to the individual interviews. In total I gathered six hours of recording. The interview-guide which was originally developed for individual interviews could still be used.

Twelve of the 19 youth who had filled out the questionnaire also participated in the focus groups. Eight out of these 12 attended immigrant churches and all were young women. Four of the 12 participated in non-immigrant churches, three young men and one young woman. When considering how to put together the focus groups, there were many choices related to age, gender, church affiliation etc. What would be the advantages or disadvantages connected to forming homogeneous vs. heterogeneous groups? I did not know what would bring out most relevant information with respect to my research question. What finally determined the composition of the groups was the very practical question of when and where the participants were able to meet. The somewhat random combinations turned out to give a quite wide perspective.

All the interviews were done on familiar ground to the youth, and I think this was important factor in establishing an informal and relaxed atmosphere in which the members of the focus group felt safe to speak their minds.

The first group was at a gathering with KMU where they would have been any way, interview or not. The group consisted of four youth from different congregations, three of them immigrant churches linked to three different African countries and one non-Immigrant church (one of the rather new churches in Oslo).

The composition of the second group was quite different, being comprised exclusively of five young women who all came from the same immigrant church which had members from

different African countries. This group too met on familiar ground, in their own church prior to a choir practice. This gave a deeper insight in one particular church, while in the other two focus groups comparisons made by the participants between the different churches resulted in other kinds of information coming to the surface. One of the young women from the first focus group also attended this focus group.

The last group had four participants from three different non-immigrant churches and one immigrant church (with members from different African countries). This interview was conducted at a camp arranged by KMU, and one of the participants suggested we meet in their room, which we did. During the interview one of group members said that this was just like the year before. He compared the situation to the camp held the previous years where some of the youth had spontaneously gathered in one of the rooms and talked and sung all until late at night.

In the focus group interviews I tried to communicate that when I suggested a theme, they were free to talk about it amongst themselves and take it in any direction they liked. If the ensuing discussion became completely irrelevant to my research, I reserved the right to bring them back to the suggested theme again. This way I hoped that the interviews would become a discussion and conversation between them, rather than a rigid interview with questions and answers in quick succession. In two of the groups this approach worked very well. Only the first group seemed more focused on answering the questions in a manner that was more like rendering a service to the researcher, not at all unwillingly, but more dutifully in a way. Yet after several initial “rounds” of answering questions, the issues behind the questions started to engage them. Soon the discussion, reflections and comparisons started to swing back and forth, requiring less and less intervention from me. When the group broke up after the interview, one of the young women—as an afterthought—said that she would have liked to discuss some of the topics in KMU in general.

I am convinced that the youth in these focus groups became conscious of the fact that they themselves were the bearers of experiences and reflections that were crucial to my research. They shared willingly from their lives. I am also convinced that they did so willingly and freely, not simply helping to enlighten an uninformed researcher. At their best, these

focus group meetings gave the participants a good opportunity to discuss issues that engaged each of them deeply.

In addition to the questionnaire and the interviews I was present at various gatherings arranged by KMU. During these meetings I participated to some degree. I took no field notes but noted that there was a general correlation between what was related in the larger group and what the youth in the focus groups related.

Methods for analyzing the material

The role *theory* has in this study is to create a framework in which to analyze and interpret the findings in the material I gathered. More about the choice of theory is described in part two of this study. In addition to that I also found it useful to use and expand Hildegunn Valen Kleive's *strictness-limit model* (Valen 1999:131) for a visual overview of the dynamics when the youth tried to define religious and cultural matters.

Theory, material and research questions have influenced and shaped each other mutually in a process which lasted throughout the project. Hence my approach is not purely inductive or deductive, but rather abductive. This is especially clear in the way theory and material "spoke" to each other in the process of analyzing the material; I looked at the material and together with the research question this led to decisions about which theories to use or how to apply the chosen theory. I looked at the theory, and together with the research question this made new perspectives emerge from the material. Going back and forth like this, the structure of the thesis begun to show itself which again revealed weak spots to be dealt with whether it had to do with use of theory, use of material or the research question.

One of the more practical aspects of *analyzing* includes the process of transcribing the interviews. I chose to transcribe the entire interviews word-for-word, despite the fact that linguistic expressions were not in focus. It was possible that some direct parts of the interviews could prove to be of great interest, though what would be important or not would not necessarily be clear from the beginning. I chose not to write down every cough and sneeze and pauses (which were few!), but made remarks about laughter, exclamations and other utterings that indicated support, recognition, confusion, disagreement or other reactions to what was said. Such reactions can help to signal how common or recognizable what was said was for the various members of the group.

I plotted the information gathered through the *questionnaires* onto a spreadsheet using Microsoft Excel. This made it easy to find averages, for example, how many countries they had lived in more than one year or how many cultures they felt any kind of relationship to. It also helped to compare information, for example, between teenagers and those in their twenties, between young men and young women, or to translate data into percentages, for example, how many attend church more than twice a month. This was easy to do with posts in the questionnaire that consisted of numbers. The answers from the more open ended questions in the questionnaire could not be counted in the same way, so these I gathered in a Microsoft Word document. I listed them under the questions which I used as sub-titles. Once again I made a distinction between young men and young women. This made it easier to look for similarities and differences in the material.

To organize the transcribed *interviews*, I used Microsoft OneNote. I copied section by section from the transcriptions and coded them thematically in OneNote under one or more titles and subtitles. Different issues surfaced during this work and contours of possible findings came into relief. As I became more and more sure of which theoretical framework was useful for my analysis, the material had to be partly recoded.

Questions about the quality of the research

Reliability and validity are much-used terms with regard to the quality of research. These originate from the evaluation of mostly quantitative research, and are not easily applied to qualitative research. Bryman proposes Guba and Lincoln's alternative criteria for qualitative research. Especially he focuses on the term *trustworthiness* (Bryman 2008:377).

In an effort to achieve *credibility* and *transferability*, I have sought to secure the trustworthiness of this research.

Credibility can be achieved by using respondent validation or triangulation. I did not go back to the youth with my findings, seeking confirmation, that is, respondent validation. But I have used more than one method. The informal observation of youth in the larger KMU group confirmed the findings from the focus group interviews. The questionnaire basically did the same, but since the written responses were naturally shorter – given limited space on the questionnaire-- they did not always reflect the degree to which different issues were

of major or minor interest to the youth. Using multiple sources this way is also recommended by Robert K. Yin (Yin 2009:40). But he labels such a use as *construct validity*.

The matter of theoretical saturation is also an issue to consider with regard to the question of credibility (Bryman 2008:477). I do not believe I reached the stage of complete saturation. But I am convinced that there were sufficient repetitions in my material to warrant the conclusion that there is credibility in the findings in this study.

Transferability is about to what degree the findings derived from the case studies in a research project can be transferred to other cases. The description of the youth in my research and of KMU which were the main sampling frame is done to obtain this transferability. Whether a case is similar to the ones in this study (and the findings therefore can be transferred) can be discerned by comparing with this description. Yin relates this way of obtaining trustworthiness to *external validity* and calls it *analytic generalization*, opposing the *statistical generalization* which is more applicable to survey research (Yin 2009:43).

In assessing my research findings, the reader should bear in mind certain considerations when judging the degree of transferability/external validity. First, there is an overrepresentation of respondents who have one or another *African* identification. This leads to a second question as to whether my findings would be transferrable, for example, to churches where most of the members have Asian background. Thirdly, *charismatic* immigrant churches are overrepresented in my material. Still, in the two focus groups where there were youth from *different* immigrant churches, these youth themselves expressed surprise at how similar their experiences were. Utterances of recognition were common.

Using qualitative methods studying social phenomena, it is of utmost importance to evaluate how the researcher conducts him or herself. I chose to participate in KMU's gatherings and was part of the group as they worshipped. This was natural to me as a Christian, but I had to ask myself whether this manner of participation might influence my research. On the one hand I thought that it would be an asset for the youth to view me not only as a researcher coming in from the outside, but also as a fellow believer. This, I think, has something to do with trust. But it also has to do with the fact that the youth didn't need to think of themselves as needing to "translate" their worship experience for an outsider. In some matters they didn't have to think of how to explain things in words understandable to a non-

believer. Instead they could just focus on the matter at hand. On the other hand it is possible that, had I not shared the same faith, or had they not known where I stood, my questions could have brought out other issues. There is also the possibility that their recognizing me as a Christian would play into what answers they thought I expected to hear in answer to my research questions.

One last perspective on my role as a researcher: a few times I felt like a sort of mentor or therapist listening patiently to the frustrations expressed by some of the youth related to their situation in their churches. I didn't feel uncomfortable with this as I never picked up any kind of overt expectations to give advices or actively engage myself in their situation. I was most aware that they appreciated that someone was interested in them and was willing to listen to them. I found it possible to combine this role with that of a researcher.

PART 4: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The aim in this part of the study is to describe and discuss the dilemmas the youth experience related in the gathered material.

- Since the context of the dilemmas the youth describe is mostly churches, and all the youth are active churchgoers, chapter 7 is devoted to the question of why they attend church.
- The chapters 8 - 12 are about the actual dilemmas which these youth face and how they deal with them. There are dilemmas caused by comparisons with youth and church-life from the parents' homelands and dilemmas from immigrant churches as well as non-immigrant churches in Norway. Finally one chapter is devoted to dilemmas related to language (chapter 11) and one to music (chapter 12).
- Chapter 13 examines one of the often repeated strategies the youth use in order to handle the dilemmas: The attempt to distinguish between culture and religion.
- Some aspects connected to the negotiations the youth enter with their parents and the immigrant generation in their churches are the main topics in chapter 14.
- Examples of how the youths' experiences influence their participation in the church and how they perceive their own role are treated in chapter 15 and 16.
- Finally, in chapter 17, attention is directed towards identifying those qualities in a church which their experience has made them treasure or long for.

Chapter 7: Reasons to Attend Church

Most of the findings which will be presented in part four have emerged from the focus group interviews. In this chapter I will take time to present some facts from the questionnaire related to reasons why they attend church. Their answers are not directly linked to any of the dilemmas, but contribute to a better understanding of why they continue to attend church in spite of the dilemmas they encounter.

Attending church for religious reasons

The main reason to attend a church (at all) was one of the questions in the questionnaire. 16 of 19 answers included something about listening to God's word, learning, being replenished before the new week, and especially to strengthen the relationship with God. These related themes were clearly the most important. Gender and age showed no differences in the answers regarding this.

F-te: .. to get a stronger bond with God. Get some more knowledge about the Bible and how to be a "good Christian".

F-te: ... for å få et sterkere bånd med Gud. Få litt mer kunnskap om Bibelen og hvordan man kan bli en "god kristen".

M-te: I believe in Jesus and need replenishment for everyday life.

M-te: Jeg tror på Jesus og jeg trenger påfyll til hverdagen.

F-tw: The Christian unity, replenishment before a new week, The Good Conversation, Listen to God's word.

F-tw: Det kristne samholdet, påfyll for ny uke, Den Gode Samtale, Høre Guds ord.

The second most frequently mentioned reason for attending church was to meet and have *fellowship with other Christians*. Here age did not show any differences in the answers whereas gender certainly did. Among the young women, Christian fellowship was mentioned by 9 of the 12. None of the 7 young men pointed out this aspect, yet the family's role and meeting new people came up several times in both groups.

F-te: I attend a congregation because I want more contact with God and be together with others who share the same faith as I.

F-te: Jeg går i en menighet fordi at jeg vil få mer kontakt med Gud og være med andre som deler samme tro som meg.

Only two young men and one young woman mentioned the importance of *song/music/worship* as part of their answer to this question. This is remarkable since the

focus group interviews show that music and worship style come up as a major issue. Two young men mention *prayer*, and only one consciously touches upon *culture* as a reason to attend church.

The conclusion is that however critical remarks they have about the preaching and the communication in the church, when summed up, they still feel that their bonds with God and each other are strengthened by attending church.

Friends and family are important for present church attendance

When asked about the reasons for attending their *present* church, the answers are a bit different. *Friends, family* and expressions equivalent to “*feeling at home*” are at the top of the list for all ages and both genders, while the specifically *Christian* fellowship is only mentioned once. Since this was emphasized by many when they answered the previous question—about reason for attending church at all—it is possible that they saw no reason to repeat this again. It is also possible that family and friends in church and the Christian fellowship in general are seen as interwoven. Still, there can be no doubt that social reasons for attending church are very significant. Six times the family, parents or “growing up there” are mentioned. All but two include the family, friends, the fellowship and other young people as part of their answer as to why they attend their present church.

F-tw: I feel that I belong here because I grew up in the congregation, know many here, and have friends and family here.

F-tw: Jeg føler en tilhørighet her fordi jeg er vokst opp i menigheten, kjenner mange her, har venner og familie her.

In one of the interviews, one of the young women says that the church is like a second family, and that she feels like she has many fathers and mothers there.

Compared with the findings in Ebaugh and Chafetz’ research the youth of this study seem to emphasize and appreciate a *cross-generational* perspective to a greater degree. Ebaugh and Chafetz findings underscore the importance of *peer support* (2000:125-129). *Friends are* also listed as an important reason for attending church in my study, but there are indications in the interviews that this perspective is not as important as it was in Ebaugh and Chafetz’s research. One of the teenage girls, for instance, complained about the predictability of the preaching in a youth group she attended. As she gained nothing from the preaching, meeting friends was left as the only motivation for attending. This she did not find sufficient. She

could meet friends elsewhere too. In one of the other focus groups a young man in his twenties related the same thing.

Another perspective is the connection between friends and family that was mentioned in relation to two of the immigrant churches. One young woman described this phenomenon as informal family-groups that formed the building blocks of her congregation. In these groups families and individuals were knit together and felt responsible for taking care of each other almost as if they were related.

F-tw : “Yes, we will help her”, if it is something that is happening at home, such things, if it is money problems or whatever; it is **they**, that group which helps them, see?

F-tw: “Ja, vi skal hjelpe henne”, hvis det er noe som skjer hjemme, slike ting, om det er pengeproblemer eller hva det skal være, så er det **de**, den gruppen som hjelper dem, ikke sant?

The same young woman who explained this also acknowledged there were some who had not been able to connect themselves to a family-group of this kind. Others chose not to get involved in this way.

Culture is subordinate to religion

Returning to the findings from the questionnaire, I found that *the cultural aspect* appears more often when explaining the reasons for attending their own church than when they were asked about *general* reasons for attending a church. Still, this factor is mentioned no more than four times altogether. Of course “feeling at home”, friends, family, and fellowship have much to do with culture when it comes to the way people relate to each other in their congregations. But culture, as such, is mentioned only once, language three times and meeting people from “my country” once. The music and worship-style are of course also part of the cultural aspect, and surprisingly mentioned by only four of the interviewees. Given the way they talked on and on about the music in the focus group interviews, it is surprising that relatively few focused on it in the questionnaire. The reason may be that the youth are more focused on the religious reasons to attend church than the cultural aspects. If this is the case, it is in accordance with Ebaugh and Chafetz’s (2000:125-129). Yet when asked why they go to church, what they think are the expected answers can easily pop up in their minds before they have a chance to think through the question more thoroughly. I believe the

youth gave honest answers in the questionnaire. This is confirmed by the interviews. But as mentioned above, the interviews reveal a more complex picture.

Five give *practical reasons* for attending their specific church. These included, for example, the church being close to where they live, or it being the only Pentecostal church nearby. Three of the young women also state that *responsibilities* in the ministry among youth in their church are reasons for staying.

F-tw: Feel that I have a mission, especially when it comes to ministry among youth in the church.

F-tw: Føler jeg har en oppgave, spesielt når det gjelder ungdomsarbeid i kirken.

In the interviews, this issue comes up again and again in a much stronger way (see chapter 15 below).

Summary

Learning from the Bible, strengthening one's relationship with God and being replenished before the new week were the most typical answers given to the question of why Christian multicultural youth attend church *in general*. Next came fellowship with other Christians. Song/music, prayer and culture were only mentioned a few times. Taken together, the answer to this question in the questionnaire suggests that the youth are much more focused on the religious reasons for attending church than cultural reasons.

By far the most frequently mentioned reason for attending their *present* church was family and friends. The sense of belonging together with other people in church was obviously important. Culture, practical reasons and having an important task in church were mentioned too, but far from as often as family and friends. Religious reasons were not mentioned as often as when explaining the general reasons for attending church, probably because they didn't see the need to repeat this reason since they already had mentioned it when answering the question concerning general reasons for attending church.

Chapter 8: Dilemmas When Comparing With Parents' Homelands

The 19 youth of this study have lived in a total of 13 *countries* for more than one year: Eritrea, Ethiopia, France, Guinea, Iran, Cameroon, Kenya, Congo, Malawi, Norway, Great Britain, Sudan, and Tanzania. Naming the *cultures* they felt any affiliation to, made the list considerably longer. What was interesting was that they also added groups such as “gangs of foreigners” and “Africans” or “Asians” which must be said to be very general terms. “Christians from eastern Norway” or “the Christian culture” also came up, and despite the fact that none of them had ever lived in the United States, some included “American” on their list, thereby acknowledging the influence of this culture on Norway. This list bears witness to the fact that many of the youth are clearly conscious of the significance of culture in the contexts they move in and out of.

Dilemmas arise when absolutes in one setting are seen as relative in others. Matters considered religious in one setting may count as culture in another and vice versa. This chapter will focus on dilemmas occurring when the youth compare church life and Christian lifestyle in their parents' homelands with their present Norwegian context. A quick look at dilemmas related to expectations from secular peers will also be included.

The youth in the focus group interviews made many comparisons between the various contexts they are a part of. Christians “up here” were compared with Christians “down there” or in “Africa” in general. Very often they did not name countries or places, but spoke in the terms mentioned above. At first this was a bit puzzling, but the explanation is probably that regarding some issues they talk about the general African culture, much in the same way that one talks about “the West” or “western culture”. There is no reason to believe that they use such general terms due to a lack of knowledge regarding different cultures. When they felt the need to be more specific, they made different degrees of distinctions both between countries and cultures.

Looking for the general principles and finding new ways of applying them

In the interviews the youth share their thoughts about how they feel they are perceived by Christians from “Africa”. One of the young women said that she doubted she would even be regarded as a Christian:

F-te: ..., and there is another problem too, for us, eh, Africans, that if I travel to Africa today and for example live there for a year; I believe I'd get huge amounts of critique [Two M-te in unison agrees: Mmmm.]. Because in their perspective: if I live the way I live now, here in Norway, then they'd say: "No, you are not a Christian". [The two M-te: Yes, m-m, that's true!]

F-te: ..., og det er en annen problem også, for oss, eh, afrikaner, at hvis i dag jeg reiser til Afrika og så for eksempel bor der i et år, jeg kommer til å få sånn veldig mye kritikk. [unison mmmm fra to M-te] tror jeg. Fordi i deres perspektiv: Hvis jeg lever på den måten jeg lever nå her i Norge, så kommer de til å si, "Nei, du er ikke en kristen". [De to M-te: ja, mm, det er sant!]

When asked to specify which criteria are used to label a person as non-Christian, they list up what they find most typical: how much one reads the Bible, what sort of music one listens to, what kind of clothes one wears, how one talks and even one's hairstyle:

M-te 1: It's not only how you talk. This is the most..., it is ridiculous, it is: How you wear your hair! [Explosion of laughter in the group.] I cannot walk around like this in Africa [referring to his hairstyle with braids].

M-te 2: They associate me with a drug addict.

F-te: Or a mad man. [The whole group starts talking at the same time and laughs at how "horrible" it is for a boy to braid his hair.]

M-te 1: Ikke bare hvordan du snakker. Det her er kanskje den mest, det er helt latterlig, det er: Hvordan du er på håret! [utbrudd av latter i gruppa] Jeg kan ikke gå sånn her i Afrika [viser til den flettede hårfrisuren sin].

M-te 2: De forbinder meg med en narkoman.

F-te: Eller en gal mann [Mye latter og prating i munnen på hverandre over tema hvor «hårreisende» det er for en gutt å gå med fletter.]

One of the young women sums it up by saying that she agrees that respecting your own body is an important Christian virtue and that certainly modesty is a good thing, but the idea that one's hairstyle, amount of Bible reading and the sort of music you listen to, should be made a measures of who is regarded as a Christian, is hard to swallow. The youth cannot accept this. They solve this dilemma by accepting the principle of modesty and respecting one's body, but they do not agree with the way this is practically applied in “Africa” and

simply do not find this binding for themselves in Norway. The strategy is not confrontation or negotiation, but simply finding their own definitions of how to apply the general principles in their present context. This sounds easy and straight forward, but it is a serious matter too, as expressed by one of the young women: *“I think a very big crash happens there!”*

Nonetheless, some differences are so profound that they find them a laughing matter. At the same time they readily acknowledge that had they been raised “down there”, and that had they continued to live there they probably would agree on the same matters they now laugh at. This acknowledgement shows that they are keenly aware of the influence of the social context they currently live in. In other words, they do not have an essentialist view of religion which would be to look at religion as something that should look alike wherever it is practiced (Baumann 199:78). At the same time they obviously do think that there are some sorts of general principles which help them to contextualize their faith. This is more like the processual view on religion which Baumann talks about, since religion is influenced by the people who practice it. But still it is not quite equal to viewing religion as a sextant, as Baumann suggests is most appropriate. He would not accept the idea that the youth have some unchangeable general principles underlying their various practices. In this regard, the youth are more in line with Bevan’s description of the *translation model* of contextualizing the Christian faith (2002:40).

What then is the bottom line principle when it comes to who can call themselves Christians? The youth were not asked this question directly, but indications of an answer came alongside other statements:

M-te: Imagine that this - how you talk - will judge about whether you have a relationship with Jesus at all or not!

M-te: Really!

M-te: Tenk at det - hvordan du snakker - skal dømme om du i det hele tatt har en relasjon til Jesus eller ikke!

M-te: Ikke sant!

Having a relationship with Jesus is what the youth in the focus group above found most crucial when deciding who is a Christian or not. In another focus group one of the young women talks about the attitude of her heart and soul:

F-tw: ... But is it this that God looks at? First and foremost I come there with my heart, and I truly want to praise God with all of my soul. Why then should my trousers stop me from coming to church? [Laughter and supportive expressions from others in the group.]

F-tw: ..Men er det dét Gud ser på? Først og fremst: Jeg kommer dit med hjertet mitt, og jeg vil virkelig prise Gud av hele min sjel. Hvorfor skal da buksa mi stoppe meg fra å komme i kirken? [Støttende bifall og latter fra andre i gruppa.]

This group agreed that what is in the heart is decisive, not how one dresses for church. The inner intention to “praise God with all your soul” was what mattered most in this case.

These examples show that the youth try to solve their dilemmas by acknowledging the basic principles, but allowing for the expression of these to vary from context to context. This may put them at peace with themselves, but the dilemma remains as they encounter the immigrant generation who in some cases seem to hold a more essentialist view regarding religion and culture. They have emigrated with their religious baggage and believe it can remain unchanged when unpacked in a new environment. Going back to the example with braided hair, one of the youths in the focus group explains the adults’ reactions as follows:

M-te: That’s when they start to think: What has happened to him? Is he like “them”? Are you a Christian for real, or...? That’s when they start to bring in other things that don’t have anything to do with the hairstyle at all.

M-te: Da begynner de å tenke: Hva har skjedd med han? Er han sånn som «dem»? Er du kristen egentlig, eller --? Da begynner dem å dra inn andre ting som egentlig ikke har noe med hårfrisyren å gjøre i det hele tatt.

That the youth could feel estranged by expectations from the immigrant-generation in church who kept comparing their behavior with the behavior of youth in their old country was also found by Ebaugh and Chafetz (2000:132-133). This may explain the relief expressed by one of the young women when her parents decided to trust her faith in God:

F-te: ... and then, and the parents, sort of, you know what: At the age of about 15: “You and your God, you know each other”. It is your life, sort of. And then: “OK! Thank you!” So my life has sort of changed, and isn’t this way: “Are you a Christian for real?”

F-te: ... og så, og foreldrene liksom, vet du hva: på 15-år alderen: “Du og din Gud, dere kjenner hverandre”. Det er ditt liv, liksom. Og så: “OK! Takk!” Så livet mitt er liksom forandret, det er ikke sånn: “Er du skikkelig kristen?”

Handling paradoxes by accepting them

Some of the youth have memories of Christian meetings in Africa. They talked about a lot more liveliness, and wondered how it would be welcomed in a Norwegian setting. They mentioned exorcism in particular, or in their own words, *demon-attack*. The one who brought up the theme did so very cautiously, adding that he found this issue taboo here in Norway. Once mentioned though, the others did not hesitate to share what they had heard or seen related to the subject. They described how people started to shake violently during the meetings. They got carried out of the meeting and then prayed for. All the while the preacher continued to preach as if nothing special had happened. What happened was perceived as being a sign of God's presence, showing that God was at work. In a non-immigrant church setting in Norway, the youth said that were something like this to occur it would be quite disruptive. And the opposite was also the case. The Christian multicultural youth could easily perceive a *quiet* meeting as meaningless in an African setting, while in Norway it could happen touch people deeply:

M-te: .. here people probably would have said: Yes, I could feel the presence of God today, it was.... But then they fee.... Then I think: Then many have... then it is a difference between how you can sense God, then, down there and here. Because here the meeting can be performed the regular way without me feeling that, --- I sit there, I could just as well have been on a concert and; same feeling! You know what I mean?

F-te: Yes, that's true.

*M-te: While **then** I get to hear the adults: Wonderful meeting, I could feel your praise, and .. it was **there**, sort of. While in Africa, there it is, if there had been such a meeting there, it would have been like: This was waste of time! [Support and laughter in the group.]*

M-te:her ville folk kanskje sagt: Ja, jeg kjente Guds nærvær i dag, det var... Men da føl.. da tenker jeg: Da har mange... da er det forskjell på åssen man kjenner Gud, da... der nede og her. For her kan møtet gå helt normalt uten at jeg føler at, -- jeg sitter der, jeg kunne liksågodt vært på en konsert og; samma følelsen! Du vet hva jeg mener?

F-te: Ja, det er sant.

*M-te: Mens **da** får jeg høre voksne: Skikkelig bra møte, jeg følte lovsangen deres, og.. det var **der** liksom. Mens i Afrika, der er det, hvis det hadde vært et sånt møte, da, så hadde det vært: Dette her var bare bortkasta tid! [Tilslutning og latter i gruppa.]*

Although the youth did not seem to mind some lively activity in the meetings, the youth in this focus group weren't eager to pass judgment on who was right and who was wrong, or

about how God works and makes his presence felt. They were just puzzled that this could be perceived so differently. When they didn't find an immediate explanation, they simply left it there, seemingly accepting the inconsistency. Using the basket-metaphor (Roald 2010:18), such a dilemma is simply put into the "basket" and left there, with the possibility of being actualized at some future time when more knowledge or experience can help interpret the paradox. Whether exorcism is common in some immigrant churches in Oslo I do not know. In the Netherlands there are examples of African immigrant churches that focus on this and have specialized in deliverance prayers (Jansen and Stoffels 2006:197).

Accepting inconsistencies can be a result of humbly accepting that one has not obtained all the information necessary to understand the paradox. Yet if the reason is an unwillingness to reach a conclusion and take a stand, it may result in an indifferent relativity as described in Bevan's *Synthetic model* of contextualization (Bevans 2002:95). Their attitudes also matches the TCK-profile when it comes to a strong awareness that people can look at the same things in very different ways (Pollock and Van Reken 2009:88).

Using double discursive competence to deal with dilemmas

Dilemmas do not only occur when the youth compare their current Christian practices to the equivalent practices "down there". One of the young women describes how she doesn't fit into the boxes prescribed for, not so much by other Christians, but by her secular peers. Having heard about the Muslim practice of praying five times daily, her secular friends expect her as an African to be as devout as Muslims in her prayer life as a Christian. Some are surprised when she tells them that she listens to all kinds of music, that she doesn't have a regular prayer life and that she reads the Bible when she feels like it.

One of the young men is even reluctant to use the label "Christian" in identifying himself because so many expectations are associated with this label. When people outside church ask whether he is a Christian or not, his answer is :*".. I believe in Jesus and God and the Bible and what it says"*. He resents the stereotyping connected to calling himself Christian.

M-te 1: I might pray in the middle of the soccer field when playing, or in bed when...do you see what I mean? [Group confirms.] And I may sit quietly during the worship, and in front of my

M-te 1: Jeg ber kanskje sånn midt på fotballbanen når jeg spiller der eller i senga når jeg...du skjønner hva jeg mener? [Bekreftelser fra gruppa.] Og kanskje sitter jeg helt stille på

friends it might not be visible that I'm a Christian and so on. But in a way, yes, one can detect that a person is a Christian compared with many of the others when it comes to, yes, alcohol, yes, and things like that. But at the same time I do not want to put myself into that box and call myself,--- Did Jesus actually tell us to call ourselves Christians? He didn't, did he? M-te 2: He most certainly didn't come to create a religion.

gudstjenesten og det synes kanskje ikke at jeg er kristen sånn foran alle venna mine og så videre. Men på en måte, ja, man merker jo når en person er kristen i forhold til mange av de andre når det kommer til, ja, alkohol og, ja, slike ting. Men samtidig så vil jeg ikke putte meg i den båsen og kalle meg, - -- Sa egentlig Jesus at vi skulle kalle oss kristne? Han sa ikke det? M-te 2: Han kom i hvert fall ikke for å lage en religion.

Even if he accepts that the Christian faith will have noticeable consequences, he is reluctant to embrace the label “Christian” and the expectations from outside which he is not sure he is willing to meet. Still he holds on to his Christian identification by reaching back to what Jesus said (and didn't say). Jesus is his point of reference, what can be linked to Him counts as binding and absolute, while it seems most other things are negotiable. This way of thinking is seen many times in the material. It leaves the youth free to find their very own way while still being rooted in their identification as Christians.

This way of relating to a dilemma also shows that they can use both an essentialist and processual approach—having and making. Reaching back to what Jesus did and said seems like an essentialist approach as Jesus is seen as a basic, stable and unchanging core. But they reach back in order to reinterpret what it means to be a Christian today, making their approach to the particular dilemma processual as well. Using Baumann's terminology it would be right to say that the youth holds a “double discursive competence” (1999:95).

“All «having» of culture is a making of culture, yet all making of culture will be portrayed as an act of reconfirming an already existing potential.” (Baumann1999:92)

Diana Butler Bass speak of the same kind of dynamic when she writes about the religious communities as both *bearers* and *shapers* of tradition. They must be bearers of the memory that secures continuity, and shapers of the imaginations which cause change. Using as an example the Church of the Epiphany in Washington, Bass shows how a church that fit right into the image of mainline church-decline, turned to a church full of vitality. She ascribes this

to the fact that the church held on to the historic tradition of their church (bearing), but took them on a journey into their present world (shaping). These kinds of churches are what Butler Bass calls *practicing congregations*. What identifies them is their ability to weave *traditional Christian practices* together with an *intentional way of life in community* (Bass 2004:18-20).

Bass doesn't mention immigrant churches or youth with integrated plural identities. She talks about a *culturally fragmented society* and points to the need of *retraditioning* the church in a time of a *detraditioning*. She says we live in a society where traditions received from before no longer gives meaning or bears authority in everyday life. In this detraditioned reality some congregations use the strategy of *tradition-maintenance*. This corresponds with Baumann's description of an essentialist approach to culture (Baumann 1999:83). An alternative to tradition-maintenance is what Bass calls *fluid retraditioning*: Reaching back, past conventions, to more ancient patterns and reinvent them for a new time. Bringing back practices from the past. According to Bass the process of *re-* and *detraditioning* is a simultaneous process and it is the context for both churches and individuals (Bass 2004:42).

Double discursive competence, combining essentialist and processual approaches, bearing and shaping, fluid retraditioning; Of course none of the youth used any of these terms, but they practice what the terms try to describe.

Summary

Recognizing they make different choices than their fellow Christians in their parents' homelands the youth look for the basic principles and then seek the appropriate way to apply these in their Norwegian context. This reveals a processual view where they are active in forming the expressions of their faith instead of thinking of their religion as something static. The belief that there is an essence that can be expressed in the various contexts by using the relevant cultures as a vehicle or wrapping complies with what Bevans describe as the translation model of contextualization.

Glimpses of what they thought of as the essence in their faith came in expressions like "*having a relationship with Jesus*", "*praising God with all of my soul*" and comparing things with what Jesus did and said (and not). But being confident in their own understanding of

these matters does not solve the dilemmas completely since the immigrant generation does not always share their conclusions.

The strategy of reaching back to the basic example and teaching of Jesus seem to be a safe thing to do which every Christian can support. Yet at the same time it is an innovation that happens as the youth uses this strategy to avoid practices they don't agree on and instead find new ways of applying the Christian principles. By using this strategy to deal with some of their dilemmas, they convey double discursive competence.

When Diana Butler Bass talk about bearing and shaping tradition and about fluid retraditioning she is very much talking about the same thing.

Chapter 9: Dilemmas within Immigrant Churches

Youth miss guidance on taboo issues

Cultural taboos¹³ were one of the factors that created dilemmas which led youth in immigrant churches to consider starting to attend other churches. Sometimes they sought Christian counseling on matters that were absent in the teaching in their church, matters that some cultures do not speak openly about. They report that these issues are addressed in non-immigrant churches they know of. This in turn caused the immigrant youth to begin to think that their current church should be open to learning from the other churches and be willing to confront difficult issues despite the fact that doing so had not been their custom before. This openness to learn from others' cultural and theological expressions is in accordance with the synthetic model of contextualization (Bevans 2002:90).

One of the young adults grew up attending an immigrant church. As he got older he missed what he considered good preaching and guidance around issues that many youth feel are relevant. He felt that certain areas were somehow taboo, especially if it related to dating and being boyfriends/girlfriends. When he mentioned this in the focus group, the rest of the group immediately joined in with such eager affirmation that he hardly had a chance to complete his own sentences as he talked.

His means of resolving this dilemma was eventually to leave his childhood congregation and begin to attend one of the newer non-immigrant churches in Oslo. A young woman in the same focus group understands both his dilemma and the choice he made though she herself has chosen to stay in her immigrant church. Still she conveys a deep-felt frustration on the matter of cultural taboos. Her suggestion is that immigrant churches focus on what the Bible

¹³ The expression was introduced and used by the youth, describing matters that were not openly talked about in their churches.

says about the matter in question and be willing to set aside the culture if necessary. If not she fears they will not be able to address some of the issues the youth feel relevant.

F-tw: ... because if we do not do it this way, then we'll never address the issues in a way that people are actually asking about, but they do not dare, because it is cu.. that is; it is taboo, taboo is adhered to it in our own culture.

F-tw: .. for hvis ikke vi gjør det på den måten, da kommer vi aldri til å ta opp de temaene på en måte som folk egentlig spør om, men de tør ikke fordi det er ku.. altså; det er et tabu, det er tabu-anlagt i vår egen kultur .

One possible way of dealing with this dilemma of cultural taboos is to find another church. Another possibility is to stay and struggle with these issues as best one can. In one of the churches they tried to take the youths' issues seriously by arranging a yearly forum where youth decided the content of the agenda (see chapter 14 below).

Objections to the style of preaching

The absence of some issues—i.e. cultural taboos—is not the only weakness the youth speak about when evaluating the preaching and teaching in their churches. Their critique also has to do with the *style* of preaching. One aspect was the *length* of the sermon. They were all used to quite long sermons. A sermon lasting for 20 minutes, not uncommon in many Church of Norway congregations, would serve only as an introduction in many of the immigrant churches.

F-te: If a preacher speaks very calmly in 15 minutes, then they say: No, this was no speech, for example. Yes, even if it was.. ..cause, one can speak 10 minutes, and what I see is that if you speak shorter, then you're able to catch it. If you talk a lot, you're left with nothing, really.

F-te: Hvis en predikant preker veldig rolig i 15 minutter, så sier de, nei, det var noe prek, for eksempel. Ja, selv om det var.. ..for det, man kan snakke ti minutter og det jeg ser at, hvis du snakker kortere, da får du med det. Hvis du snakker veldig masse, du får ingenting ut av det, egentlig.

Talking about lengthy sermons brought back a lot of memories in all the groups. Many remembered being a child and coping with endlessly long meetings where they only partly understood the content. In particular, they shared memories from different kinds of conventions during weekends or holidays, sometimes abroad. Whether the youth came from African or Asian immigrant churches these were experiences they all recognized. But the

remarkable thing was that the immigrant youths' reaction to these recollections was a lot of laughter. They told long stories with outbursts of laughter and comments from others in the group that indicated common recognition. It was obvious that they hadn't found these long sermons very funny at the time. Why then all this laughter? It could be the acknowledgement that this experience cuts across all the congregations and represents the fellowship of common experience. Or it could be the result of relief that long sermons have become a thing of the past, and that they can point to it together and agree that it actually *was* horrible.

Another issue identified was the *intensity* and *volume* of the preacher which was often so high that the youth complained that they were unable to catch the contents of the sermon.

F-te: And the pastor, when she speaks, then it is like, in order for the congregation to sort of hear that here comes a good word, then she must scream, in a way. And it sort of works automatically, you start to scream and scream until you just... you can't even hear what she's saying! [Surrenders to laughter.]

F-te: Og pastoren når hun preker, da er det liksom, for at menigheten skal liksom høre at det her er godt ord, hun må skrike, på en måte. Og det har gått liksom automatisk, du begynner å skrike og skriker helt til du bare... du hører ikke hva hun sier engang! [Ler overgitt.]

The kind of *language* used in the sermons was also identified as an issue—not thinking linguistically. Most often the only target group is the adults, and the language used is tailored to them. The youth explain that examples and illustrations given in the sermon are taken from the adult world and do not communicate to youth. In addition they complained about sermons that try to *cover too much*. The preacher should focus on one thing at a time. This would make it easier to remember and consequently apply what they hear to their everyday life.

Length of services and worship

Even though they resented long sermons as small children, many of the youth with an African family background still appreciate the fact that not everything is run by the clock. When worshipping, for instance, it's good to know that there is enough time.

*F-te:... you do what the Holy Spirit prompts you to. It, that you have, simply that you have **room***

F-te:...du gjør det du føler at Den hellige Ånd leder deg til å gjøre. Det, at du har, rett og slett

*for the Holy Spirit. To sort of, because God is, you've got room for **God!** That's what I grew up with. That you sort of sing, you let people express themselves in the song, you sort of, in that way. But where I attend at now, there.. There is no room for it. It is like ba-pa-pa-pa! Finished! And if you're exceeding the time, the pastor just looks at you [who lead the worship] and, so, oh, we've spent too much time!*

*at du har **rom** for Den Hellige Ånd. For å liksom, for Gud er, du har rom for **Gud!** Og det er jeg vokst opp med. Atte liksom du synger, du lar folk uttrykke seg i lovsang, du liksom, på den måten. Men der jeg går på, så er ... det er ikke noe rom for det. Det er sånn ba-pa-pa-pa! Ferdig! Og hvis det tar lang tid, så bare ser pastoren på dere [som leder lovsangen] og så, å ja, vi har tatt lang tid!*

In the church which the young woman in the case cited above attends, there are different cultures represented, and this has influenced how they think about the question of time. In another church they have tried to shorten the time spent in church on Sundays. One factor which helped was that the premises which this congregation used needed to be vacated at a certain time. The other factor was that given the fact that all live in a Norwegian setting, with jobs and time schedules to keep, most families in the church didn't feel able to spend so much of their Sundays in church anymore.

F-tw 1: Yes, but the thing is that we live a place where people have things to do. They do not have time to be in church for four hours, for example. So, to set a time is not wrong, but when you're there for example for five hours, we started at twelve, really, it can ruin so much, see? You won't have people coming anymore. They have family, they have children, small children, people are bound to get hungry.

F-tw 2: But then it can have to do with how the program is set up too. Cause, it doesn't have to last for five hours. You can be a lot more effective than that. And if you like to, in a way, have worship and all of that, which lasts a certain amount of time and such, then one can start to set aside one such Sunday a month, or something where one just sing and dance and

F-tw 1: Jo, men saken er at vi bor et sted hvor folk har ting de må gjøre. De har ikke tid til å være i kirken i fire timer, for eksempel. Så liksom å sette tid, det er ikke feil, men når for eksempel du er der i fem timer, vi starta klokken tolv, altså, det kan ødelegge så mye, ikke sant? Du kommer ikke til å ha folk som kommer lenger. De har familie, de har barn, småbarn, folk må jo bli sultne.

F-tw 2: Men da kan det ha veldig mye med hvordan programmet er satt opp også. Fordi, ting trenger ikke ta fem timer. Du kan være mye mer effektiv enn det. Og hvis du vil på en måte ha lovsang og alt det der som går over tid og sånn, så kan man enten begynne å sette av en sånn søndag i måneden, eller noe hvor man bare kan synge og danse og prise Gud, og så snakker

praise God, and make the speech short, true? Try to organize such things that can contribute to help people coming. Because everyone aren't accustomed to sit for an hour, to sit and listen to a sermon for two hours or whatever. [The rest of the group approves.]

man kort, ikke sant. Prøve å få til sånne ting, det kan være med på at folk kommer. Fordi det æ'kke alle som er vant til å sitte i en time, sitte og høre på en preken eller to timer eller hva det skulle være. [Tilslutninger fra de andre i gruppa.]

Despite the fact that the issue of *time* was a topic in all of the focus groups, they related no incidents where the youth themselves took on the role of change-maker in their churches. Despite the fact that they sometimes had very different views, they seemed willing to go along with this custom in the particular church they attended. The KMU group which these youth started has meetings which last the better part of a whole Saturday. So on this issue they clearly follow the pattern of spending a long time in church, even though doing so probably feels different when they define the contents of the gathering themselves.

A conclusion regarding contents, style and the time-aspect of the sermons is that the youth have not done much practically to promote change. Most of the youth seem to have chosen the strategy of simply enduring long meetings. On the other hand, a large portion of the youth in my study have engaged themselves in children's' ministry. Despite enduring long meetings themselves, they do not want the next generation to have to repeat their experience.

Exceptions to this pattern are the two interviewees who chose to transfer to another church. One of them said that the style and contents of the preaching was also part of the reason for his decision to transfer.

In the book *A moving God* (2006) edited by Mechteld Jansen and Hijme Stoffels one chapter is devoted to "African European" preaching. Studying three immigrant churches in Amsterdam Ciska Stark analyzes the sermons. When it came to describe the style, we see some of the same features that the youth have related above: Long sermons and loud ones as well. As the youth in my study didn't say much about the contents, it is difficult to know if there are similarities there too. Yet Stark said the preaching was very focused on living out their Christian life in daily life. This may be a focus in the African churches in this study as

well, but some of the youth found the sermons too long and complex to be able to extract the practical advises that could be applied in their daily life.

Dilemmas related to authority and how the churches are organized

Another perspective is that new immigrants from their parents' homelands continuously arrive. Especially when new adult immigrants arrive, the homeland culture is strengthened in the church, and in the opinion of one of the young men this influences the way the adults relate to the youth. Sometimes this can be the source of conflicts:

M-tw: ... in adult age, so then they've got a totally different culture. Totally different way of communication. It becomes so clear when, when we're there, and so it sort of becomes a conflict, then. [Frequent approvals expressed by others in the group as he talks.]

M-tw: ...i voksen alder, så da har de en helt annen kultur. Helt annen måte å kommunisere på. Det blir så veldig tydelig når, når vi er der, og så blir det liksom konflikt, da. [Stadige bifall fra andre i gruppa, mens han snakker.]

The young man cited here was one of the two who chose to transfer to another congregation. He reported that he grew tired of the constant smaller and larger conflicts, another one of the reasons for deciding to leave.

M-tw: I've noticed that when I visit my old congregation, that it is difficult to submit to the matters that are settled there. Why? I do simply not agree. So instead of quarreling and all the time create conflicts about it, it has been easier to just leave than to..

F-tw 1: play along.

F-tw 2: I understand.

M-tw: Jeg merker at når jeg er på besøk i den gamle menigheten min, så er det vanskelig å innordne seg under de tingene som er satt der. Hvorfor? Jeg er ikke enig, rett og slett. Så i stedet for å krangle og bare hele tida skape konflikt om det, så har det bare vært enklere å gå enn å

F-tw 1: å jatte med.

F-tw 2: Jeg skjønner.

The role of age in relation to the issue of respect seems to be an issue here. The youth are expected to listen to those who are older and wiser than themselves, and to comply. For their part, the youth want to be listened to as well. They believe they have something to contribute, especially since they feel they understand the multicultural setting as well as the Norwegian setting better than many of the adults.

Ebaugh and Chafetz' research in Houston revealed that the question of submission to elders and authority figures was a problematic issue (2000:132-133). As we saw above, these findings are corroborated by this study. Youth entering into negotiations is an issue which will be further elaborated in chapter 14.

Another finding that was most prominent in the immigrant churches was that many of the youth called for a clearer organization of their church. The youth ministry, for instance, was in some cases living its own life almost disconnected from the rest of the church. Youth from two different churches where this was the case, called for a connection between the board of elders and the youth ministry. In another case the problem was that the pastor overruled people who were running a ministry. The youth experiencing this thought that when someone is assigned a task, he or she must also have a certain freedom to make decisions and choices without their power being undermined by leaders or others who, without good reasons, overrule them. In other words, the youth want the power and influence they do have to be real.

This matches the findings of Ebaugh and Chafetz in the Houston research. They found that if youth were not being entrusted with meaningful roles in their congregation, the youth became alienated from their congregations. When Ebaugh and Chafetz compared their case studies they found that the churches which were most successful in holding on to their youth were the ones which allowed and encouraged their youth to participate in decision-making in the church and to take on important roles (2000:132-133). The youth in my study seem to be most eager to take on responsibilities in the areas of music and child and youth ministry.

Dilemmas concerning outer appearances

The clothing a person wears is another issue that can cause conflict. There seems to be a tacit agreement that a Christian way of dressing places an emphasis on a certain modesty (chapter 8). But what is modest is defined differently in different cultures. Thus the consequences which the youth and the adults draw from the principle of modesty sometimes end up worlds apart, leading both into a dilemma. The youth are willing to grant everyone the freedom to dress as they like as long as a basic degree of modesty is maintained. The adults are more conservative in this regard. Similar issues and attitudes

came up in all of the three focus groups. The following conversation from one of the groups can serve as an illustration:

F-tw 1: Really, it is so hard, 'cause I feel that even; it's not only Biblical issues! It is in a way the style of clothing. That is, I do understand; you ought to be modest, we are Christians, we must not show to the entire world, either, but it is like: If a punk came into the church, then it is like this: "OHH, wow, look over here! Now we have to start praying for him!". [Laughter from the rest of the group]. He could easily be one of strong faith, you know, but he just has.., -these are the clothes he likes to wear! [Supportive exclamations from the group.] Your clothes are not necessarily what you believe, see, it is things like this.... [lots of agreement expressed in the group] and I feel, that where we are, that is, my church, it is very like: "Well, then, this is how we do it here!", and that is difficult..

F-tw 2: Very strict rules to define who fits in... or who are considered Christians..

F-tw 1: Altså, det er så vanskelig for jeg føler til og med; det æ'kke bare bibelske tema! Det er på en måte klesstil. Altså, jeg forstår; Man skal være moderat, vi er jo kristne, vi skal jo ikke vise for hele verden heller, men det er liksom: Hvis en punker kom i kirken, da er det sånn derre: "ÅÅHH, wow, se her! Nå må vi begynne å be for han!" [latter fra de andre]. Han kan jo også være en kjempe-troende, liksom, men han har bare.., - dette er klærne han liker å gå i! [Støttebifall]. Klærne er nødvendigvis ikke hva du tror på, altså, det er bare sånne ting ... [masse bifall fra de andre] og jeg føler at det er der vi, altså, kirken min, er veldig sånn: " Ja, okei, sånn gjør vi det, her!", og det er vanskelig..

F-tw 2: Veldig klare regler for hvem som passer inn... eller hvem som er kristne..

The first young woman went on to tell the story about the first time she dared to go to church dressed in pants instead of a dress. This caused a great deal of commotion. Expectations related to dress-codes are not only directed towards young women. A young man in the same interview group, but from another African immigrant church, experienced something similar:

M-tw: Had it been up to them, the boys should show up in suits and with a large Bible in their hand [F-tw: Yes-yes-yes!] and really go along with everything they said. [Agreeing exclamations from all in the group]

M-tw: Hadde det vært opp til dem, hadde guttene vært i dress, med en svær bibel i hånda [F-tw: Jajaja!] og virkelig vært med på alt de sier [bifall fra alle i gruppa].

As we can see, the same dilemma surfaced in their home church "up here" as it did in meeting Christians from "down there". In one focus group the issue of not being judged by

others in church based on external appearance was an issue that came up repeatedly. It seemed that misinterpretations and backbiting based on what a person wore was a problem.

Christian immigrant youth today are more open to finding God in any person, regardless of their style of clothing. This matches the anthropological model Bevans describes in his research. He defines it as expecting to find God's hidden presence in any culture or context (2002:56).

Consciously choosing differently from one's parents

The cultural identifications of the youth are different from those of their parents, whether the youth attend immigrant churches or not. The interview material in this study provides examples where the youth talk about consciously making choices which differ from their parents' generation. When asking whether this was not just a generational conflict one of the young women protested:

F-tw: No, I think it is a culture conflict. Because we could just as well have been thinking like them too [parents/congregation]. That is, we could have been just like them, ... that's the way my mother raised me, and, because if I want to, then I can think just like them too. But I have chosen not to do it, because I do not feel that is right.

F-tw: Nei, jeg tror det er kulturkonflikt. For vi kunne like godt tenkt som dem vi også. [foreldre/menighet] Altså, vi kunne vært akkurat som dem, moren min har oppdratt meg sånn, og, for hvis jeg vil, så kan jeg også tenke som dem. Men jeg har valgt å ikke gjøre det, for jeg føler ikke at det er riktig.

A young woman in her late teens in another group relates the same thing. She thinks she differs from her parents because she was very young when she came to Norway and therefore found it easier to accept change. It is interesting to note her choice of words. They show that she does not perceive herself as *being* changed. Just like the other young woman cited above, she thinks of herself as actively and consciously choosing change. This matches what is found elsewhere in the interview material, when the youth talk about themselves not so much as being integrated but as integrating themselves, and others.

F-te: ... And this I felt when I came to Norway, that I grew up in a different kind of environment, and since I was young it was easy for me to change all of that, and then, and the parents,

F-te: ... Og det jeg følte da jeg kom til Norge, så vokste jeg opp i en annen miljø, og siden jeg var liten, så var det lett for meg, liksom bare å forandre på alt det der, og så, og foreldrene

sort of, you know what: At the age of about 15: "You and your God, you know each other". It's your life, sort of. And then: "OK! Thank you!" So my life has sort of changed, and isn't this way: Are you a Christian for real?

liksom, vet du hva: på 15-år alderen: «Du og din Gud, dere kjenner hverandre». Det er ditt liv, liksom. Og så: «OK! Takk!» Så livet mitt er liksom forandret, det er ikke sånn: Er du skikkelig kristen?

This quotation shows not only that the young woman found it easy to change, but one can also detect that her parents had been anxious for her sake earlier on. Seeing how easily their daughter settled into the Norwegian context, they appear to have worried about whether she would be able to hold on to her faith. When she was 15 years old, her parents expressed trust in her relationship with God. This young woman says her life sort of changed as a result of this. The parents' perspectives are not included in this study. Still it is worth asking whether the reason for many conflicts and dilemmas is that parents worry that their children will become as secular as many of their peers. When parents see how their children adapt to the Norwegian context, this fear is fuelled. As a result a natural strategy for the parents is to intensify their attempt to transmit their homeland's culture in order to avoid secularization. This may confuse the children and lead them to believe that their parents are not able to distinguish between culture and religion. Again, it is impossible to deduce this conclusion directly from the interview material in this study since the parents' perspectives are not included. I should also add that while some youth describe having many disagreements with their parents, others describe a relationship in which they are very much in line with each other.

Lack of programs for children and youth

Many of those who experienced a lack of programs for children or a youth ministry in the church in which they grew up had considered transferring to another church. We cannot know if this has also been the reason which explains why some youth drop out of church altogether since the research material does not reflect the perspectives of church drop-outs. But the lack of programs for children and youth work had a profound effect on those who experienced it. For this reason I have chosen to delve further into this particular phenomenon in chapter 15.

The youth whom I interviewed are calling for change. But this doesn't mean that they want to change everything. The picture is not complete without remembering that the youth also

talked about how they appreciated the music, dancing, language and generally the culture in their church.

Summary

Problematic issues in the immigrant churches that created dilemmas for the youth were related to:

- avoiding cultural taboos, meaning issues that are important to the youth but not openly talked about in church.
- preaching and teaching that
 - o was too long
 - o tried to cover too many topics at one time
 - o were too loud
 - o lacked examples and language relevant to youth
 - o were difficult to understand and to apply to real life
- the way authority was exercised
- the organization of their church
- prejudicial attitudes related to outward appearance
- lack of programs for children and youth

There are very few examples related by the youth that show that they consciously work for change with regards to these issues. One exception is that many of them try to build programs for youth and children. This is explained as a result of having missed it themselves when they grew up.

In the midst of the frustrations the youth also communicate a great fondness of the people in church and an appreciation of the culture and worship style too.

Chapter 10: Dilemmas in Non-Immigrant Churches

Having an integrated plural identity and trying to find your place in a non-immigrant church also creates some challenges in form of dilemmas which need to be resolved. Out of the 12 youth who took part in the focus group interviews only four attended non-immigrant churches. Yet they brought up several interesting issues.

Focus on outer appearances among the youth

Outer appearance is an issue in the non-immigrant churches as well as in the immigrant churches. In the non-immigrant churches though, the issue is not related to modesty and biblical principles, but is rather linked to fashion and being cool. The pressure is not from adults but from peers.

M-te 1: .. in the other youth group where I attend, I can, sorry to say, not be myself a 100 %. I get there, and I actually know before I leave my house what I should wear [group laughs] in order for people to think I'm cool and such! Yes, talk to people! And I know what, or how I sort of must adjust inside my head...

M-te 2: You actually get a good hang on that!

M-te 1: Yes [lots of laughter in group, the researcher asks for further explanation]

M-te 1: Okay, I..It is a different way of talking that you, okay, when you're there, you ought to talk like that. And you should actually, you should wear that today, because that's what most of them wear.

M-te: ..i det andre ungdomsarbeidet jeg går i, så kan jeg dessverre ikke være meg selv 100 %. Jeg kommer dit, jeg vet faktisk før jeg går ut huset hva jeg bør ha på meg, [latter i gruppa] for at folk skal syns jeg er kul og sånt! Ja, snakke til folk. Og jeg vet hva, hvordan jeg skal liksom innstille hodet,...

M-te: Man blir egentlig ganske god på det der!

M-te: Ja, [masse latter i gruppa, forsker ber om utdyping]

M-te: Okey, jeg... Det er en forskjellig... snakke måte som du, okey, du er der, du bør snakke sånn. Og du bør faktisk, du bør ta på deg det der i dag, fordi de fleste går sånn.

This young man's friend confirms that this is the way it works. He once visited this group and had not given enough thought to what he was wearing. This oversight was immediately commented upon.

M-te 2: I had vans on, but I think it was last years, ehh shoes. That was pointed out

M-te: Da hadde jeg på meg vans men jeg tror det var fjorårets, ehh sko. Så det fikk jeg høre med

immediately. I went there and: "Oh, well, cool to see that people are still wearing vans!" You have to think about what you wear.

M-te 1: In KMU I don't have to think about such things, I'm simply just myself and, yes!

F-te: And that's OK.

M-te 2: And everyone else is too. That way it isn't, you are not afraid of, sometimes outside KMU, I was about to say, you worry that you've met a person but still didn't really met the real person because it occurs,.. many.. ehh... appear differently because they want the others to like them and so on, but here, in a way, I know that everyone are themselves. Be yourself and it becomes sort of delightful...

én gang! Jeg kom dit: "Å, ja, det er kult å se at folk fortsatt går med vans, da! "[alle ler] Man må tenke på hva man har på seg..

M-te: Og i KMU så slipper jeg å tenke på sånne greier, jeg bare er meg selv, og, ja!

F-te: Og det går greit.

M-te: Og alle andre er det óg, så da er det ikke, du er ikke redd for, noen ganger utenfor KMU, holdt jeg på å si, så kan man bli redd for at du møter en person og du egentlig ikke har møtt den virkelige personen fordi det oppstår.., mange ..ehh... gjør seg annerledes fordi de vil at de andre skal like dem og så videre, men her så veit jeg på en måte at alle er seg sjøl. Vær deg sjøl, og det blir på en måte så deilig..

Don't want to push in a multicultural direction

The dilemma recounted above is a good example of the need to choose between being yourself 100 % or to "adjust inside your head" in order to blend in with the rest of the youth culture in the church. In this case the teenagers choice was to adjust. They convey no aspirations to influence their churches to move in a more multicultural direction:

M-te: It is so few of us, so I feel we can't do much. So I do not know what to do.

M-te: Det er så få av oss, så jeg føler at jeg ikke kan gjøre så stort. Så jeg veit ikke hva jeg skal gjøre.

Since they represent such a small minority in their church, they don't see how they should go about promoting change. But the reluctance to promote change also comes from the acknowledgement that the rest of the congregation would not be comfortable with the changes the youth want:

M-te: Mm, but about my wish that it should be more multicultural in my church? No! I do not care to even try, because that, ... what's the point... then it would be only me who enjoyed myself.

M-te: Mm, men det at jeg ønsker at det skal være mer multikulturelt i den menigheten? Nei! Jeg gidder ikke prøve å få det sånn en gang, fordi det, ... hva er vits å... da er det bare jeg som koser meg.

The youth interviewed admit that not all aspects of their churches are exactly the way they would like, but they do adjust to the way things are because they recognize that the majority are most comfortable with the way things are. Like the TCKs, the CCKs in this study are able to blend in and adjust to the context. They don't seem they get confused as to who they really are, something that could be a result of this adjustability (Pollock and Van Reken 2009:88,100). They engage themselves in their congregations and identify with them, while at the same time admitting that some parts of their identities are better lived out in other settings like the KMU group. This bears a resemblance to multicultural convergence where unity and equality are acknowledged and the distinctiveness of the various parts are not dispelled (Baumann 1999: 126,139). The way these youth accept the choices of their congregations and don't attempt to change these simply for their own sake, shows this multicultural convergence at work. Or perhaps one should say *multicongregational* convergence. They do not want to pressure their congregations into uniformity since they acknowledge that each Christian meets their own needs differently. The attitudes of youth on this question reflect an overarching concern for the unity of the larger body of Christ. This was not stated explicitly, but it is possible to interpret their attitudes in this way.

Differing opinions about preaching

In one of the focus groups, frustration with the contents of the preaching came up. While in the immigrant churches it was the *formal* aspects that were the cause of discontent, that is, the preaching was too long, too loud, used examples irrelevant to youth etc. In the non-immigrant churches it was the very *content* of the preaching that was the problem. The teenager who aired this frustration felt there was too much of the same, and he could predict what was coming:

M-te: .. after a while I found it boring to attend this group, because the preaching was the same every time. And I, as 15 years, as a 15 year old, then, when I felt that: I don't feel like going to the youth meeting today, because I, I know everything, I know what the pastor... when you're 15 years old and start to think like this, then there must be something wrong, 'cause

M-te: .. jeg syns etter hvert at det ble kjedelig å gå der fordi det var akkurat det samme som blei talt om hver gang. Og jeg som som 15 år, som femtenåring da, når jeg følte at: Jeg gidder ikke gå på ungdomsmøte i dag, for jeg, jeg kan alt, jeg veit hva pastoren.. når man er 15 år og begynner å tenke de tankene der, da må det være noe feil, fordi du er jo fortsatt, jeg har jo

*you're still, .. I haven't really experienced **anything** yet in a way; I have a long life in front of me. I thought: Nooo, I know what he'll talk maybe I'll give it a chance. And so I went, and found him preaching about the **exact** thing I had expected!*

*egentlig ikke opplevd **noe** på en måte, jeg er jo bare 15 år, jeg har jo et langt liv foran meg. Jeg tenkte: Neihh, jeg veit hva han skal snakke... kanskje jeg skal gi det sjansen. Og så gikk jeg der, og så talte han **akkurat** om det jeg trodde han skulle snakke om!*

One of the young women in the same focus group attended a quite multicultural *immigrant* church. But she had been to many youth meetings in a non-immigrant church. She confirmed that it was easy to predict what would happen in the meetings. This observation was made by a couple of youth attending non-immigrant churches but was not mentioned by any of those attending immigrant churches. The opposite was the case in the Houston research where preaching that was too predictable was an issue in the immigrant churches (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000:132-133).

Among those in the focus groups who attend non-immigrant churches there was one person who was very content with the preaching in his church. Actually the good preaching in his church was one of the reasons for transferring to it.

*M-tw: ... that what is preached, that it is very down to earth and it gives me, .. that it is true **food** for me. To a degree that it is solid food [chuckles]. That is; many things can be very general and floating, and stretch over a long span, so I sort of am not able tie it down to something concrete that is useful in the everyday life. [All three agree at the same time]. So, at least for myself, at the age and in the period of time I'm in, it is very good for me to get a sermon that is very clear and concrete, I do well with that.*

*M-tw: ... at det som forkynnes, at det er veldig jordnært og det gir meg,.. at det er veldig **føde** for meg. I den grad at det er matnyttig [humrer]. Altså; for mange ting kan være veldig generelle, og veldig, litt svevende, og over et veldig stort spekter, så jeg får liksom ikke tatt å knytta det ned til noe konkret som jeg kan bruke i hverdag. [Alle tre bifaller samtidig]. Så i hvert fall meg, i den alderen og tidsperioden jeg er i nå, så er det veldig godt for meg å kunne få en preken som er veldig klar og veldig konkret, det trives jeg veldig godt med.*

The youth quoted above consciously chose the church he attends and found one that fitted his needs. The two others who were not satisfied with the preaching reached back to what they'd experienced in Africa. The lifestyle required to pass as a Christian there was viewed as

too strict but still they missed the direct and challenging way of preaching they had heard in their parents' homeland. One of them thought that maybe African pastors were better at this kind of preaching. In both cases, what the youth wanted is clear: practical and challenging preaching that is related to their everyday life.

There seem to be a difference between the non-immigrant churches represented by four of the youth in the focus groups. Two of them had changed to their non-immigrant church from an immigrant congregation, and they had both chosen quite new congregations of the charismatic type, and many of the cultural expressions they related from church seemed to be similar to the general youth culture. The two others belonged to more traditional charismatic churches and the dilemmas here were more similar to the ones in immigrant churches. Yet a generalization on the basis of four churches is not possible to do.

Promoting the dialogue as a way of teaching and learning

One of the young women who attend an immigrant church says she has found something in her church's youth group that non-immigrant churches should learn from.

F-te: ... we could need some more of the African culture into Norwegian congregations because, eh, Africa is sort of "up there" and then Norway is "down there" and we as youth want something in between it, so for me I think that my present congregation, I think that on Sunday meeting, then it is much African. But on our youth gatherings, then it is more like, yes, we are there; in between. That it is sort of, we sit and talk together and discuss about Bible and all of that, and that I think; for Norwegian pastors it is more like, cause in Norwegian culture, I think, then, that I experience that one is not supposed to meddle in the business of others, so to say, but..
M-te 1: Look after yourself...

F-te: Yes, look after yourself, sort of; it is your own life. But in, and when we go back to Africa, then it is like pastor is the one supposed to look

F-te: ... vi kunne trengt litt mer av den afrikanske kultur inn i norsk menigheter fordi, eh, Afrika er liksom "der oppe" og så er Norge "der nede" og så vi som ungdommer vi vil ha noe i mellom der. Så for meg så syns jeg at i den menigheten jeg går på nå, så syns jeg det er, det er, på søndagsmøter, da er det mye afrikansk. Men på ungdomsmøter da er det mer sånn, ja, vi er der midt i mellom. At det er liksom, vi sitter og prater sammen og diskuterer om Bibel og alt det der, og det syns je; at for norske pastor er det mer sånn, for i norsk kultur, syns jeg, da, det jeg opplever, at man skal ikke gå inn i andres business, for å si det sånn, men ...
M-te 1: Pass på deg selv..

F-te: Ja, pass på deg selv, liksom; det er ditt eget liv. Men i, og når vi går tilbake til Afrika, da er det liksom pastor skal være den som tar vare på

after you. If you are a youth pastor, then you must take care of the youth in the congregation, and you must pay attention to how they live, how sort of..

M-te 2: Meddle a lot..

F-te: .. meddle in their lives, really. Be involved, in a way, and that..

Researcher: Is that positive or negative?

F-te: It is positive, I think [M17a/b: Positive!] because in a way you always have an adviser.

deg. Hvis du er en ungdomspastor, da må du ta vare på ungdommer i menigheten og du må følge hvordan de lever, hvordan liksom..

M-te 2: Graver veldig mye..

F-te: ...grave inn i deres liv, egentlig. Være involvert, på en måte. Og det...

Forsker: Er det pluss eller minus ved det?

F-te: : Det er pluss, tror jeg, [M17a/bi bakgrunnen: Pluss!] fordi du har på en måte alltid en rådgiver.

In chapter 8 the youth said they couldn't live according to the expectations from Christians in Africa when they were in a Norwegian context. Therefore they worked out a way to practice their faith here themselves. But in this chapter the quotations show youth who call for direct and challenging preaching related to daily life. In the quotation directly above we also see that they do not mind pastors who "meddle" in their lives because they want advice on how to live as Christians. These opinions seem to oppose each other, but the explanation for the openness for "meddling" is probably the *dialogical* approach to it. For instance, running seminars and workshops were mentioned as examples of what pastors in Norway can learn from pastors in Africa. The benefits of running workshops and seminars are explained in the following statement: "There you can ask any question you like!" Seminars and workshops give an opportunity for the youth to raise questions and be in dialogue around issues they are concerned with. Dialogue appears to be important to them:

M-te: I feel that one learns more from talking than from preaching. This has been my opinion since I was.. since I started to pay attention to sermons. So, I thought it was good, eh.. but every time I got the opportunity to talk, then, with friends or adults, family, about what was preached about, or about topics like...

F-te: That's when you remember it!

M-te: You remember a whole lot more!

M-te: Jeg føler man lærer mer av å snakke enn å tale. Det har jeg syntes siden jeg var.... siden jeg begynte å følge med på taler. Så synes jeg jo det var bra, eh.. men hver gang jeg fikk mulighet til å snakke, da, med enten venner, eller voksne, familie, om det som ble talt om, eller om sånne temaer som ...

F-te: Da sitter det!

*M-te: Da sitter det **mye** mer!*

The multicultural youth seem to agree that when they get to *talk* about something in a dialogue, that's when they learn and remember what they have learnt. When asked about in which cultures the youth experience this sort of conversations they instantly think of KMU.

M-te 1: That [conversation] I feel in a way that I find most of here in KMU. Actually. Last year, here in this room, and talked, could have sung for hours. Learns a lot from it! One gets to hear what others really think instead of only what the pastor thinks.

M-te 2: Yes, and when you are in a meeting you cannot really ask question to the pastor.

M-te 1: Den [samtaalen] føler jeg på en måte jeg finner mest her i KMU. Egentlig. I fjor, her på rommet, og snakket, kunne sunget i flere timer. Lærer mye av det! Man får høre hva andre virkelig tenker i stedet for å høre hva bare pastoren tenker.

M-te 2: Ja, og når du sitter på et møte så kan du ikke stille spørsmål til pastoren heller.

The possibility to discuss a matter is expressed as the preferred method for learning about the Christian life. Any teacher would probably agree that pupils learn more easily when they are engaged in a dialogue rather than just passively listening. The question is whether this method is especially important for youth with integrated plural identities? If there are more contexts, more cultures, more varied experiences and expressions to consider, it may also be likely that the need to discuss, test out opinions, air frustrations and so on, is greater than if the identity and experiences are less plural. This thesis cannot be confirmed or rejected on the basis of the material in this study. Nonetheless, this question is still worth asking.

Baumann presumes that all identities and cultural identifications are *dialogical* by nature and this fits well with the statements above (Baumann 1999:117). Dialogue seems to be exactly the preferred method which the youth in this study use to find their way of living out their Christian faith in a multi-faceted cultural reality.

Leadership which makes room for experimenting

One of the young men who attends a non-immigrant church commented on the fact that the leadership in his church gave the youth a chance to try out their ideas. If what they tried was a success, it was repeated. If it was a failure it was be left behind. All the elders were not always enthusiastic about the results, but having the support of the pastor made up for this. Examples from both immigrant and non-immigrant churches show that a supportive pastor was very important to the youth.

Summary

Also youth who attend non-immigrant churches experience that outward appearances are given too much weight. But here the pressure comes from peers, not from the adults in their congregations. The strategy for dealing with this dilemma seems to be to adjust to the present situation instead of pushing for change. Since the immigrant youth feel that they are so few, they feel no right to promote changes in a multicultural direction when the rest of the congregation is content with the present situation. Like TCKs, the youth in this study choose to adjust by blending in and finding their place. They can live out other parts of their multiple identities in, for instance, the KMU group. They also seem to be part of a multi-congregational convergence as they acknowledge the differences that exist between churches and see these as important for the wholeness of the larger Christian body. When it comes to preaching, some are very happy with their church, while others find the preaching in their church very predictable and not fulfilling. All of them agree that what they want is practical and challenging sermons that they can apply to their lives. Pastors in Africa are held up as good examples since they follow up the youth closely, almost meddling in their affairs as seen with Norwegian eyes. But the youth accept this because this gives them an advisor to consult when they need one. The preferred way both to learn and to receive advice is in a dialogue. A two-way communication where discussion and questions have their place was clearly valued by the youth. Also, supportive pastors who let them try out their ideas was valued, and could make up for resistance coming from elders or others in the congregation who held back and showed distrust.

Chapter 11: Language Dilemmas - Different Needs within the Same Congregation

When going to church, the youth in this study are met with various languages, something which gives rise to a number of dilemmas. The table below shows that almost half of the churches the youth attend use no Norwegian in their regular services. It is these churches which are the focus of this chapter.

<i>Language used in the service:</i>	<i>Number of youth:</i>
Only Norwegian	6 – whereof two attend additional churches where other languages are spoken
Norwegian + English	5
Norwegian + Tigrinya	1
Only English	6
Amharic or Tigrinya or Persian	3
	SUM: 22 (Two of them attend more than one church)

Language as an inclusive

The issue of language came up in different ways in the focus group interviews. In the group where all came from the same African church, the youth challenged the language choice made in their congregation. As no single language could unite the whole church, their church chose English as the common language. As a result, some members left. Others learned English because they stayed. But the youth asked themselves why their congregation didn't choose *Norwegian* as their common language.

F-tw: It might be consistent to them, because they think: English is what everybody talk. But, because, I think: Yes, but what about the others from outside, then? What about the fact that we live here in Norway? What about our attempts to include? I'm a bit, on the other side in a way, who says: No, I don't think English ought to be what just holds everything together.

F-tw: Det er kanskje forenlig for dem, fordi de tenker: Engelsk er det alle sammen snakker. Men fordi, jeg tenker: Ja, men hva med andre utenfra, da? Hva med det at vi bor her i Norge? Hva med at vi prøver å inkludere? Jeg litt, sånn derre, motsiden, da, som på en måte sier: Nei, jeg synes ikke engelsk burde være det som bare holder alt sammen..

This is only one example, but English seems to be the language chosen when serving people with different mother tongues in the same church. Of the 99 immigrant churches in Oslo 32 choose English as the language in their services (DAWN 2010:7). English may seem to be the

most inclusive and obvious choice, but for the youth this isn't the case. For them, Norwegian is clearly more inclusive. When they come together in KMU-gatherings, everything is in Norwegian. They speak Norwegian among themselves. The preaching, information, entertainment, their website and Facebook—everything is in Norwegian. The one exception is the songs in their worship at KMU-gatherings. In the songs multiple languages are used. These choices are consistent with their conscious attempts to be open to and include others. At a camp which they arranged in the summer of 2012, this was one of the main issues on the agenda.

The desire to be inclusive is the motivation for the youths' choice of language and probably also for their parents' choice of language. Yet the two generations seem to hold opposing views on which language works best for this purpose. As far as I was able to discern, the reason may be that the parents are focused on including people from ethnic groups already represented in the church while the youth think in wider terms. One of the young women explains it this way:

F-tw: Because, I feel that language has a lot to do with, see, choice of language has a lot to do with attitude, attitudes. You know, if we should only speak English, imagine then, when a new person comes in and doesn't know English too well; will feel very, just sort of excluded, not cared for, or taken care of. Would simply have felt that people don't bother.

F-tw: Fordi, jeg føler at språk har veldig mye med, altså, valg av språk har veldig mye med holdning, holdninger å gjøre. Altså hvis vi bare skulle snakke engelsk, tenk deg, når en ny person kommer inn og ikke kan så godt engelsk; kommer til å føle seg veldig, bare sånn utenfor, ikke tatt vare på, eller ivaretatt. Hadde følt at folk ikke bryr seg, rett og slett.

What is also interesting is that the youth were not primarily preoccupied with *their own* integration. This was taken for granted somehow. Their focus in the matter of language and integration was how they could contribute to the integration of others into *their* fellowship.

The same issues described above are seen in the description of a Korean congregation in Boston (Warner and Wittner 1998:295-331). In order to accommodate for the second generation they first introduced a simultaneous translation system in their services. But the contents in the sermons were not at all tailored to the youth and it didn't work out. Also many of the second generation were uncomfortable with attending a church that was

ethnically limited. Especially it was a problem when the youth wanted to bring non-Koreans friends with them to church. A separate worship service in English run by second generation themselves and shaped in style and contents to address the concerns of second generation became the solution. These worship services ended up gathering more people than the Sunday morning worship service in Korean.

When trying to imagine the ideal church, the youth agreed that it would have to be multicultural. They also eagerly discussed music, leadership and how to include people. None of the groups—with one exception where I asked directly—mentioned which specific language they would choose to use. The answer to my question came promptly: *“If it is in Norway it will be Norwegian.”* No one disputed this statement. They continued to talk at length about how to make people feel at home and included, and one of the ways was to include all the languages used by people in the church in their worship songs.

Language as a teaching tool

The importance of language in relation to inclusiveness is one issue. Another is which language is best suited to help people understand the teaching of the church. One young woman raised this issue as she describes how a man grabbed his jacket and left her church after just a few minutes because he didn’t understand:

*F-te: ...and I **understand** him, because you want a better contact with God and you sort of want to learn new things from the Bible, but you do not get the chance to, because they’re not able to communicate it in your language..*

*F-te:...og jeg **forstår** ham, fordi du vil jo få bedre kontakt med Gud og du vil jo på en måte lære nye ting i Bibelen, men du får ikke den sjansen fordi de ikke klarer å få formidlet det på ditt språk..*

This statement shows that language is also a tool to get closer to God and to learn from the Bible. The youth are convinced that the common language should be Norwegian so that the teaching in their church is accessible to as many as possible.

Language as part of the cultural heritage

Like Ebaugh and Chafetz found in their research, the youth were primarily focused on the religious aspects of the language issue. The cultural aspect was subordinate (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000:125–129). Among the parents some seem to look at the issue of language the other way around. One of the young women observed that her parents go to church mostly

because it gives them a chance to use their own language and to meet people from their homeland. She herself and her family were never very active in church prior to coming to Norway. Now they attend regularly.

F-te: I think it is because they miss their homeland. I don't feel they go there to meet God or be with Jesus or such. It is just traditional and talk about..., yes and such.

F-te: Jeg tror det er på grunn av de savner hjemlandet sitt. Jeg føler meg ikke de går dit for å treffe Gud eller til å bli med Jesus eller sånn, men det er bare tradisjonelt og prate om, ja og så.

This young woman feels she lacks the language skills and knowledge to choose a different church from the one her family attends. But in the future she would like to find her own church. When she does so, ethnicity and language will not be the most important criteria.

F-te: Yes, I choose the church, but I sort of don't choose because of where they come from or that they speak a language. I just plainly want to attend church, sort of.

F-te: Ja, jeg velger kirken, men liksom jeg velger ikke på grunn av hvor de kommer fra eller de snakker et språk. Jeg vil bare gå til kirken vanlig, liksom.

That fact that half of the youth in this study attend immigrant churches and the other half attend non-immigrant churches also indicates that the language spoken is not a decisive factor when choosing where to go. But appreciation for the cultural aspect is not absent. One of the young women said that she really values the opportunity to maintain the culture and language from her parents' homeland by attending their church. She was born and raised in Norway. She herself and her whole family master both Norwegian and their parents' native language. In the questionnaire she wrote that fellowship with other Christians was the *main* reason for attending church in general. But when naming the reasons for attending her specific church, she added the cultural and language factors linked to her parents' homeland.

F-tw: The most important is that this has become my second family so to speak,[.....] .Another thing is that it is an [mentions an African country] congregation, and I really want to uphold this part of my cultural background and I have an opportunity to do so there. Yes, this is the most

F-tw: Det viktigste er jo at det har blitt min andre familie, så å si, [...] En annen ting er at det er en [nevner afrikansk land] menighet og jeg vil gjerne ta vare på den delen av min kulturelle bakgrunn og det har jeg mulighet til der. Ja, det er det viktigste tror jeg, for at jeg går der.

important, I believe, for going there.

In general, however, using church as a place to maintain language skills and ones parents' cultural heritage did not climb high on the list of criteria for selecting a church. In the answers to the questionnaire, the pattern is obvious: the religious aspect of going to church comes first, together with fellowship with other believers. The issue of *language* is hardly mentioned.

Language as a non-negotiable issue

When listening to the youths' views, it is surprising that not one of them describes situations where they have challenged the choice of language in their churches, not even in the church where the switch to the English language represented a major transition for the children and youth. The pastor at that time spoke quite broken English and the text in the King James Version of the Bible felt very formal to the children.

F-tw: But, seriously, it wasn't until I got older and first learnt English that I started to understand: Ah, so this is what they're saying! Now I understand clearly, that is, it is fluent to me, but before: I sat there with a question mark all over my face and: Mum, I don't understand what they are talking about!

F-tw: Men helt seriøst, det er ikke før jeg begynte å bli eldre og først lærte meg engelsk, at jeg begynte å forstå: Å, ja! Er det dét de sier, er det dét de preker om. Nå forstår jeg det tydelig, altså, det er fluent for meg, men før: Jeg satt der med et spørsmålstegn i ansiktet og bare: Mamma, jeg vet ikke hva de snakker om.

Having the sermon in Norwegian with translation into English was the youths' proposal when talking about what they would have preferred. As mentioned previously, the youth have made no concrete efforts to address the language issue in their churches. My guess is that they were too young at the time the switch to English happened. Another explanation could be that the youth understand the need people in their churches feel for expressing themselves in a language they don't need to struggle with. Despite being able to understand this need, it is possible to detect some frustration the youth feel in relation to their parents' generation. One young woman said openly that she thinks their pastor should be more willing to learn better Norwegian. Such willingness would likely encourage other adults in the church to improve their Norwegian. One youth expressed frustration with the indifference some adults show in this matter, and burst out: *"But they do live in Norway!"*

Using Norwegian - enough to retain the youth?

In this study the parents' perspectives are not investigated, but in the KIFO report we hear adult immigrants who express the importance of being able to worship and pray in their own mother tongue (Synnnes 2012:60). A dilemma occurs as the youth often end up being more familiar with Norwegian than with their parents' native language. Ebaugh and Chafetz found that a large contingent from the congregations in their research chose *English* in their youth work as an attempt to retain the *second generation* (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000:119). This strategy seems to have been chosen in Norway as well. In the KIFO report the findings regarding the role of language varied from church to church (Synnnes 2012:60-62). In some churches it was merely a practical question. In other churches language was one of the important unifying cultural factors. But the use of *Norwegian* in church was mostly mentioned in relation to the *second generation*. Other Norwegian research mentioned in chapter two shows that almost all the churches chose this strategy in order to accommodate their children and youth because Norwegian is the language the children and youth are most fluent in. Very often the churches chose a combination of Norwegian and their native language because they want the younger ones to learn or hold on to the native language of their parents as well.

But choosing Norwegian to accommodate for their children and youth in church is not necessarily enough to keep them in their parents' churches. Ebaugh and Chafetz' research shows that this does not automatically happen. Actually they found that the strategy of using the host-country's language worked in very *few* cases (2000:119). Using this strategy attracted just a small minority of the second generation. The story of the previously mentioned Korean church confirms that it is not the language alone that matters. The issues of the youth also have to be addressed (Warner and Wittner 1998:295-331). In my study the same thing is reflected when the youth ask for sermons with examples they can recognize from their daily life and when they complain about "cultural taboos" which hinder their churches in talking about issues that the youth find important. No research is done in Norway to measure the effect of applying Norwegian with regard to retaining their youth in immigrant churches. What Ebaugh and Chafetz found to be most effective to keep the youth in church was to give them meaningful tasks in the congregation and let them partake in

the decision-making (2000:133). For the youth in this study this seems to fit. All attended church quite regularly, and all but one talked about responsibilities they have there.

A simple solution that can meet the needs of all parties, safeguarding both the religious and cultural aspects, seems hard to find with regard to the inter-relationship between church and language. Probably each church has to find a solution for its own unique situation. But in this process I suggest that one bears in mind the findings from Houston and Boston.

Summary

Half of the churches the youth in this study attend do not use Norwegian in their services. One third of all the immigrant churches in Oslo use English, especially when many languages are represented in one church. Yet the youth cannot understand why Norwegian isn't used as the unifying language. Many congregations' choice to use English or a native language seem to have the same goal of being inclusive, but the target group is the adults and the ethnic group(s) already represented in the fellowship, while the youth think more broadly and therefore find Norwegian to be more inclusive. To them language is a tool to serve the purpose of including people and communicating their faith to as many as possible in the easiest understandable way. Yet my research material shows a few examples of youth who appreciate the language used in their church from a cultural perspective.

Despite the fact that in some cases youth express disagreement with the choice of language in their church, they also understand the need for people to be able to worship in their mother tongue. Still the challenge facing the adults who seem indifferent to learning Norwegian is clear: they ought to make a greater effort.

To solve the language-dilemma, many immigrant churches use Norwegian in their children and youth ministries. This is probably a wise choice, but research from the US indicates that this in itself is not enough to retain the second generation in the immigrant churches. Meaningful tasks in the congregation seem to be a much stronger factor as is addressing the issues of the youth. Whether these findings can be applied to the Norwegian context is not easy to determine. But the fact that almost all the 12 youth in the focus groups talked about tasks they had in their congregation could be an indication that the Norwegian pattern is indeed similar to the one registered in research from the US.

Chapter 12: Dilemmas in the Field of Music

Music - of great importance to the youth

F-te: .. and if you just take a walk around the Central station: Everybody have earplugs, sort of. So either it's music there or it's just speeches, but typically: It's music, don't you think?

F-te: .. og hvis du bare går på jernbanetorget: alle sammen har ørepropper, liksom. Så enten er det musikk der eller så er det bare taler, men typen: Det er musikk, ikke sant?

Listening to music, making music, talking about music – music appears as natural to the youth as the air they breathe. At least 14 of the 19 respondents were actively engaged in music in some form or other in their churches and/or KMU. The conversations in two of the focus groups kept returning to this topic. As the quotation above shows, they consider music to be a general part of youth culture. But in addition, some also ascribe the strong focus on music to their African heritage. It seems that in many of the immigrant churches where most of the members have African background, music has a central place. In one of the focus groups I asked what they thought they would miss most from their present church should they decide to transfer to a Norwegian church. Needing no time to deliberate, they all exclaimed: *"The music!"* A few of the youth had grown up in one single church and stayed there. But 80% had attended one or more other churches before. One example is a young woman in her twenties. She had been exposed to different music and worship styles in both immigrant and non-immigrant churches, in addition to churches in her parents' homeland. She wasn't willing to choose one style and discard of the rest. She had some personal preferences, but found something valuable in each of the traditions, something which she appreciated and could whole-heartedly take part in. A young man in one of the other focus groups expressed how much fun it was to discuss music at KMU, because there were people who listened to and played different kinds of music. He himself enjoyed more than one style.

Examples of negotiations related to music, often between the younger and older generations, come mostly from the African immigrant churches. In other congregations, immigrant or non-immigrant, music seems to be a less disputed matter even if the youth there are just as much taken up with music. One of the interviewees who knew several Asian congregations found many matters to dispute in these congregations. But none were related

to music. Whether this is typical in Asian immigrant churches is not possible to determine given the limited material on this subject on the basis of my material.

Most of the immigrant churches represented by the youth in this study are African. For this reason what is said about immigrant churches in this chapter is more or less equivalent to African immigrant churches, unless stated otherwise.

In the written questionnaire only two young men and one young woman gave song/music/worship as part of their answer to question as to why they attend church. This is remarkable since the focus group interviews show that music and worship style were major issues for many of the youth. When asked to give reasons for attending *their specific* church their answers are almost the same. Music and worship style are mentioned by only four of the interviewees. Given the significant amount of time they used to discuss this subject in the focus groups, it is somewhat puzzling that relatively few focused on it in the written questionnaire.

It is difficult to interpret this inconsistency. One possibility is that the questionnaire only revealed the most important reasons for attending church, while music, although important, was not considered among the most essential reasons. Music is also something the youth can enjoy elsewhere, while Christian fellowship and teaching are what they go to church for.

Music as a means of attracting people to church

Despite the fact that music was not among the most essential reasons for attending church, two of the focus groups took it for granted that music played in the worship service was an important factor when youth decided where to attend church. The consensus seemed to be that youth ended up in the congregations where they played their preferred music.

F-tw: Yes, because actually, people attend where they feel most at home. That is, if you are a person who likes traditional gospel, then you'll end up a place where they actually play that. Because that's where you feel that you, in a way, can praise God. [Everybody in the group: Mm-hmmm!] Where you feel most comfortable.

F-tw: Ja, faktisk, for det at, folk går jo hvor de føler seg mest hjemme. Altså, hvis du er en person som liker sånn tradisjonell gospel, så kommer du til å ende opp et sted hvor de faktisk spiller det. Fordi det er der du føler at du kan på en måte prise Gud. [Alle: mm!] Hvor du føler deg mest komfortabel.

In addition to acting as a tool to attract people to church in the first place, the youth also viewed the kind of music chosen as an indication of which sort of people the church wanted to attract:

M-te: We were going to take a milkshake; I promised them milkshake after the meeting! [The whole group laughs.] That was what they really wanted. But then they came there, and they didn't remember a thing from the sermon, but: "Wow, that was good music!". It was a really great band, you know. That was what they remembered. [...] We live in a very, a sort of music.. .. ehh .. music world these days, and people are really into it.

M-te: Vi skulle ta en milkshake, jeg lovte dem milkshake etter møtet! [Latter i hele gruppa.] For det var det de egentlig ville. Men så kom de dit, og huska ingenting fra prekenen, men: Å, det var bra musikk! Det var skikkelig bra band, liksom. Det var det de huska. [...] Vi lever jo i en veldig sånn musikk, ehh. ..musikkverden disse dager og folk er opptatt av det.

All the youth agree that music is what gives visitors their first impression of a congregation. It determines whether or not the youth find the congregation attractive or boring. The youth in this study want to use their own style of music, obviously because they like it, but also because they want to open their church up to youth from outside. Their concern on this issue is similar to the question of language in church. Both are viewed as important elements in attracting and including people from outside their existing fellowship. The wish to “package” the Gospel in music that communicates with the people outside church is a good example of the translation model of contextualization (Bevans 2002:40).

Judging by the youths’ opinions, the adults want to praise God in the familiar and well-known way. One of the young women explains that she knows exactly what and how to play when she leads the worship in order for the adults to go home and be happy. Confronting this dilemma, the youth react in different ways:

Strategy of adjusting and learning

One strategy is to decide who the target audience is and set aside their own music preferences, adjusting to the preferences and wishes of the larger congregation. This was especially an issue in focus group two where the respondents came from an immigrant church. Very much aware of the differing expectations in the congregation, the young women seemed willing to stretch a long way to accommodate the older generation. Several times they emphasized the necessity to “know your crowd” and they actively tried to play

the music preferred by the largest portion of the congregation—those in their 40's and 50's. But even when the youth tried to adapt their style of worship and choose songs the larger congregation was used to, they couldn't help coloring the music with their own musical background.

F-tw: And since we grew up in a totally different culture, in a way, then we are not used to, in a way, to sing songs, or perform songs the way they want them performed. Because, they, .. when we sing, then.. we change the style of the song, see? [Unanimous consent]. And then...

Researcher: Changing the songs they know from before?

F-tw: Yes, the style changes automatically, because we are more used to sing pop and as a result we sing in a more pop-drums or R&B, and then they think: Ah, what are they doing with this song? They have ruined it!

[Unanimous consent; true, mm, yes.]

F-tw: So, that is a problem too. [.....] Because, if you hear how they-, when they clap, they clap totally differently. Even when they sing, the beat, the rhythm is different. We do the songs: Sometimes they stand there: What are they doing? We try, - so it is a bit of fun, though! So, we do sort of learn, we've begun to understand that, oh, yes, so that's why it sometimes doesn't work, and: So the rhythm is like that, all right. So you do learn, then.

[During the whole explanation the whole group is talking and laughing in response, it is obvious that they recognize the situation.]

F-tw: Og når vi er oppvokst i en helt annerledes kultur, på en måte, så er ikke vi vant til, på en måte å synge sanger, eller fremføre sanger slik som de vil de skal framføres. Fordi, de,.. når vi synger, så er... vi forandrer stilen på sangen, ikke sant [unison tilslutning] og da...

Forsker: På de sangene som de kan fra før?

F-tw: Ja, stilen blir forandret automatisk, for det at vi er mer vant til å synge pop og da synger vi sangen på mer sånn pop-tromme eller R&B, og da tenker de: Ah, hva er det de gjør med sangen? De har ødelagt den.

[Unison tilslutning: Ikke sant, mm, ja.]

F-tw: Så det er det som også er et problem. [.....] Fordi, hvis du hører hvordan de, når de klapper, så klapper de helt annerledes. Til og med når de synger, takta, rytmen er annerledes. Vi drar sangene: Noen ganger så står de der: Hva er de de driver med? Vi prøver, - så det er litt morsomt da! Så, vi lærer jo, da, vi har jo begynt å forstå at, å, ja, så det er derfor, kanskje det ikke funker noen ganger, og: Så rytmen er slik, ja! Så man lærer jo, da. [Under hele denne forklaringen ler og prater de andre, det er tydelig at de kjenner igjen situasjonen].

Here we see that the youth are actually confronted with how stuck they are in their own musical tradition, even when they try to accommodate the musical taste of adults in their

40's and 50's from a handful of different African countries. The youths' response is partly frustration, but they also seem to have the ability to look at their situation with humor and to see it as an opportunity to learn something.

The immigrant generation in church may not share the youths' musical preferences; still the youth perceive their own music as being inclusive in the sense that it can attract people to church, and not just any people. Their obvious assumption is that it is young people that need to be attracted since they feel most committed to reaching out to this group.

The youths' awareness of how they influence the music shows that on this question they hold a processual view of culture. Music is something which is recreated by every new person who performs it and by every new context in which it is performed. The youth admit that even when they try, they are unable to preserve the music the way it was originally played. Inevitably they change it.

In dialogue with the context – the music has to mean something or be set aside!

In the gathered material there are examples from both immigrant and non-immigrant churches where the youth are given a chance to try out new things. The interesting thing is that they are not satisfied with just a chance to play music their own way. One of the young men in group three underlines that there has to be a “match” between what they play and the audience. It has to work at a given time and place and with the people present.

M-te: It is not always that your thoughts and ideas, you may have them, share them and people are open to it, but it isn't always, what to say, that it is a match anyway. Do you understand what I say? That, eh, that in a way: Yes, that could have been cool, but right there, and for that crowd, that place; it ain't gonna work!

M-te: Det er ikke alltid dine ideer og tanker, du har dem kanskje, deler dem og folk er åpne for det, men d'ække alltid, skal vi si, det passer uansett. Skjønner du hva jeg mener? Atte ehh atte det på en måte: Ja, det kunne jo ha vært kult det, men akkurat der for de folka der, det stedet der, det går bare ikke!

Another of the young men in group three writes and performs rap. In his (non-immigrant) congregation he was asked to rap in the worship, and he was willing to try. But he says he won't do it again because it didn't work.

M-te 1:- [...] people have asked me to, or asked if I could do a rap and such, they were really at me. And then I do it, and then there is no positive response. It is just like: Yeah, cool, you are rapping, well, well. [The whole group laughs.]
 M-te 2:[...] they may think it is fun that you like to do it, and they think it is cool for you, and..
 M-te 1: But when I see that it doesn't really mean anything to them, then I don't feel like doing it again.

M-te 1:[...] folk har bedt meg om, eller spurt om jeg rappe og sånn, vært skikkelig ivrige. Og så gjør jeg det, og så er det ikke noe positiv respons. Det er bare sånn: ja, kult, du rapper, ja, ja.
 [Latter i hele gruppa]
 M-te 2:[...] de syns kanskje det er gøy at du liker å drive med det, og de syns det er kult for deg, og..
 M-te 1: Men når jeg ser at det ikke betyr noe for dem, så få'kke jeg lyst til å gjøre det igjen.

If he were to use rap in worship, he would have to feel that it really works. One of the reasons he is reluctant is that he associates rap with entertainment, not with praising God:

M-te 1: No, in that case I would have to come to a place where it can really work, and I, or I, I am, I have done this a very long time now, rapping and such, and I have been, sort of, ... actually I am in front of an audience just to entertain them. I haven't really, ..I am not used to stand and sing and praise God with rap, in a way, and that's, .. It is just because of that I feel that this is a little new to me, somewhat strange.... [...] it is more a performance than to worship God.

M-te 1: Nei, da må jeg komme til et sted hvor jeg føler at det passer ordentlig og jeg, eller jeg, jeg er.. jeg har drivi med det veldig lenge nå, å rappe og sånn, og jeg har vært sånn, .. egentlig så er jeg sånn foran et publikum bare for å underholde dem. Jeg har aldri vært sånn skikkelig, jeg er ikke vant til å stå og synge og tilbe Gud med rapp, på en måte, og det er der, det er akkurat derfor jeg føler at det blir litt nytt for meg, litt rart,[....] det er mer performance enn å tilbe Gud.

In response, one of the young women from another non-immigrant church gave examples showing that it can be done. She knows a person who uses rap when praying. She was quite taken aback when she experienced rap used in this way the first time. When asked to rap in church she felt the same reluctance as her friend above. Like him, she related rap to performance and entertainment, not to prayer and worship. But then she began to focus on the words when rapping. When the words were about God or on what God had done in her life, she sometimes found that she could use rap as a legitimate expression for faith in worship.

M-te: Yes, so I am testing it now. I'm in the process of it. I think: Sometimes it works, in some settings.

M-te: Ja, så jeg tester ut nå, da. Jeg holder på. Jeg synes: Av og til så funker det, i visse settinger.

These three seventeen years-olds are testing out their own preferred musical expressions, willing to employ them or abandon them for use in church, depending on whether they “work” in prayer and worship and whether they communicate with the congregation.

Pushing for change; backing from leadership is essential

Above we have seen some examples of how the youth are willing to comply and to learn. It appears that adjusting to the larger congregation is a path often chosen by the youth, just as was the case on the issue of language. Now we see that they do this regarding music too, but on this issue the youth *also* want to expose the congregation to their own preferred music. The interview material shows that where there is an encouraging leadership, the youth are able to stay motivated and keep going, even when they face resistance or experience failure.

The young women in the group where all came from the same church have tried to introduce some of their own songs several times, with varying degrees of success. On one occasion they experienced that the congregation was at a complete loss when trying to catch a new kind of rhythm, not understanding where and how to dance or clap. In these young women's eyes the whole thing was a disaster. But to their relief the pastor came up after the song and saved the situation:

F-tw 1: He simply said: Yes, you know, I didn't know how to follow the rhythm, - but I danced just the same! [Laughter from the group].

F-tw 2: Yes, but he is so cool; you could say he is our supporter. [The whole group: Yes!] He is one of those who give us... motivation to keep on going, because at other times you think: Oh God, now we'll just have to give it all up! [Chuckles.]

F-tw 1: Han bare: Ja, du vet, jeg visste ikke hvordan jeg skulle følge rytmen, men jeg bare danset! [latter]

F-tw 2: Ja, men han er så rå, da, han er liksom supporteren våres. [Gruppen: Ja!] Han er en av de som gir oss ... motivasjon til å holde det gående, for det er andre ganger du tenker: Å, God, nå må vi bare gi opp! [fnising]

A supportive leadership that allows both failure and success seems to be crucial in motivating the youth to carry on in their congregations. One of the young men in the third focus group shared about similar experiences in his *non-immigrant* church. At times he felt

that the power of the elders and of old traditions was difficult to challenge. When the youth proposed new ways of doing things, they felt it hard to be heard. In this situation the pastor listened to the youth and gave them the chance to try out their ideas. Sometimes it worked, sometimes not. But they were given room to experiment and to find out for themselves.

Facing the difficulties in adjusting to each other's cultures, it seems that the youth experience an ongoing dialogue rather than a conflict. When something doesn't work, the youth are willing to put it aside. However, they do not necessarily give up after the first try. One of the young women in group three simply notes the fact that change doesn't come over night. The youth's patience and persistence, combined with a supportive leadership seems to be the path that is often followed.

Choice of language in the songs

Sometimes the language in the songs is of greater importance than the music style. According to examples given by the youth, we see that the adults seem to prefer to sing in their mother tongue, whether they attend non-immigrant churches or immigrant churches. The youth are far more flexible and like to include other languages as well.

F-te:.... before I went to a Norwegian congregation, and that was more like.... grown up. Like, they.... if you play English songs, for instance, then they sit, they stand there and just look at you. But immediately, if you start with a Norwegian song, wow, then they're up there!
M-te: We've tried to combine a bit, then. When you talk about English worship songs. And you can see it straight away.. I'm in the worship team for the youth, and you immediately see that it becomes very.... very tame! [Referring to plain English songs for the congregation.] And you know, we enjoy ourselves up there, and we,... this is sort of what the youth are used to, outside of the church. Eh., and, but then we try to sort of find some.. same type of songs in

F-te:.. før så gikk jeg på en norsk menighet, og da var det mer sånn, ehm... voksent. Sånn, de .. hvis du spiller engelske sanger, for eksempel, da sitter, da står de bare der og ser på deg. Men med en gang du begynner med en norsk sang, oi, da er de der oppe!
M-te:Vi har prøvd å kombinere litt, da. Når du snakker om det med engelske lovsanger. Og da ser man jo med en gang.. jeg er med i lovsangsteamet for ungdommene, og da ser man jo med en gang at det blir veldig,.. det blir veldig tamt! [Henviser til å spille engelske sanger for menigheten.] Og du vet, vi koser oss oppå der, og vi, det er på en måte det vi ungdommene er vant med, utenfor kirka. Eh.. og, men da må vi på en måte kombinere og prøve å finne noen... samma

Norwegian. It has come more of that lately, you know. And then the older people, we see that then more of the older people also catch on.

type sanger på norsk. Det har jo blitt mer av det i det siste, ikke sant. Og da er, da ser vi at det er litt flere eldre som kanskje slenger seg på.

In these cases we see how the youth register what works and what doesn't. They make compromises by adding songs with Norwegian texts in order to include the adults in the congregation. They are not trying to trump things through, but instead actively look for solutions that will work for everyone.

In one focus group they said that in the church of their dreams the songs should be in all the different languages represented in the congregation. This way everyone would feel that their background and language counted and were recognized.

We have now looked at some perspectives of music in church. The material does not say much about what they play and listen to when not in church. A few comments show that they feel free to listen to any kind of music, and resent the idea that the kind of music you listen to is an indication about whether you are a Christian or not. A case study from three immigrant churches in Amsterdam which focuses the youth and music show a strong awareness regarding the lyrics in the songs. They do not want to listen to anything that could influence them in a bad way (Jansen and Stoffels 2006:171). Whether the youth in this study have the same awareness is not possible to see from the material.

Summary

The youth listen to music, they talk about music, and they play music and create music themselves. It is clear that even when they stretch themselves to accommodate their congregations, they are also fighting for their own musical expressions. The competence which they have within music is possibly the reason why they boldly experiment with how different genres work in worship and with different groups within their congregation. They see the importance of being able to praise God with musical expressions each one is comfortable with, and they are therefore willing to adjust the music to the congregation's preferences. Their competence within music also seems to give them the confidence and ability to search for new combinations and possibilities. They refuse to let themselves get

caught in a set style and clearly treat music as a part of the culture that they *make*, not only something that they *have*. In other words, they act out of a processual view of culture.

The dilemmas these youth face in church regarding their music style seem at first glance not to have any religious connotations. The dilemmas merely seem to be a matter of different preferences between generations and cultural background. It also appears that they are in a constructive dialogue on these matters, and are active and confident in this process even though they also express how crucial support from the pastor is.

The *religious* dimension is seen in the use of music to attract new people to their church so that they can hear the Christian message. It is also clear that, regardless of how preoccupied they are with which musical genre they prefer, the critical question in their congregational setting is to what degree the songs and the music communicate with the congregation and whether or not it is possible to worship and pray through the particular songs and music. The desire to worship God is the unifying factor. It is possible to deal with differences, various preferences and even disagreements under this unifying umbrella.

Chapter 13: Attempts to Separate Culture and Religion

Developing one's own personal interpretation of faith through dialogue

When Sissel Østberg studied young Norwegian Pakistanis she registered how the children were socialized into a reality where Islam was taken for granted. But when they reached adolescence the emphasis on religion started to vary between each individual, yet with this in common; they looked for interpretations of Islam that they could support personally (Østberg 2003: 17-19). The same dynamic is found among the youth of this study when we look at their attempts to come to terms with the dilemmas described before.

The process of finding one's personal interpretation does not take place as an isolated process within each individual. From what the youth relate, we see how the personal interpretation is constructed in a dialogue with their various contexts, just as Østberg also describes. In a similar way, Baumann talks about cultural identifications as dialogical by nature (Baumann 1999: 119).

Attempting to distinguish between culture and religion

In the process of finding their own personal interpretation of their faith, the youth tried to discern which matters represent the core, the absolute truths in their religion. They sought to distinguish these from the practical expressions of the faith which could vary depending on culture and context. Some matters ended up being classified as merely cultural. These distinctions were important to the youth as they influenced how they chose to live their lives. To negotiate about *cultural* matters may not always be easy. But regardless of their choices in these areas, cultural matters could not threaten their identity as Christians. *Religious* matters of less importance fell into the same category. But the *essence of their faith* was another matter. The *core* could not be disputed and was absolute. By defining as many matters as possible as *cultural* they found the flexibility needed to hold on to their faith as they moved in and out of different contexts and cultures.

There are two major stumbling blocks in the dialogue which takes place when Christian immigrant youth work out their personal interpretation of their faith. One is differing opinions about what to classify as religious or cultural. The other is differing understandings of the relation between the two.

According to one of the young women, the very combination of religion and culture is the problem: *“One has taken culture and Jesus and put them together!”* The frustration was obvious as she said this. The strategy of dealing with dilemmas by creating a dividing line between culture and religion may work to resolve the dilemma on the *individual* level. But when congregations disagree with their youth on how to classify the various matters, the dilemmas remain. From the youths’ point of view, many of the dilemmas occurred when cultural matters were given religious significance.

The crucial matters and the negotiable matters

One example is when attitudes and opinions of Christians in “Africa” are brought to Norway and applied with very little adaptation. This was the point at which, according to one of the young women a *“very big crash”* occurred. She continued by presenting a long list of examples of this very big cultural crash. This list included the style of preaching (a really good sermon ought to be very loud, intense and long!), style of worship, style of leadership, hairstyle, jeans on the stage, mini-skirts and so on. She thought that all these do’s and don’ts were not real Christianity, but the result of mixing faith and culture:

F-te: .. we have in a way mixed Christendom and culture: This is Christendom: You must: Before going to bed you must pray. You must do this, you must not, not do this, you must not do this, you must not do that, you m....

F-te: vi har liksom tatt kultur og kristendom og puttet dem sammen: Det er kristendom: At du skal: Før du legger deg du skal be. Du skal gjøre det, du skal ikke, ikke gjøre det, du skal ikke gjøre det, du skal ikke gjøre det, du s...

She denounced all these rules as unimportant outward expressions, with little relevance to the true faith of the individual. The decisive question for her was whether the do’s and don’ts had anything to do with Jesus. Her opinion was shared by most of the youth in all the three focus groups.

F-te: [...] it is about such physical things that have nothing to do with Jesus, really. But as I said before: One has taken culture and Jesus and put them together, see? And it is stupid to put it together!

F-te: [...] det er sånne fysiske ting som har ingenting med Jesus å gjøre egentlig. Men som sagt så har man tatt kultur og Jesus og putta dem sammen, ikke sant. Og det er dumt å putte det sammen!

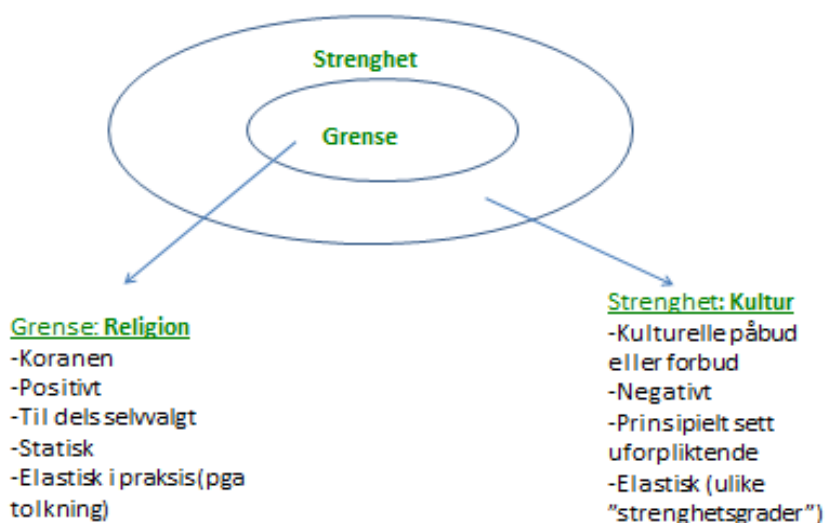
Having a relationship with Jesus is what makes you a Christian. This was the essence of the way the youth expressed their faith (explained in chapter 8). External things like clothes, hairstyle and music were subordinate matters. Even how often one prayed or read one's Bible were secondary and not essential criteria for calling oneself a Christian. But despite the fact that they considered many of these externals as non-essential, it is clear that judging by the frequency of their references to the Bible, these youth have had a great deal of exposure to the Bible. The written questionnaire also reveals that the youth in this study are very faithful churchgoers. 88 per cent of them attended church more than twice a month. Nonetheless, the matters mentioned above were not regarded as decisive. With the natural confidence that belongs to youth they boldly classified matters as either cultural and negotiable or crucial to the faith and non-negotiable.

Culture and religion as strictness and limits

Other researchers in Norway have made similar observations. Hildegunn Valen Kleive studied roles and values among Muslim youth in Oslo. She found that these youth actively customized their faith, especially on matters regarding their practical everyday life. This she found to correspond with Østberg's findings as well. When studying their choices more closely, Valen Kleive discovered two terms the youth made use of repeatedly. They distinguished between what they called "strictness" [*strenghet*] and "limit" [*grense*]. Matters which could be interpreted in different ways and which were subject to negotiation were graded in terms of varying degrees of *strictness*, while *limit* denoted the situations where non-negotiable absolutes in the religion came into play (Valen 1999:117-131). From this Valen developed her Strictness-Limit Model (reprinted with permission):

Grense – strenghet modellen

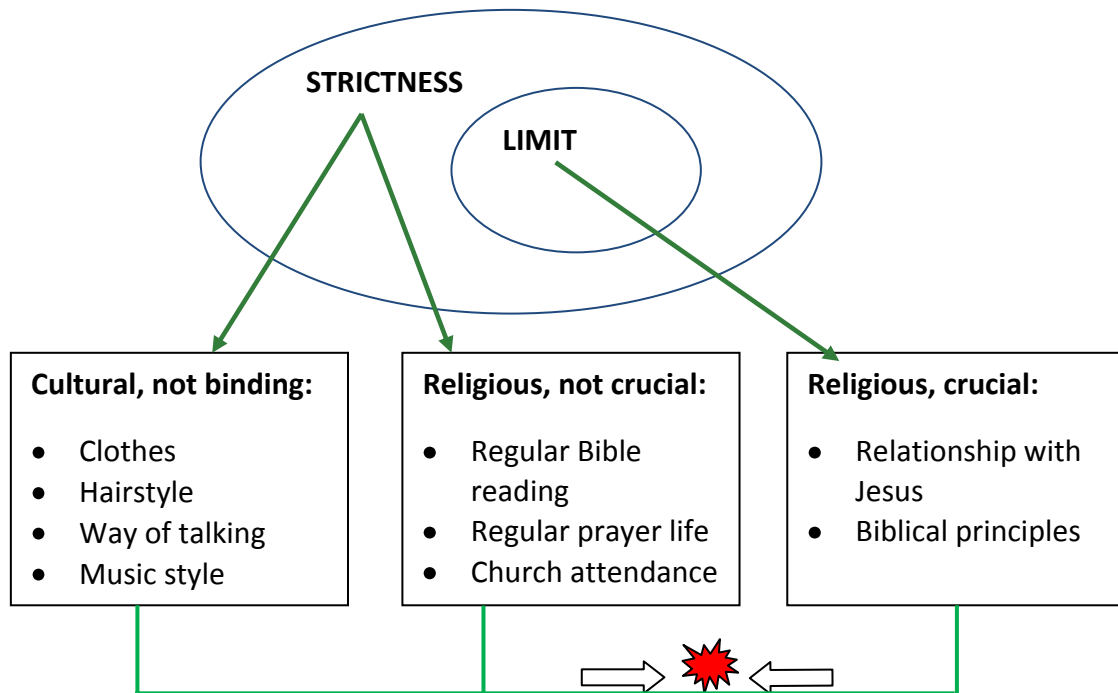
(Valen 1999)



We see in this model that matters the youth categorized under the negotiable *strictness* classification were often related to what they thought of as *culture*. Culture was not regarded as unimportant. But neither was it absolutely binding. Elastic concepts that could be negotiated were assigned differing degrees of *strictness*. The Quran was the main definer of the *limit* or boundary. As such it was perceived as positive. To a certain degree this limit, though often very static, was self-chosen by the Muslim youth. Yet when these youth sought to relate their religious convictions to their practical lives, it turned out that even the Quran was interpreted in different ways and was therefore, like culture, also somewhat flexible (Valen 1999: 131).

The youth in my study use the same strategy of classifying matters as either cultural (strictness-issues) or religious (limit-issues). The idea that culture is changeable while religious issues are more absolute was very recognizable. Applying Valens strictness-limit model to the findings in this study I had to modify her model somewhat. First I had to add the box with "religious, not crucial" matters. Second, I added connecting lines between the boxes. This was in order to reflect the fact that the issues in the boxes had an influence on each other. The two arrows crashing is meant to illustrate the dilemmas or conflicts that arise when two parties don't agree on which way the influence ought to go or what should go into which box.

The Strictness-Limit model of Valen modified for the findings of this study:



The common pattern among the youth was to think that issues in the “Religious, crucial”-box had precedence. These were the matters that counted when it came to calling yourself a Christian and these were the matters that could shape and influence the issues found in the other two boxes. In the “Religious, crucial”-box were the *principles*, in the other two boxes one found examples on how the principles *could* be lived out, but not how they *had* to be lived out. In other words, the practical application of the basic principles could be different within different cultures without threatening the validity of the principles. In many cases the youth were convinced that the immigrant generation/their congregations placed too much emphasis on matters which they themselves felt were negotiable.

In all of this we see the translation model of contextualization being used (Bevans 2000:40). The youths’ references to Jesus and the Bible as their fixed point for orienting themselves can be also compared to Baumann’s example of viewing religion as a kind of compass. There is one point of orientation, even though the surroundings may change. Yet Baumann questions whether this is really possible. He argues that even the core contents in a religion can change over time. He finds it more accurate to use the sextant as a metaphor. The sextant tells you your position in relation to the context. The youth in this study show no

signs of agreeing with this, this may reflect that many of them come from the charismatic type of Churches where one can often find the classic conservative Christian position.

How the Bible is applied to the youths' practical dilemmas is an interesting question since the Bible is mentioned as something very basic. Yet my research material contains very few references to how they apply the Bible. The few examples which do come up will be discussed in the next chapter in relation to the use of the Bible in negotiations.

Explaining ability to distinguish between culture and religion with exposure to cultures

In one of the focus groups isolation was given as one of the reasons for the restrictive attitudes found in some congregations; there was too little contact with other congregations. Another group made the same claim when talking about how youth relate a great deal to various cultures while adults tend to stick together more with people who have the same kind of background as themselves. Consequently the adults aren't as exposed to other cultures as much as the youth. One youth used lack of exposure to other cultures as an explanation for adults' inclination to judge people by outward appearances. In general it seemed that the youth felt more equipped to cut through the jungle of outward expressions than adults. They felt able to recognize *"the same fire inside"* that is in other Christians even if they dress like punks or have *"tattoos all over their face"*.

Having said this, it must also be added that my research material also conveyed examples of youth who had a more nuanced view of adults in this regard. However, most of the youth seemed to agree that this was the general picture. The youths' expanded world view as a result of the exposure they have had to other cultures is yet another confirmation of Pollock and Van Reken's TCK-profile (2009:88).

Exposure to other cultures has given the youth confidence that they can navigate between different contexts and decide how to practice their faith in a complex social environment. The choices they make show youth making use of the synthetic model of contextualization (Bevans 2002:90-93). They believe there to be something good which can be learned from most traditions while at the same time acknowledging that there are other aspects of these same traditions that do not fit their specific situation.

Summary

As young Christians, the youth in this study seek to find an expression for their faith which they can personally support. They do this by means of a continuous dialogue with their context. Their main strategy involves distinguishing between 1) the essentials of their faith, 2) the more negotiable aspects and 3) the merely cultural aspects. The essentials are linked to having a relationship with Jesus and with basic biblical principles. These are non-negotiable issues which do not need to be discussed. However, the less essential aspects of their faith as well as cultural issues can be discussed and negotiated without threatening their identity as Christians. When dilemmas occur due to differing interpretations of what is culture and what is religion, they show confidence in their own ability to discern what is what. The youth believe that the competence they have required in this regard comes from being exposed to many different cultures.

Their exposure to many cultures and contexts have resulted in the youth acquiring an expanded worldview, and in this regard they match the TCK profile. They register differences between those who have had little and those who have had more exposure to various cultures. They think that those with greater exposure are better equipped to cut through outward expressions in order to come in to the real issues.

Chapter 14: Negotiations

This chapter will look at some aspects around the negotiations which the youth enter into.

Does more negotiating take place in immigrant churches?

Reviewing my research material from the focus groups, the first impression is that the dilemmas leading to the need for negotiation are found most often in the immigrant churches. Having noted this there are a number of other considerations which must be taken into account. Firstly, there were fewer youth from non-immigrant churches represented in the focus groups. Secondly, two of these came from non-immigrant churches which they had transferred to, and consciously chosen according to their own criteria. And thirdly, while the youth attending immigrant churches worked for change, the youth in non-immigrant churches felt that they were too few to demand change. As one of the young men put it, “Then it will be only me who has a good time”. He wouldn’t feel right about changing things if the rest of the congregation was content with the way things are.

M-te: But I do not think I want to change... If people like it where they have it, then I will not come there and fuss, 'cause I know it wouldn't work, and that's why it is no dream for me either, 'cause I think it is a good thing that people have their own ways. I wouldn't have liked it if I was in a congregation, see, where I feel that this is just perfect for me, and then a dude comes and just: HEY! We'll turn this over to... I wouldn't have liked that at all!

M-te: Men jeg tror ikke jeg vil forandre... Hvis folk trives der de har det, så vil ikke jeg komme dit og pese på det, fordi det veit jeg ikke vil gå, og derfor blir det ingen drøm for meg heller, fordi jeg syns det er bra at folk har sin egen greie. Jeg hadde ikke likt om det kom, hvis jeg var i en menighet, da, der føler at dette her er akkurat perfekt for meg, og det kom en dude, bare: HEI! Vi vrir om til Det hadde jo ikke jeg likt i det hele tatt.

Negotiating with parents

In some cases it was not their congregations but their parents who were the other party in the youths’ negotiations. Not many said anything about this, but those who did, shared different approaches. For one of the youth it was enough to look into his father’s eyes to know whether or not the issue in question was negotiable. Another describes his mother as being more like a friend to discuss with, but one who sometimes brought in her parents’ perspective which meant that despite not being present, this particular youth’s grandparents were still an influential party in the discussion. One of the young women

related the following general approach in developing her strategy. First she listened. Then she confirmed that she understood and maybe even shared her parents' basic concerns. Finally she carefully tried to explain why she saw a different solution than them to the same situation. This appeared to be a strategy that worked; in many cases the parents were able to accept her choices because they understood her reasons for them. Others in the focus group where she told about her strategy recognized the approach. The same young woman said she was willing to make compromises and to go with her parents decisions in many cases. But when it came to issues that were important for her, and especially for her future—like what kind of education to take—she felt she needed to be firm. She could still decide to use the careful approach described above, but if need be, she would put her foot down.

Considering this case, it would appear that this young woman was wise in letting her parents understand that their concerns were recognized and perhaps even shared to some degree. This approach helped to reduce her parents' worries and likely made them more open to their daughter's suggestions despite the fact that they differed from their own.

Use of the Bible in the negotiations

Many times in the research material, the youth expressed a strong appreciation for the culture of their parents'/congregations' homelands. Yet they were not willing to simply go along with everything. In certain matters, they felt free to set aside the prescriptions of their culture. If someone challenged them to think differently, the youth demanded that those posing the challenge use the Bible to convince them. If the proposed restrictions had no Biblical foundation, the youth did not feel obligated to follow them. Hildegunn Valen Kleive experienced that the Muslim youth she interviewed felt they had an ally in the Quran. If they could show the parents a quote from the Quran that supported their view the discussion was settled (Valen 1999:127). Similarly the youth in my study thought that the Bible trumps culture. In most situations, the Bible was viewed as an ally in negotiations with their parents.

F-tw: What I've tried to tell people is that sometimes we must in a way that is, push our culture and rather see what the Bible says about things, than just to; "Yes, but we are from

F-tw: ..det jeg har prøvd å si til folk er at noen ganger så må vi på en måte heller altså, skyve kulturen vår, og heller se hva bibelen sier om ting, enn å bare; "Ja, men vi er fra [nevner et

[mentions country], and in our culture we do it this and that way”.. | *land], og i vår kultur så gjør vi sånn og sånn”..*

But using the Bible didn't necessarily settle all matters. From what the youth say, we can see that the Bible is used to argue both parties' points of view—youth as well as parents.

Sometimes the Bible is viewed as an objective judge outside the culture. At other times it is used to support one or another praxis. Especially youth from immigrant churches think that the practical consequences of the principles in the Bible are understood far too narrowly by their parents and congregations. Even when the particular issue being negotiated is regarded cultural by both sides, they may disagree on how important it is to follow the custom in question. Various understandings of how the Bible applies, and how one should relate to any given culture are sometimes all mixed together, making for a rather confusing landscape to navigate in. The following dialogue serves as an illustration.

F-tw1: ... it was just frustrating at times, because you think: Okay, I'm born in Norway, and that is..

M-tw: ... an undeniable part of our identity!

F-tw1: Yes, that's true!

M-tw: ... the Norwegian culture.

F-tw1: ... and our parents probably do not understand that I have in a way chosen another culture which they maybe will not, or that I take their culture and Norwegian culture and just mix it together. When we try to approach, or use the Bible or when I am in various situations in life, then they think from: "Yes, but in [county] we...." And then they use the Bible and then, that is, use verses from the Bible that supports their cultural...

F-tw2: Yes!

F-tw1: .., yes, isn't it so? And then I use: "But here we do like this..." , or "I feel like so and so.." , see? So it is difficult, it is very difficult.

F-tw2: It is very difficult to separate culture from

F-tw1: ..det var bare frustrerende noen ganger, for du tenker; Okei, jeg er født i Norge, og det er..

M-tw: ... det er en unektelig del av vår identitet!

F-tw1: Ja, ikke sant!

M-tw: .. den norske kulturen.

F-tw1:.. og foreldrene våre forstår sikkert ikke at jeg har på en måte valgt en annen kultur som de kanskje ikke vil, eller at jeg tar deres kultur og norsk kultur og bare blander det sammen. Når vi prøver å tilnærme oss, eller bruke Bibelen eller når jeg er i ulike livssituasjoner, så tenker de fra: "Ja, men i [land] så, ... " og så bruker de Bibelen og så, altså bruker bibelvers som støtter deres kulturelle..

F-tw2: Ja!

F-tw1: .. ja, ikke sant! Og så bruker jeg: "Men her gjør vi sånn..." , eller "jeg føler at sånn og sånn..." ikke sant? Så det er vanskelig, det er kjempevanskelig.

F-tw2: Det er vanskelig å skille kultur fra tro eller

faith or religion. It is very difficult.

F-tw1: Yes! Yes! So I sort of have said to mum some times: It is just to see what God says, sort of, and then.. It is great to have culture, it's not that, but sometimes there are negative sides of our culture that hinder us from asking the questions that are of special relevance to us, yes...

religion. Det er veldig vanskelig.

F-tw1: Ja! Ja! Så liksom, jeg har sagt til mamma, noen ganger: Det er bare å se hva er det Gud sier, liksom, og så.. Det er kjempegodt å ha kultur, det æ'kke dét, men noen ganger så er det negative sider ved kulturen vår som gjør at vi ikke kan stille spørsmål som er ekstra relevante for oss, ja...

The Bible has authority. There is no discussion about that. But it can be used by both parties in the conflict, and this the youth acknowledge. As this subject was not pursued further in the focus group interviews, the material says nothing about whether the youth had an opinion about which was the “correct” method of interpreting the Bible. In addition, they do acknowledge that distinguishing between culture and religion is difficult. But they do not discuss further whether it is at all possible to extract the one from the other.

Negotiating as both fighting and being patient

In chapter 15 we will see how a large number of the youth interviewed made conscious choices to stay in their churches because they felt responsible for helping those younger than themselves in the church. Especially the young adults felt that they were in a key position to be a voice for the children in the larger congregation. Sometimes this process was described as a *fight*, not in the sense of a quarrel, but in the sense of being willing to stand up on an important issue. Almost in the same breath, one of the young women talked about the need to be willing to *compromise*.

F-tw: .. But maybe because I am older, and that I in a way, that is, I try to compromise too. I view it from where they come from, and then I think: Okay then, they've got that way of thinking, but how can I in a way try to approach them? So this is how, I.. fight! [...] .. I will not give in!

F-tw: ..Men kanskje fordi jeg er eldre, og at jeg på en måte, altså jeg prøver jo å inngå kompromiss også. Jeg ser jo utfra hvor de kommer fra, og så tenker jeg: Okei, da, de har den tankegangen der, men hvordan kan jeg på en måte prøve å tilnærme meg dem? Så det er sånn, jeg.... kriger! [...].... jeg skal ikke gi opp, så.

Yet not all found this road acceptable. Several of the youth also told of becoming tired of constant confrontations. Giving up their views and going along with all the dominant

expectations was not an option, so a couple of them even chose to withdraw. They found themselves new congregations to attend, though this was not the reason for all those who withdrew. In one of the groups I asked directly if they knew about youth who had given up church altogether. All knew of people who had done so.

As the quotation above shows, those who stay and find motivation to keep working for change sometimes call it a *fight*. But when asked whether they had to put up a hard fight in order to be heard, one of the young women in another group acknowledged it as a struggle, but was reluctant to call it a fight. The challenge, according to her, was more that the process was so slow.

*F-te: .. not actually **fight** for it, but it takes more **time** in order to be sort of heard. Eh.. you may come with a suggestion and then the pastor says: "Okay, we'll think about it", and then that process, it can take a lot of time, before they say: "Okay, we'll go for it".*

Researcher: You are heard?

*F-te: We **are** heard. Yes, it is not like: "No, no, no! This we will not have in our congregation, no!" No, it isn't like that, it is more like; it takes more time, ..*

*F-te: ... ikke akkurat **kjempe** for det, men det tar litt lengre **tid** for å bli liksom hørt. Eh.. du kan komme med en forslag og så sier pastor; "Okey, vi skal tenke på det», og så den prosessen der, den tar lang tid, før de sier: «Okey. Vi går for det."*

Forsker: Dere blir hørt?

*F-te: Man **blir** hørt. Ja, det er ikke noe sånt: "Nei, nei, nei! Det skal vi ikke her i vår menighet, nei!" Nei, det er ikke sånn, men det mer sånn; det tar lengre tid, ...*

This young woman believes that if the congregation's leadership has *direct* responsibility for the youth work, this helps to speed up the process. In her particular congregation, the youth work lived a life of its own, separate from the rest of the congregation. This she was not satisfied with. On the other hand she seemed to be reconciled to the fact that, as she herself said: "*Change does not happen overnight*".

This combination of patience and willingness to fight was not uncommon among the youth attending immigrant churches.

Seeking better organization in church in order to avoid conflict

To avoid friction and conflict, some of the youth long for more structure and specified mandates in their churches. This was most pronounced in the immigrant churches and has already been mentioned in chapter 9.

F-tw: ... the youth tries to be more organized, because sometimes we feel that things are getting quite disorderly. That in a way we must have some structure, we must have some guidelines about how to do things.

F-tw: ... ungdommene prøver å være litt mer organiserte, fordi vi føler at ting noen ganger blir så veldig rotete. At vi på en måte ha litt struktur, vi må på en måte ha noen regler om hvordan vi skal gjøre ting.

In the group where this was suggested, the youth expressed a true appreciation for their pastor. Yet despite his understanding their situation and agreeing on what should be changed, he unfortunately repeatedly reverted to doing things the old way. So the youth patiently brought up the issue again, hoping that lasting change will slowly come.

Attempts to build bridges

In one of the immigrant churches a special forum was created to strengthen the dialogue between the youth and the adults in the congregation. Here they discuss the relationship between young and old, cultural barriers and other issues. The youth are given the task of planning and facilitating this forum which has now become a yearly event:

F-tw 1: It is us, the youth, who find a day in the summer and then we inv.. then we put up a program, then. And then we invite all the adults to come and listen, bring along friends and such things and then..

*Resesarcher: And then it is **you** who presents things?*

F-tw 1: Yes, we present, we present questions, we discuss issues, and then we look at it, we try to look at it from the Bible, yes, and then we discuss and such, [laughs]

Researcher: Do you get the congregation along?

F-tw 1: Yes, yes, yes! It is amo., that is; people do

F-tw 1: Det er vi ungdommene som setter opp en dag i løpet av sommeren, og så invi... vi setter opp et program, da. Og så inviterer vi alle de voksne til å komme og høre, ta med venner og sånne ting, og så

*Forsker: Og så er det **dere** som legger fram ting?*

F-tw 1: Ja, vi legger fram, vi legger fram spørsmål, vi diskuterer ting, og så ser vi det, prøver vi å se det utfra Bibelen, ja, og så diskuterer vi og sånt da [ler]

Researcher: Får dere med menigheten, da?

F-tw 1: Ja, ja, ja! Det er bl., altså folk

discuss... it is fun [laughs]

F-tw 2: But do vi arrive on any conclusion? That is the question.

diskuterer jo, det er morsomt [ler]

F-tw 2: Men om vi kommer til noen konklusjon? Det er jo det som er saken.

These yearly events where the youth set the agenda and invited the adults to discuss issues of importance for the youth were much appreciated by both groups. In the focus group where this came up, the young women constantly laughed as they talked about the forums they had arranged. These had obviously been a lot of fun, but they admitted that they seldom led to practical changes. For this reason one of the young women thought it would be better to have some kind of regular meetings with the board of elders. This fits with the suggestion, mentioned above, made by a young woman in another church—to place the congregation’s youth work directly under the leadership.

Disqualified by being young and being born in the West

Structural issues are not all that create conflicts or hinder fruitful negotiations. One recurring problem in the youths’ negotiations was how their young age was viewed by the adults. The African culture requires that those who are younger have respect for those who are older and more experienced. So when the youth dare to challenge the adults’ way of thinking, cultural concepts of respect and pride come into play. The adults in the congregation mentioned immediately above, readily participated in the yearly forums by the youth, but were still somewhat reluctant to accept their ideas:

*F-tw: It is this: “Now **you** will tell **us** how **we**.. [laughter] ought to raise you?” [Laughter around the whole table]. And that is what it becomes, and then it turns out like this: “Oh, so that is what you are going to do?”*

*F-tw: Det er det at: “nå skal **dere** fortelle **oss** hvordan **vi**...[latter] skal oppdra dere?» [latter rundt hele bordet] Det er jo dét det blir, og så blir det sånn: «Å, ja, så dere skal gjøre dét?»*

Still the adults took part in the discussions and were engaged in the issues. For their own part, the youth said they learned something. They also enjoyed the chance to talk about their own issues and get the adults’ responses, even though lasting changes have yet not resulted from these meetings. But being taken lightly solely based their age, or as several of them had often experienced, on the fact that they were born in the West, was hard for the youth to accept.

F-tw1: What is also very difficult, or what is, what I feel, that I've seen in African cultures or in this culture, then, that is here in the church, is that African adults, men and women, have a really hard time listening to the youth. It is very much like this: Really, are you gonna tell us what to do? We are older than you, true? That is what we get to hear: Yes, but I'm older than you! You must listen to me! I have more experience, I know better....

F-tw2: Or that we are born here in the West.

F-tw1: Yes, or that we are born here, so we shouldn't say anything, see? So that is it, we feel that..

Researcher: So it is used against you that you are...?

F-tw1: Yes, all the time! You can go abroad and meet Africans there: They say the same thing! [Laughter in the group.]

F-tw1: For det som også er veldig vanskelig, eller det som er, som jeg føler da, som jeg har sett i afrikanske kulturer eller i denne kulturen da, som er her i kirken, er atte voksne afrikanske kvinner og menn har det veldig vanskelig for seg å høre på ungdommer. Det er veldig slik at det er sånn atte: Ja, men, skal dere fortelle oss hva vi skal gjøre? Vi er eldre enn dere, ikke sant. Det er jo det vi får høre: Ja, men jeg er eldre enn deg! Du må høre på meg! Jeg har mer erfaring, jeg vet bedre...

F-tw2: Eller at vi er født her i vesten.

F-tw1: Ja, eller at vi er født her, så vi burde ikke snakke, ikke sant! Så det er dét vi føler atte ...

Forsker: Så det blir brukt mot dere at dere er...?

F-tw1: Ja, hele tiden! Du kan dra til utlandet og møte afrikanere der: De sier det samme! [Latter i gruppa.]

The majority of the youth in this study had most of their childhood in Norway, some were also born here. Some adults were convinced that these youth had an inadequate basis for understanding how things *ought* to be. One of the worst examples of this mindset, according to the youth, was when they attended a convention in Spain. There they discovered that the man in charge of child-care actually slapped the children. The young woman who told this story came to pick up her little sister and protested when she found out about what had happened. Her protests were dismissed on the basis of the fact that she was born in the West:

F-tw 1: "Yes, you are born in the West, that's why you talk like that." And so I said to him: "You can't say that! You must not hit others' children! Really, you could hurt them, and then what should you say?" And he was: "Yeah! Yeah! It is because you

F-tw 1: "Ja, dere er født i vesten, det er derfor dere snakker sånn." Og så sa jeg til han: "Du kan ikke si dét. Du skal ikke slå andres barn. Altså, du kan skade dem, hva skal du da si? Og han ble: "Jah! Jah! Det er fordi dere er født i

are born in the West and you do not know what you are talking about." See? So this is the kind of things you encounter all the time. It is very tiring. They do not even try to understand where you come from, sort of. It is just that you are born in the West, so..

F-tw 2: So you have nothing good to say. [Group laughs.]

vesten og dere vet ikke hva dere snakker om." Ikke sant, så det er sånne ting man møter på hele tida. Det er veldig slitsomt. De prøver ikke engang forstå hvor du kommer fra, liksom. Det er bare det at du er født i vesten, så ...

F-tw 2: ... du har ikke noe bra å si. [Latter fra gruppa.]

Adults who do not listen alienates the youth; supportive leadership helps

It was not only remarks like these which represented a hindrance (or full stop!) to dialogue. The very style of communication was also identified as a stumbling block. To illustrate this, one of the focus groups parodied adults who were bound to old patterns and not willing to listen. These adults wanted everything to stay the way it was and to do things they way they always had been done:

M-tw: And then there is the way of communicating. Because they [the adults] are not so good at sitting down and discuss and assess new ideas. It becomes very much like this: "No! No, it is not this way! Like this, see? No, really! »

[Making a parody of the adults with his voice].

F-tw [continues the parody]: "This is the way we've always done it, yes, m-hm!"

Researcher asks rest of the group: Do you too recognize this situation?

Rest of group: Mm-hm, yes!

M-tw: Og så er det en måte å kommunisere på. For de [de voksne] er ikke så flinke å sitte sånn og diskutere og vurdere nye ideer. Det blir veldig sånn: "Nei! Nei, sånn er det ikke! Sånn, altså. Nei, altså!" [parodierer de voksne med stemmen].

F-tw [fortsetter parodien]: "Vi har gjort det slik i alle år, ja, m-hm! "

Forsker til resten av gruppa: Kjenner dere dere igjen, dere også?

Resten av gruppa: Mm-hmm, ja!

Several of the youth said that submission to elders and authority figures is difficult when communication ends up like this. In their research, Ebaugh and Chafetz also found that this was a problematic issue for the youth they studied (2000:132-133). Even though maintaining good communication and relationships can be hard at times, and even negotiating seems to produce few practical results, there is still an ongoing dialogue. In the midst of sharing frustrations, the youth also talk about how much they appreciate the people in their congregations, the music, the worship style, their pastor and so on.

Summary

The negotiations related in my research material are mostly connected to the immigrant congregations and to the parents in these congregations. In relating the parents, the quality of communication varies greatly. Yet the strategy of expressing understanding for the parents' bottom-line concerns before introducing one's own solutions was recognized and affirmed by the whole focus group in which this was mentioned.

Despite the fact that the Bible is viewed as some sort of external judge, raised above all cultures, the youth also acknowledged that the Bible can be used by both sides when negotiating. No ideas related to an "authoritative" way of applying the Bible were related.

When they describe the negotiations the youth use words like *compromise* and *fight*. Even if frustration and impatience surfaces in the interviews, they seem reconciled to the fact that change happens slowly.

In some of the immigrant churches, the youth ask for better organization and more specified mandates. This could reduce friction and conflicts.

Among the more difficult things to cope with in negotiations are adults who dismiss youth based on their young age. Equally difficult are adults who think youth are unable to understand simply because they were born in the West. The youth also encounter adults who are not willing to listen simply because they want everything to be done as it always has been done before. Even though they may not see immediate results, the youth appreciate opportunities to dialogue with the adults about issues they struggle with.

In the midst of sharing their frustrations, the youth also convey a great love for their church, the people there and their culture.

Chapter 15: Consequences of a church's Lacking Youth Work

Staying in their immigrant church out of concern for the younger

Half of the Christian multicultural youth that were interviewed in this project said that they had decided to stay in the immigrant church where they either grew up or followed their parents into. Many of them expressed a strongly-felt sense of belonging to their church. A few related this feeling to culture (especially regarding music and worship style) and language. Others explained that the people in their church were like a larger family to them. But the reason for staying mentioned most often was a feeling of obligation towards the younger youth and children in the congregation.

In the written questionnaire and in the focus group interviews there were no direct questions about *how* they participated in church apart from attending services. In the focus group interviews though, most of the youth mentioned things they were involved in. Music and children/youth ministry were the two main areas in which they took on responsibilities.

In two of the focus groups there were several young women who explicitly said they became involved in the children's/youth ministry to create a better situation for the younger ones. This sense of duty was most clearly articulated by those in their twenties. When they themselves grew up, not many accommodations were made for them as children. Falling asleep on the chair while listening to endless sermons, which they didn't understand much of, was a situation recognized across the different congregations. Having "survived" this experience of church themselves, many are now engaged in building up a children and youth ministry in their churches. They have consciously chosen not to leave their churches in favor of churches with more interesting program for youth because they don't want to leave the younger ones to fend for themselves. They know all too well what they themselves missed at that age and don't want the youngest generation to have to go through the same experience.

Growing awareness in the immigrant churches of the needs of the younger

Only youth have answered the questionnaires and participated in the focus groups. Some perspectives from adults and leaders in the immigrant churches are presented in chapter

two. I also interviewed Viktor Calvert and Rune Fiskerstrand in KIA to get an idea of what the immigrant churches do in order to meet the challenge of retaining their youth. Calvert and Fiskerstrand register an awakening among the immigrant churches to the needs of the children and youth. Especially many of the older immigrant congregations have now made children's and youth ministry a priority. But many are at loss when it comes to *how* to care for the youth. Various approaches have been tried. There are Sunday schools in Norwegian or in the native language of the parents. Some hire youth pastors. Others offer language classes, organize youth groups or cooperate with other churches. Fiskerstrand explains the different approaches by referring to different traditions from their homelands.

*"In Norway there is a tradition for facilitating groups for children, youth, adults, elderly and so on. And while this is important for the various groups and their special needs, one must take care so that the sense of belonging and unity with the larger congregation is not missed. Many immigrant churches are good at the more holistic approach where all belong, regardless of age and interests. But sometimes the special needs of their children and youth are neglected. In other cases these needs are acknowledged, but the churches in question do not have the resources required to meet these needs. Another problem is that they are unsure about **how** to accommodate their children as they have become more Norwegian than their parents. The result of not accommodating the youth is often that they leave their churches as they grow up. But there are also immigrant congregations who have invested heavily in keeping their youth in church. They find the resources within their own church or they seek help and cooperation with other churches in order to meet this challenge."*

A model that is sometimes used is to send their children to a church which has Sunday school and where the language is Norwegian. For many immigrant churches this solution can cover the needs of their children when their own resources are insufficient. The Baptist Union of Norway reports that 25% of their total membership is immigrants. But when counting only children and young people, the percentage is 47. This reveals something about the dynamics mentioned previously.

Fiskerstrand provides an example from the Pentecostal tradition. The Pentecostal church in Oslo, Filadelfia, is currently building a new church. One of their considerations when designing their building was to make it possible for all the immigrant churches who use their premises to be able to hold their worship at the same time. This way the children from all

the congregations can be gathered at the same time for activities and Christian education appropriate to their age.

There are examples of ways in which immigrant churches address the challenge of youth and children using their own resources. For instance, there are many examples of well-developed children and youth ministries among Vietnamese and Chinese congregations.

From other research (Foley and Hoge 2007, Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000) we know that an important reason for why parents begin to attend church is their wish to communicate the language and culture from their homelands to their children. But the children who grow up there seem to have a stronger focus on faith and come to regard culture as subordinate to it. However based on the examples from my research, it seems that Christian immigrant parents in Oslo are just as focused on the faith aspects as they are on the cultural ones. Let me hasten to add that more research is needed to determine whether this really is the case.

Youth in the squeeze between own needs and feelings of duty

In other cases the parents' uncertainty about how to accommodate their children in church has resulted in the congregation pushing the responsibility over to the youth. In at least two of the churches a children's and youth ministry now exists thanks to the youth. The two young women quoted below are from two different churches and both express a desire to improve things for those who are younger, thereby also fulfilling the wishes of these children's parents.

F-tw: I believe that precisely because there have not been many youth there, there has sort of been an expectation, from both family and congregation, that we shall, that it is important that we're there, then. So that we can build up a youth work, - or I. So that's why I have felt, I have always felt an expectation that there is a need for me there, and therefore they'll rather not that I transfer to another congregation.

F-tw: Jeg tror at nettopp fordi det ikke har vært så mange ungdommer der, så har det på en måte vært forventning fra både familien og menigheten at vi skal, det er viktig at vi er der, da. Sånn at vi kan bygge opp et ungdomsarbeid, - eller jeg. Så derfor så har jeg følt, jeg har alltid følt en forventning om at det er behov for at jeg er der, derfor så vil de helst ikke at jeg skal bytte menighet.

F-tw: So it is important for us who grew up there and know how it is that no one has the

F-tw: Så er det viktig for oss som har vokst opp der og vet hvordan det er å ikke ha noen som tar

responsibility for it, that we in a way make use of that lesson and change it, make it better for those who come after us. So, yes, it is in a way a bit of responsibility and it is also somewhat expected by the adults in a way, yes..
[continuous support uttered by others in the group as she talks]

ansvar for det, at vi på en måte tar bruk av den lærdommen og forandrer på det, og gjør det bedre for de som kommer etter oss. Så det er jo på en måte litt ansvar og det forventes også litt av oss av de voksne på en måte, ja..
[kontinuerlige støtteytringer fra andre i gruppa mens hun snakker]

The dilemma some of the youth in this position feel is the squeeze between their own needs and the responsibility they feel to care of those who are younger than themselves.

Sometimes they perceived the adults' expectation that they take responsibility for the children as a good thing. The young women quoted above pointed to the fact that it's good to feel needed and that one's feeling of ownership for the church grows as one takes on new responsibilities. Again we see the findings of Ebaugh and Chafetz confirmed. To contribute in ways that feel meaningful and important are key elements for youth deciding to stay in their congregations (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000:132-133).

It appears that the youth in their twenties find themselves in a position in between the children/young teenagers and the rest of the congregation. In this position they both run a ministry for those who are younger—because “*who else will do it?*”—and they also speak on behalf of the younger ones to their leaders. One of the young women looking back on her own childhood noted, “*we had nobody.*”

What seems to add to their feeling of obligation is the fact that these youth grew up in congregations where people have known them since they were born. The church feels a lot like an extended family. The way the youth talk about the church's expectation related to younger children and youth, it sounds like both a heavy task and a meaningful mission that has been entrusted to them.

Going to or dreaming about going to another church

Inevitably the youth sometimes compare their situation with what they see in other churches. When that happened one of the young women said she sometimes felt envy. At times she felt alone with her responsibilities in church. Despite the fact that she clearly

underlined her appreciation for having all the generations gathered together, she sometimes missed a fellowship with more people her own age.

F-tw:when I see other congregations that have a vital ministry among children and youth, and see dedicated parents who realize the importance of it and leads it in the congregation, that's when I get really envious, in a way, eh.. when I just think that this is what we should actually have had in our congregation! Where parents truly realize that, wow, this is the future of the congregation; it is so important to sow from when they are young, eh, yes, then I think: This is what we should have had.

F-tw:når jeg ser andre menigheter som har levende ungdoms- og barnarbeid, og ser dedikerte foreldre som innser viktigheten av det og leder det i menigheten, da blir jeg skikkelig sånn misunnelig, på en måte, eh..hvor jeg bare tenker at dét skulle vi hatt i vår menighet, faktisk! Hvor foreldre virkelig ser at, wow, dette her er framtiden til menigheten; det er så viktig å så inn fra de er unge, eh, ja, da tenker jeg at dét skulle vi hatt.

Two of the participants in the focus groups had made a conscious choice to transfer to another church. This number does not include those who transferred for practical reasons, like moving to a different part of the city or to another city, their current church closing down etc. Many more had considered this option which became more tempting when they encountered churches with a thriving youth ministry.

The young woman quoted above chose to join youth activities in other (non-immigrant) churches for a period of time. This was her way of meeting a need which was not met before, in her original church. She didn't want to break off her ties to her original church where there were people who had known her since birth, and where they counted her as a part of their extended family. The church she grew up in also gave her the opportunity to maintain the language, music and general culture of her parents' homelands. This was important to her. Even though she found a strategy for dealing with this issue, she still feels envy when she sees a church with dedicated leaders and parents who run a children's and youth ministry.

Another youth in the very same church used the same strategy in dealing with the dilemma of a lack of youth ministry. This strategy eventually led him to transfer completely over to another church. This was not only due to the fact that his new church had a youth ministry.

It was also because of the communication he saw between the adults and the youth in this congregation, as well as the content of the preaching.

Another perspective to bear in mind is that it might not be easy for youth to simply drop out of their church or transfer to another church. In focus group two they admitted it was not only the feeling of obligation for the younger that made them stay. It was one thing to entertain the thought of leaving. But to actually do so required a very, very firm decision since it was hard to go against their parents' expectations and demands. One young woman in her twenties said that at least for those who belong to the African tradition, one had to be very determined in order to make a choice that differed from the parents' wishes. Another teenage girl told a story about one Sunday morning when she chose to sleep instead of going to church. This wasn't an easy thing to do, and the story caused a lot of laughter in the group who clearly identified with this teenager. Fortunately the youth in this group had formed a choir in the church in which they grew up. In that setting they enjoyed the support of each other and clearly had a lot of fun. But even without this choir, these youth would probably have stayed in their home church. They explained that they would have been there physically without being present with their hearts.

F-tw: ...: And I pity them [those who quit church] too, because you know that you have sort of seen sort of that God have already started to use them, or that they were so much on fire for God. And then, just: No, there's no use, we give up. And the worst thing is to have people in your church who give up, they just attend to please their parents. [group in unison: "mm!"] But their hearts are not there, and to me that hurts a bit..

F-tw: ...: Og det er så synd på dem[som slutteri kirka] også, fordi du vet at du har liksom sett liksom at Gud har allerede begynt å bruke dem, eller de brant så mye for Gud, og så bare, nei, det er'ke noe vits, vi gir opp. Og det verste er også å ha folk som er i kirken din som gir opp også, de går dit bare for please their parents. [Samstemt "mm!"] Men hjertet dems er'kke der, og for meg så gjør det litt vondt.

A short look at churches with Asian background

Most of the information in this chapter comes from youth who are part of immigrant churches with an African background. Yet some of the youth related their experiences with Asian churches. One of the younger girls had attended three of them, and said she was astonished by the similarities to what she heard about the African churches. At the same

time the internal variations among the Asian churches she had attended turned out to be quite great.

One church held special youth services. Unfortunately, the communication was mostly one way—from the pastor to the youth. The youth were put in the role of passive receivers. On the other end of the scale was the church where the youth were actively engaged in the youth work. They were assigned different roles, helping out in the worship. Sometimes they were even challenged to preach. She described the connection between the youth and the adult leaders as open and strong. The youth were given space in the Sunday morning worship to show what they had learned during the week. Finding herself caught between two congregations, the teenage girl who had now tried three different Asian congregations finally ended up in one of the newer charismatic non-immigrant churches.

The issue of language in the children's and youth work

The choice of language in children's and youth work varies a great deal. Native languages, as well as English and Norwegian, are used in many combinations. In the Chinese church in Oslo religious education for children and youth is done in Norwegian, the language the children are most familiar with. The youth are not familiar with Christian terminology in any Chinese language. In addition they offer language classes apart from religious education (Hansen 2007:54-56). The pastor in a Vietnamese congregation told me he holds Bible studies for the youth during the week so that the youth develop an understanding of religious language in Vietnamese as well. The Salem congregation has a youth worship service called "Young Salem" where both Spanish and Norwegian are used, the target group being Norwegian and Spanish-speaking young people from the congregation (Synnes 2012:54). These are but three examples which serve to illustrate the wide variety of strategies immigrant churches use in their programs for youth.

The youth in this study did not discuss the choice of language in youth work, only in their churches in general. I am not aware of any Norwegian research which compares the different approaches and their effects. In the US Foley and Hoge found that the immigrant worship communities struggled with the same issues:

“Most immigrant worship communities are torn between inculcating in their children elements of the home culture and accommodating children’s and teens’ preferences for English-language services and activities and for American-inflected forms of worship and play.” (Foley and Hoge 2007:192).

Summary

Immigrant churches have different approaches to their ministry to children and youth. In a new cultural setting, many experienced that their children left church when they became old enough. Many churches had never had any tradition for specifically “youth ministry” prior to being awakened to this need by their own youth.

In this study many of the youth grew up with no children’s or youth work. They envy those churches which have special programs for their youth, but have chosen to stay to build up a children’s and youth work in their own church. They themselves feel an obligation to care for those who are younger, but also feel expectations to do this work from some of the adults in their congregations. Two of the youth chose to transfer to other churches. Many others admit to having entertained the thought. But most of these find it too hard to make choices which go against the wishes of their parents and congregations.

Giving the younger generation meaningful leadership roles in the congregation is an important strategy which some immigrant churches use to hold on to their youth (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000). The youth regard being engaged in the children’s and youth ministry as an important task, a fact which may contribute to their remaining in their congregations.

Another reason to stay despite the lack of youth ministry is also the people in church. Some describe them as being almost like family. The music, the language and the culture in general were also mentioned by some as important.

Regarding the choice of language for the children’s and youth work, we see that the immigrant churches seem to make different choices. The youth in this study did not discuss the language-issue in relation to children’s and youth work.

How the congregations organize their children’s and youth ministry differs. Further research is needed to find out which approaches are most effective in holding on to the youth.

Probably many different approaches can work and are needed, as the cultures and denominations are so different.

Chapter 16: Viewing Themselves as Bridge-builders

The first part of this chapter looks at how the youth in this study – Christian youth with integrated plural identities - view themselves. The intention is to see how the question of identity is linked to perceptions of their role in their congregations and how it influences their participation in church.

Holding on to all of their various cultural identifications

The NOVA-report mentioned in chapter four reveals that youth with immigrant backgrounds did in fact consider themselves as foreigners most of the time. This was especially true when it came to youth that came to Norway after the age of seven. But even among those born in Norway more than half thought of themselves as foreigners (Frøyland and Gjerustad 2012:49). *Foreigner* was also a term youth in this study used on several occasions to describe themselves. At times I could sense their reluctance to use this term because it didn't quite cover the way they perceived themselves.

M-te: I've got two cultures: That is: I do not feel completely Norwegian. I do not feel completely as a foreigner. Ehh... and of course: I am myself! – over there [in his congregation]. They know the way I am, and then it becomes, in a way; one notices that I am not just like everybody else, because it depends humor, it depends music, it depends all sorts of everyday-life-stuff.

M-te: ... Jeg har to kulturer. At; Jeg føler meg ikke helt norsk. Jeg føler meg ikke helt utlending. Ehh, og selvfølgelig: Jeg er meg sjø!! – der borte [i menigheten han går i]. De veit åssen jeg er og så blir det på en måte; man merker jo at jeg ikke er som alle andre fordi det kommer på humor, det kommer på musikk, det kommer på alt mulig hverdagslige greier.

But when they wanted to distinguish between themselves and Norwegians without immigrant parents, they called themselves foreigners without a second thought. Adding to this complexity was the fact that those who called themselves Africans suddenly talked about newcomers from Africa to Norway as being the “real” Africans.

In any case, none of them gave any indication that they were willing to let go of any part of their plural identity. On the contrary, in one focus group the youth talked eagerly about the importance of not denying any part of their identity. As one young man talked about the importance of holding on to the positive sides of all cultures one identifies with, another

completed his sentences. It was obvious that these were issues these youth had really thought through. These observations seem to diverge somewhat from the NOVA-report. But the design of my study doesn't make it possible to make any valid comparison.

Holding on to all their cultural identifications it was not surprising to find that the term *multicultural* was used frequently by the youth. When the youth in KMU used this term about themselves, even in the name of the group, it was not only pointing to the plurality of the group. When talking with them it became evident that they referred just as much to the fact that each individual felt somehow affiliated with more than one culture. The diversity was as much *within* each of them as *among* them.

Gerd Baumann does not talk about *being* multicultural, but about the multiculturalist view of identity. From what the youth reveal in terms of their thinking and practices, this coincides with Baumann's description: the multiculturalist sees every identity as a whole *set of* identifications. Using the word *identification* instead of *identity*, Baumann avoids the more static impression and opens up for a more dynamic and processual view (Baumann 2007:137).

In their extensive research on immigrant worship communities in the US, Foley and Hoge make the same observation from an empirical angle. They found that most of the respondents in their research saw themselves as bearers of *multiple identities*; this was the case for both parents and adolescent children (Foley and Hoge 2007:192).

In summary we can say that the youth want to hold on to all their cultural identifications and that the different labels they apply to themselves in various contexts reflect the fact that they are aware of their many-faceted identities.

Developing double discursive competence and self-reliance

The youth make conscious choices which they know will, at times, differ from their parents/congregations. From the cultural box (see diagram on page 94 above), the youth talk as if they can pick and choose according to their own liking, creating their own preferred combination of cultural elements. They want to include all cultures, but not everything from each of them:

M-te: I'd say there are positive and negative aspects attached to both cultures, do you see what I mean? That you take the positive side from the Norwegian, then takes the African part and subtracts a little, ...

M-te: Jeg vil si at det er positive og negative sider ved begge kulturene, skjønner du hva jeg mener? At du tar det positive fra norske, tar det afrikanske og så trekker du litt fra der..

Yet the youth also show an awareness of how their choices and expressions are influenced by the contexts they have grown up in. The young women in one of the focus groups acknowledged this when they struggled to sing “village songs” the way their parents were used to singing them. In another group a teenage boy made the reflection that had he been born in Africa, he would probably have shared the same opinions as his peers there.

Even if insights like this surface in the focus group material, the idea that each individual can independently make their own choices is most prominent. This feeling of freedom to choose can be seen, for instance, in the how the youth use possessives. They can start out talking about “our” culture, referring to the culture(s) they share with their parents. A few moments later, this has changed to “their” culture, while “my” culture is described as a mixture of “their” culture and what they call the “Norwegian” culture which, according to the youth above, is seen as an “undeniable” part of their identity.

From this we see that sometimes the youth feel served by describing culture in an essentialist manner, as something fixed. The next moment they reveal a processual approach as they find new ways of practicing and combining their cultures. In other words, the youth show a “double discursive competence” (Baumann 1999:95).

The confidence with which these youth carry on this double discourse shows a feeling of self-reliance that is one of the characteristics of TCKs. They trust themselves to be able to relate to the different cultures and to find their own way in the midst of them. The TCKs develop this quality by learning to cope with change and new situations in the same way the CCKs of this study develop it by being exposed to the various cultures in their everyday life and having to decide the shape of identification with each of the cultures (Pollock and Van Reken 2009:116).

A short summary of this chapter so far shows that the youth are aware of their plural cultural identifications and that they want to hold on to all of their identifications. They also convey double discursive competence in relating to the cultures. How do these facts,

together with their experience with handling dilemmas in their churches “*influence the youths’ participation in their congregations*”?

Feeling responsible to act as intermediaries and bridgebuilders

First of all the material shows that the youth use positive terms when describing their having plural identifications. Admittedly, this can lead to feeling like an outsider. But one of the teenage boys challenged the youth in this situation to hold on to *all* their cultures, find the positive sides in all of them and cultivate them. The dilemmas are not denied, but when summed up, one of the young men counts his multicultural background as a blessing. He explains it this way:

M-te1: Okay, advantages, maybe the greatest benefit is that, well, you can meet people, more people, and then you know how they think and are. I know how Norwegians think, and I know how Africans think.

M-te2: While maybe Norwegians do not know how Africans think and Africans do not know how Norwegians think. I know both.

M-te1: That is a very positive..

M-te2: So you’ve always got this extra..

M-te1: M-hm!

M-te1: Okey, fordelene, kanskje den største fordel er at, altså, du kan møte mennesker, flere mennesker, og så vet du hvordan de tenker og er. Jeg vet hvordan nordmenn tenker, og jeg vet hvordan afrikanere tenker.

M-te2: Mens kanskje nordmenn vet ikke hvordan afrikanere tenker og afrikanere vet ikke hvordan nordmenn tenker. Jeg kan begge deler.

M-te1: Det er en veldig positiv...

M-te2: Så du har alltid det ekstra..

M-te1: M-hm!

As seen in the quotation above the two young teenagers clearly expresses confidence in their ability to understand people from different cultures. In the same focus group they continued to talk about the responsibility they believed this ability led to. One of them called multicultural youth for intermediaries. Since they can see things from both sides, they have to try and “*make them melt together*”:

F-te: [...] You are sort of that intermediary, so it is you who sort of must try to bind the Norwegian culture and the African culture, sort of..

M-te 1: .. together in a..

F-te: ..yes, in a positive way.

M-te 2: It is many who can see the negative, and,

F-te: [...] Du er liksom den mellommannen, så det er du som liksom må prøve å knytte den norske kultur og det afrikanske kultur, liksom ..

M-te 1: ..sammen på en..

F-te:..ja, på en positiv måte.

M-te 2: Det er mange som ser de negative, og,

do you see what I mean? But you in a way understand why they are irritated, you understand why they do not understand, and then you must in a way... then you are the person who have to try to do it..

F-te:.. to make them melt together... and that I believe, that is a task which, ... it is our task really, but we just sit there quietly while they talk negative. And they talk negative while we know better, but we do not say anything. That is the way it is.

Researcher: So you're in a way challenging Christian multicultural youth to stand up and use the.....

M-te 1: ... the advantages they have..

Researcher: .. in that connection?

F-te: That is how you can take the conclusion!

skjønner du hva jeg mener? Men du skjønner på en måte hvorfor de er irriterte, du skjønner hvorfor de ikke forstår seg på det, og da må du på en måte.. da er du den personen som må prøve å gjøre det..

F-te:: å få dem til å smelte sammen.. og det tror jeg, det er en oppgave som, .. det er vår oppgave egentlig, men vi bare sitter der og tier still, og de snakker negativ. Og de snakker negativ, og vi vet bedre, men vi sier ingenting. Sånn er det bare

Forsker: Så din utfordring er på en måte at kristen multikulturell ungdom må stå fram og bruke de..

M-te1: de fordelene de har

Forsker: i den sammenhengen?

F-te: Det kan du ta konklusjonen!

The two teenagers above, as well as the rest of their focus group, kept elaborating what it meant practically that they had skills as intermediaries. The first challenge in their opinion is to be willing to enter into the situation and use their skills instead of simply keeping quiet. When choosing to get involved, one of the teenage boys concluded that most often, though not always, he succeeded in bringing together the different parties. He said he understood the thinking behind the actions on both sides, and so what he did was to simply help explain this to each of the parties. This ability was described as having two kinds of “sight” [Norwegian: *syn*] while Norwegians have only one kind of “sight”. Having two kinds of “sight”, this youth thought it was his task to help other persons when misunderstandings arose. This meant helping to explain the reasons behind another person’s actions.

Just like TCKs, the youth in this study who are CCKs of various kinds, have developed observational skills which help them see the more hidden aspects of cultures (Pollock and Van Reken 2009:115). Relating this to others, they function as intermediaries. Yet another example of this was brought up by the same young man mentioned earlier. This youth knows a person with connections to the nearby refugee asylum center, and so every so often

he is asked to give newcomers a guided tour of the area. When he does so, he automatically enters into a role as intermediary:

M-te: And then I show him around in the town, and I do not just walk there and: Here is this, here is that... then I know that what is really most important now is how you can get to know Norwegians. Because you are not at all like them, and this is not going to work out well unless I tell you a few things now, so... [group chuckles] so that is it, .. without thinking this is in a way what I do.

M-te: Og da jeg viser han rundt i byen, så går jeg ikke bare der og: Her er det, her er det.. da veit jeg at egentlig det viktigste nå er åssen du skal bli kjent med nordmenn på. Fordi du er overhodet ikke som dem, og det her kommer ikke til å gå bra hvis ikke jeg forteller deg litt nå, så ... [humring i gruppa] så det er det, .. uten å tenke over det, det gjør jeg da på en måte.

When introducing newcomers to their new environment, he uses his competence in relating to different cultures and contexts and can help newcomers settle in more easily. This is a typical TCK characteristic (Pollock and Van Reken 2009:114). In this example, we see that other CCKs also have this characteristic.

In addition to expressions like *being an intermediary*, *helping others melt together* and *having two sights*, the expression *to build bridges* is also used as a metaphor to describe the role these youth take on. One young woman says that growing up with two cultures has enriched her and she sees her experience as a tool which she can use to link the immigrant generation and ethnic Norwegians.

F.tw: .. and I can use it as a resource and to build bridges between the parental generation/immigrant generation and ethnic Norwegians or, sort of, the general Norwegian society.

F-tw: og jeg kan bruke det som ressurs og for å bygge broer mellom foreldregenerasjonen/innvandrergenerasjonen og etniske nordmenn eller, liksom, det norske samfunnet ellers.

Summing up this far, we have seen earlier in this thesis that the Christian multicultural youth in this study take on the role of intermediaries *within* their churches. They find themselves in a position between the immigrant generation within their church and those who are younger than themselves, and they try to help these two understand each other. In this chapter we see that they also express a desire to help “melt together” those from the

immigrant generation/ new immigrants and the ethnic Norwegians. Yet in the focus group interviews something else shone through as well. The youth would like to see their churches as partners in their bridge-building project. They long for their congregations to *themselves* take part in bridge-building. The youths' hope is not simply limited to their playing the part of an intermediary.

Wanting more tolerance and inclusiveness in their churches

Many of the youth define themselves as being far ahead of their parents and the adults in their churches when it comes to understanding people with other cultural identifications. They conclude that this is a result of their upbringing in a multicultural environment. This is why they find it interesting to explore other cultures while adults rarely like going out of their comfort zone. The indifference which some point to within the immigrant generation is presented as an indirect accusation. At the same time they also excuse their parents' generation who didn't grow up in the same kind of multicultural context as themselves. Exposure to people with other cultures is seen as decisive when it comes to developing bridge-builder skills.

F-te 2: But if you grow up in an environment where you encounter different people every day, then it will be easier for you to sort of be open to other cultures, true? So it actually depends on where you grew up and which environments you have been in, or are in, [...]

F-te2: [...]. Men hvis du blir oppvokst i et miljø hvor du ser forskjellige folk hver dag, så er det enklere for deg å liksom være åpen til flere kulturer, ikke sant. Så det spørres egentlig på hvor du blir oppvokst og hvilket miljø du har vært i, eller er i, [...]

The same thing is the case for the congregations as is the case for the adults/parents: the youth find the amount of exposure to other cultures as decisive. Two of the young women in their twenties compare churches that isolate themselves and churches that are open to people who have lived their whole life in one place and people who have travelled a lot. The latter have broadened their horizon and can see things from many different angles:

F-tw 1: [...]. Equally there is a difference between congregations too. That a congregation which isolates itself completely and only has contact with its own; There is a big difference between this

F-tw 1: [...]. Og akkurat sånn er det i menigheter også. At en menighet som isolerer seg helt og som bare har kontakt med sine egne; det er stor forskjell på den og en annen

congregation and another who cooperate with other congregations and... .. has an overview.

F-tw 2: You notice that they are more tolerant...

F-tw1: ... and that they have a broader perspective on matters, and they are able to see things from more angles. [Agreement expressed in group all along.]

menighet som har samarbeid med andre menigheter og som har oversikten.

F-tw 2: For du legger merke til at de er mer tolerante...

F-tw1: ... og har et bredere perspektiv på ting, og de kan se ting fra flere synsvinkler. [Enighet uttrykkes i gruppa hele tiden.]

One of the young women in the group quoted above said she became frustrated with her church many times in this regard. She wanted them to be more tolerant and open, and at times her frustration led her to google other congregations. Yet she concluded that no church is perfect and that it may even be part of God's plan that she be in this specific congregation. She felt she had been given a task—to help people become more tolerant, something she equated with making them more like Jesus:

F-tw:.. try and make it better, that is: make people more tolerant, because it is about, do people more like Jesus. Because if we are so conservative, then we are not like Jesus. Jesus mingled with tax collectors, you know, prostitutes, and all of that, see? I do not think we are quite there. Not in my church in any case. So that is where I'm heading, sort of.

F-tw:.. prøve å gjøre det bedre, altså: gjøre mer folk tolerante, for det gjelder, gjøre folk mer lik Jesus. For det at hvis vi er så konservative, da er vi ikke lik Jesus. Jesus var jo blant tax collectors, you know, prostitutes, og alt det der, ikke sant. Jeg tror ikke vi er der, når det gjelder kirken min i hvertfall. Så det er liksom dit jeg vil da.

Here we're back to an issue often repeated—the wish to include, to integrate and to make people feel at home. The ability to do this is typical for TCKs (Pollock and Van Reken 2009:114) and the CCKs in this study seem to possess this same characteristic.

Summary

The youth in this study used many designations when talking about themselves—ethnic terms like foreigner, black, multicultural, African etc. At no time did any of them describe themselves directly as Norwegian, but in one of the groups they all agreed that Norwegian culture was an undeniable part of their identity. In one of the focus groups the youth

encouraged each other not to deny any part of their cultural identifications, but to drop the bad parts and hold on to the good sides in all of them.

Sometimes the youth talked about culture as something fixed and stable. At the same time they integrated some elements and disregarded others from the cultures they related to. This combination of an essentialist and processual approach to culture shows that they have developed double-discursive competence.

The youths ascribe their abilities to act as intermediaries to being multicultural. Being able to see a situation from both sides (*having two kinds of sights*) and understanding the cultural codes behind peoples actions, they can be effective intermediaries. They use this ability to help parties to understand each other or to include and integrate people who are newcomers whether into their particular church or into society in general. Here we see yet another TCK characteristic that fits in describing the youth in this study.

The youth find themselves in the role of an intermediary between the immigrant generation/congregations and ethnic Norwegians/larger society. Those attending immigrant churches find themselves in the same role between the youngest in church and the leadership/adults. They accept this role, but given the choice, would rather have their church as a *partner* in their bridge-building efforts. Instead, they often realize that their churches are one of the parties who need a bridge built to them.

Several of the youth express that they feel an obligation to enter into the role of the intermediary due to their having abilities which their multiple cultural identifications have given them.

Chapter 17: Longing for a Place to be themselves

The youth have multiple cultural identifications. They have dealt with various dilemmas in their churches. They act as intermediaries. Which kind of church does this group of youth see as ideal? What have their experiences led them to long for?

Longing for something “in between”

«.. and you can be yourself. You're not afraid to wear the wrong shoes!” The rest of the focus group laughed as the young man whom we met in chapter 10 referred to the story about wearing the wrong kind of shoes when describing the church of his dreams. Many times the youth times expressed the longing for a church where they could be themselves without explaining or moderating. The young man mentioned earlier—who transferred from an immigrant church to a non-immigrant church—felt he had both lost and gained something by transferring. When he said that he longed for “something in between” he received clearly supportive exclamations from two young women in the focus group who attended immigrant churches.

M-tw: So that's why it ended up with a choice where I changed congregation and started in a church where I like it very much. But I still now can feel that I would very much have liked to have something in between. [Heartfelt “mmmm!” from two of the young women.] A sort of, maybe not so ethnic, but maybe not so Norwegian either, a sort of an in between thing, so that is something I miss.

M-tw: Så derfor ble det til et valg hvor jeg bytta menighet og startet i en menighet hvor jeg trivdes veldig godt. Men jeg merker nå fortsatt at jeg skulle gjerne hatt en mellomgreie. [Inderlige «mmmm!» fra to av jentene.] En sånn, kanskje ikke så etnisk, men kanskje ikke så norsk heller, en sånn mellomgreie, så det er noe jeg savner.

A young woman in another focus group used the same “in between” expression to characterize what considered ideal:

F-te: Yes, because I think for me, then it is that, like he said, that we could need some more of the African culture into Norwegian congregations because, eh, Africa is sort of “up there” and then Norway is “down there” and we as youth want something in between it, so for

F-te: Ja, jeg synes for meg, da er det, som han sa atte, vi kunne trengt litt mer av den afrikanske kultur inn i norsk menigheter fordi, eh, Afrika er liksom «der oppe» og så er Norge “der nede» og så vi som ungdommer vi vil ha noe i mellom der, så for meg så syns jeg at i den menigheten jeg

me I think that my present congregation, I think that on Sunday meeting, then it is much African. But on our youth gatherings, then it is more like, yes, we are there; in between.

går på nå, så syns jeg det er, det er, på søndagsmøter, da er det mye afrikansk. Men på ungdomsmøter da er det mer sånn, ja, vi er der: midt i mellom.

This young woman found what she was looking for in the youth group in her church while others referred to the KMU group as an example of what they longed for. KMU represented the “in-between thing”, despite the fact that KMU is not a church. Both the interviews and the observation at KMU’s gatherings made it clear that one of the greatest benefits of being part of the KMU group was that the youth felt they could be one hundred percent themselves there. One of the young men had described the different things he appreciated about KMU—do music, rap, help out with workshops, easy to get to know people, and so on—when he concluded with this exact phrase; *“I can be myself one hundred percent!”* He then turned to me and said I could leave out the rest of his description of what attracted him to the group because this was the essence of it all. A young woman expressed why she liked coming to KMU gatherings in another way:

F-te: It is such a delight to be together with people who share the same faith as you. It is also much fun, because we can eat, laugh and fool around together, but even so we are serious and praise God together.”

F-te: Det er deilig å være med folk som deler samme tro som deg. Det er også veldig morsomt, fordi vi kan spise, le og tøyse med hverandre, men likevel så er vi seriøse og priser Gud sammen.

In addition to good variety in the program and good music in the KMU gatherings on Saturdays, there were three things one of the young women singled out that made KMU attractive: 1) you can be yourself, 2) you can do what you are good at and 3) you are heard. Two of the young men added that even if you take on responsibilities it keeps being fun.

Another reason for why many feel at home in KMU may come from the fact that most of these youth can be labeled CCKs (chapter 5). In this thesis we have seen that many of the characteristics of TCKs that Pollock and Van Reken listed in their book (2009) fit the youth in this study. The longing for something in between and their finding this “something” in KMU is evidence of the fact that large parts of the definition of a TCK also fits them:

“A Third Culture Kid is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside the parents’ culture. The TCK frequently builds relationships to all of the cultures, while not having full ownership in any. Although elements from each culture are assimilated into the TCK’s life experience, the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar background.” (Pollock and Van Reken 2009:13).

Even if not all the CCKs share experience of moving from place to place, which is typical to TCKs, they do share the experience of building relationship with many cultures as they grow up. Probably this experience is what makes up the “similar background” that makes them feel a sense of belonging in KMU. Since KMU is not a church, a natural question is whether or not a multicultural church is a good alternative for them.

The youth want diversity ethnically and age wise

A tendency to split up into smaller churches can be seen in the immigrant landscape in Norway, but the KIA-staff observe a trend which points in the opposite direction as well: the merging of different groups into *multicultural* churches. More and more immigrant churches are now multi-ethnic and commonly use English in their services. The 2010 DAWN report registered English as the language of the services in *one third* of the immigrant churches. The interesting question thus becomes which trend will dominate in Norway in the long run--splitting up into smaller churches or merging into multicultural churches? It is also possible that both dynamics will continue side by side. From a theological point of view Stephen A. Rhodes claims that God’s intention for creation always has been multicultural and he promotes the multicultural church (Rhodes 1998:148). As for the youth in this study, there is no doubt that if they are free to choose, they would clearly choose a multicultural church. Summing up the questionnaires and the focus group interviews, some characteristics came up again and again when the youth were asked to describe the ideal congregation. They wanted a church that

- was multicultural
- was ethnically diverse
- had all ages represented
- had all ages and all ethnic groups in the church represented in the leadership
- had Norwegian as the common language
- had music which reflected the diversity in the church, both in language and genre

- was welcoming and including to newcomers
- had a flourishing youth work
- was not judgmental in attitude

The list grows longer if findings from chapter nine and ten are added, for example, the youth want short sermons that are to the point and easy to apply to their daily life. They want an organization where the structure is clear and the mandates clearly specified. Dialogue is promoted as the best way of learning and a supportive pastor is highly valued. The quotation below—which is a short excerpt from a longer conversation—illustrates one of the characteristics mentioned above, namely the issue of leadership in the ideal church:

M-te 1: I would consider those who come in and not only those who have stayed the longest [agreeing utterings from the group]. But considering those who come in, what them, what they, their thoughts about what... so that all are maybe not a 100% contented, but...

F-te: And I know about a congregation who runs such a leadership, really, that I came to think of now. It is in Denmark. It has, in the committee they have all the nations of the church.

Researcher: In the committee; you mean the leadership?

F-te: Yes, the leadership. Then they have all the nations represented in the church. So it is sort of, every nation comes with their perspective and that way they create an agreement on how to run the congregation. And I think this is in a way a very good way of leading a multicultural church. And, if we shall start a congregation in Bergen,

M-te 2: Yes, then it cannot be an African leadership, if we are supposed to be a multicultural...

M-te 1: At the same time it is also important to

M-te 1: Jeg vil ta hensyn til de som kommer inn og ikke bare de som har vært der lengst [enige ytringer fra gruppa]. Men hensyn til de som kommer inn, hva dem, hva de, deres tanker om hva... sånn at alle kanskje ikke er 100 % fornøyde, men ...

F-te: Og jeg vet en menighet som driver en sånn ledelse, egentlig, som jeg kommer på nå. Den er i Danmark. De har, i komiteen så har de alle nasjoner i kirken.

Forsker: I komiteen, da tenker du ledelsen?

F-te: Ja, ledelsen. Da har de alle nasjoner som i kirka. Alle nasjoner i kirka er representert i ledelse. Så det er liksom, hver nasjon kommer med sin perspektiv, og da skaper de på en måte enighet om hvordan menigheten skal bli ledet. Og jeg synes det er på en måte en veldig god måte å lede en multikulturell kirke. Og så synes jeg, hvis vi skal starte en menighet i Bergen,...

M-te 2: Ja, så kan det ikke være en afrikansk ledelse, hvis vi skal være en multikulturell

M-te 1: Samtidig er det viktig å se på alder,

consider the age, age group...

F-te: Yes, who you want to...

M-te 1: ... all generations have in a way; I think it ought not only to be a board of elders, then, as there is in some congregations. Also the younger, adults, old; all are gathering to come with their... [agreements uttered]

aldersgruppe, ...

F-te: Ja, hvem du vil atte...

M-te 1:.. alle generasjoner har på en måte; Jeg synes at det ikke skal bare være eldsteråd, da, som det er i noen menigheter. Også at yngre, voksne, gamle, alle samles for å komme med sine.... [enighetsyrtringer]

Earlier in this study, the youths' young age was mentioned as a problematic issue in some immigrant churches. Sometimes the youth felt they were not taken seriously or listened to simply because they were young. In the quotation above we see this same issue surface again in the form of a wish to have a leadership where all ages are represented and have influence on the decision-making. In the case above, it was two young men who attend non-immigrant churches who raised this issue. In general, this appears to be an important issue for the youth from all the different churches. In his book *Building a Healthy Multi-Ethnic Church* (2007) Mark DeYmaz from his own experience confirms the importance of a diverse leadership when building a multicultural church. Very much in line with the youth he also argues the importance of promoting a spirit of inclusion.

Summary

What youth are looking for in a church is a place where they can be themselves. They look for a place "in between", meaning they want to combine elements from non-immigrant churches and immigrant churches. They find the KMU group a suitable combination. Here they meet other youth with the same background. This gives them a sense of belonging and they feel they can be hundred percent themselves. Being heard and getting an opportunity to contribute with their gifts and talents are other elements the youth highlight when explaining why they like it in KMU. Others emphasize the music, the variety in the program and the combination of having fun and honestly worshipping God.

Diversity in age, cultures, ethnicity, and music were listed as important characteristics when imagining the ideal church. In addition the chosen language is Norwegian and the leadership reflects the various groups in the congregation and also their age. Children and youth ministry are also part of the ideal church.

PART 5: CONCLUSION

As there have been summaries after each chapter in part four, the conclusion in chapter 18 will be only a very short summary of the main findings and a comment to the transferability of this study. Finally I will suggest some areas where more research is needed.

Apart from the conclusion I will in chapter 19 set up a table which gives an overview of the assets and challenges of the youth, based on the findings in part 4 in this study.

Chapter 18: Conclusions

The research question was:

How do Christian youth with integrated plural identities deal with dilemmas they face in the churches they attend and how do these experiences influence how they participate in their congregations?

How the youth deal with the dilemmas in church

The youth have several ways of dealing with the dilemmas in their churches. The most dramatic, of course, was to leave their church and attend another. Only a very few chose this strategy and they ended up in non-immigrant churches. Most, however, chose to stay, and of these the youth who were part of non-immigrant churches seemed most inclined to adjust to and accept the situation in their congregation as it was. Whether or not this is typical for Christian immigrant youth in who attend non-immigrant churches is difficult to determine since only a few in the focus group interviews attended non-immigrant churches.

Those who stayed, especially those in the immigrant churches, had to find other ways of dealing with the dilemmas. Many of the dilemmas arose when the expectations from the immigrant generation in church—or at home—came into conflict with how they wanted to live their own lives. In order to preserve their Christian identity, they had to find a way to defend those choices that were in conflict with the expectations from their church. This resulted in the strategy most often used to deal with the dilemmas—to separate matters into three categories. The first and most important was the category of crucial religious matters that were not discussed or negotiable. The Bible, or rather basic biblical principles, and Jesus, specifically having a relationship with him, were among these matters. Without these youths' actually discussing this foundational core, it was clear that to meddle with these matters was to shake the basis of their faith and this could be seen as a threat to their Christian identity. In the two other categories the youth divided dilemmas they faced into 1) religious matters of less importance, and 2) mere cultural expressions. These two categories the youth felt free to negotiate about. The non-negotiable first category was also the source from which they derived the practical consequences linked to dilemmas that arose in the other two categories. When dilemmas occurred as a result of deriving different practical consequences from the same basic principles, the youth still felt quite confident about their

own interpretations of the principles. They felt they had a clearer understanding as a result of having had more exposure to other cultures than their parents' immigrant generation. They were convinced that this exposure gave them a better ability to discern which matters were cultural and which were religious—whether crucial or not.

This strategy did not, of course, *solve* all the dilemmas, since they didn't always succeed in reaching agreement with their congregations. But this means of classifying matters, and the confidence in their own interpretations, provided them with a basic strategy which gave them persistence in their negotiations with their immigrant congregations and the courage to make different choices from them.

When entering into negotiations, their strategies were both to compromise and to take a stand. The strategy of first reassuring the adults that they understood their concerns before presenting their own solutions was recognized by many. The strategy of entering into negotiations was not effective when the youth were disregarded due their being young or simply because they were born in the West.

To ask for changes that could reduce the number of dilemmas that arose was also a strategy. What the youth wanted in this regard was better organization and clearly defined mandates.

The multicultural youth in this study assume that there is a basic content to their faith which does not change despite the fact that the expressions of this faith varies from one context to another. At times they reach back to this basic content—to what Jesus said and did—in order to find the right way to practice his teachings in today's world. This way of holding on to the basic yet at the same time reinterpret it shows double discursive competence according to Baumann. Bass would have called it fluid retraditioning, while Bevans would have said they used the translational model of contextualization.

The translational model is not the only one which the youth in this study use. They also make use of the praxis model when they test out new ideas in their congregations, evaluate them and make corrections before the next try. While liberation is often the goal of the practitioners of the praxis model, the youth are very often guided by the desire to include as many as possible in the fellowship of their congregation. Even more typical for the youth—with their multiple cultural identifications—is the use of the synthetic model. This is seen in

their willingness to learn from all contexts and theological expressions. They discard the parts they find irrelevant or even wrong and hold on to what they find valuable and good.

When it comes to the TCK's characteristics which Pollock and Van Reken present, it turns out that the various CCKs represented in my material show evidence of many of the same attitudes. Their most profound similarities between the youth of my study and TCKs are seen in relation to their having an expanded world view, the ability to adjust to new cultural settings and codes, and the observational skills that also are essential to their skills as bridge-builders between people of different cultures. Coping with many changes results in their developing a strong feeling of self-confidence and self-reliance which help them stay strong for the negotiations they often choose to enter into.

How their experiences influence their participation in church

Their church's lack of children's and youth ministry caused many to consider transferring to other churches. Feeling expectation from their parents and congregation to stay, they found themselves in a dilemma. A few chose to transfer. Others remained in their old church. Quite a few of those who chose to stay became engaged in children's and youth work. Having suffered the consequences of lacking children's and youth work themselves, they did not want the story to repeat itself with the younger ones. In addition to running a children's and/or youth ministry, some also said they became intermediaries between the larger congregation and those who were younger.

Being effective intermediaries or bridge-builders was another of the results of their experiences in church and of being multicultural. They acted as intermediaries both between the different generations in their own congregations as well as between the immigrant generation and ethnic Norwegians. Instead of their churches being one of the parties who need a bridge built to them, the youth dream of having their church as a *partner* in their bridge-building efforts. Several of them said they felt an *obligation* to act as intermediaries. I got the impression that they saw the ability to use two kinds of "sights" as a unique gift of importance to the community in which they lived, and that is why they felt this obligation to use it. Could an additional reason for entering this role also be the need to hold together the reality they live in as *one*, avoiding to stand with one foot in two parallel worlds without connections between them?

The youth expressed a longing to be part of a congregation that was somewhere in between the immigrant and the non-immigrant churches. This desire is probably linked to the fact that they have been exposed to many different cultures and have observed both kinds of churches. Their background and experiences have, in any case, helped them get a clearer understanding of what they want, and it seems very likely that this is what motivates the changes they are willing to work for in their churches. This proved to be the case with children's and youth ministry. It is also likely the reason for their strong desire to influence their churches to be more inclusive towards newcomers.

With regards to how the immigrant congregations will develop as second and third generation grow up, there seems to be three major concerns which needs to be balanced toward each other.

The first concern is the need to maintain the language and culture from the homeland of the first immigrants and new ones who arrive. This serves the need of being able to freely express oneself both in worship and in relation to each other. A place where you understand and are understood is important in a new context where many things appear strange and unfamiliar to begin with.

The second concern is how to retain the youth in church. The language and social needs that were so important to the first generation immigrants are not so relevant to the second and third generation. To use their own words; they have *integrated themselves* and most of them are more fluent in Norwegian than their parent's language. The challenge is not only to accommodate activities in Norwegian, but to tailor the contents of the sermons and activities to second generations needs. To stay in a church that only addresses the concerns of the first generation immigrants becomes irrelevant to the youth. They need fellowship and service that helps them face the challenges and conflicts that are unique to their experience. They also need the feeling of ownership to the church which results from being given meaningful and important roles in the congregation and being allowed to partake in the decision-making.

The third concern has to do with the matter of *inclusion*. This issue the youth brought up in many fashions, whether it had to do with music, language, style of clothing or other issues. The underlying reason for debating these issues was that it had to do with inclusion of

others into their Christian fellowship in church. They were not focused on their own inclusion, something which I think shows a strong confidence in their own ability to adjust and understand the culture and codes wherever they go. But they were frustrated if they attended a church which they felt acted in ways that could estrange others.

The strong emphasis on inclusion and the wide perspectives the youth have on this, may come in conflict with the first concern; to provide a “safe haven” for newcomers where the specific ethnicity and culture plays an essential role. If a church succeeds to retain their youth, I still believe this tension between the first and third concern have to be dealt with in order to prevent two parallel congregations to develop within the same church, just as it happened with the Korean church in Boston (Warner and Wittner 1998:295-331). There may be many ways to solve this tension but I still want to draw the attention towards one specific tool, highly valued by the youth: *the dialogue*.

The dialogue, often mentioned by the youth in form of workshops and seminars, seems to be of great importance as a way to learn and teach and to create understanding and openness between the generations in church. It strikes me as a very simple but effective tool if the wish is to hold on to the youth by addressing their issues and at the same time prevent a division between the generations in church. The youth in this study may think of themselves as more equipped than the immigrant generation when in relating to the complexity of cultures in Oslo. But this doesn't mean they do not need or want guidance. On the contrary this thesis has showed that they actually *ask* for it. However equipped; they feel the need of guidance as to how to live a Christian life in the contexts they move in and out of daily. And meeting adults who treat them with respect and listens to them in a true dialogue I believe is the best way to give this guidance and also to prevent division in the churches. I believe there is a relational aspect to dialogue that is hard to replace with any other way of relating to the youth.

I also don't think these concerns are meant to be worked out in an isolated process within each immigrant congregation. Personally I believe it is time for the churches to come together and share their experiences and search for the best solutions.

Back to the question of transferability

In chapter 6 the question of this study's transferability was asked, and it was left to the reader to judge about the transferability to other cases by comparing them with the description of the Christian multicultural youth of this study. After having worked with the material and compared the findings with other research, I am now convinced that the group of youth I have studied is not atypical. On the contrary the findings are in many cases confirmed by, for example, larger studies like Ebaugh and Chafetz's (2000). Also the findings which reveal characteristics of the youth to a large degree match what Pollock and Van Reken have found are typical for those who grow up cross-culturally. Similarities are also to be found when comparing with Norwegian research (Valen 1999; Østberg 2003) done on multicultural youth and children that grew up in a Muslim family context.

Need for further research

To investigate this group of youth has raised a number of questions. The need of more research is obvious. Here are but a few suggestions to anyone interested in doing *empirical research* in this field:

It could be interesting to study individual churches from the perspective of multicultural youth. Why some of the multicultural youth choose to drop out of church altogether is also an interesting question. On the basis of this study, we know that simply considering *changing* churches requires a very strong resolve. What then of dropping out of church altogether?

Another thing to investigate could be which kind of children's and youth ministries that are to be found in the immigrant churches. Is it possible to find any features that are characteristic for the children's and youth ministries in churches that manages to hold on to their youth? Or those who lose them?

An interesting aspect is also the immigrant churches' choice of languages as well as their reasons for choosing this language, especially in relation to their children and youth.

This study seems to corroborate Ebaugh and Chafetz's findings in Houston regarding the importance of giving youth meaningful roles in the congregation as a means of holding on to them (2000:132-133). Further research on this issue in the Norwegian context is needed.

Chapter 19: Assets and Challenges of the Youth; an Overview

At the beginning of this thesis I wrote that those who have pastoral care for Christian multicultural youth should be interested in understanding these youth and their situation better. Hopefully the findings in this thesis have succeeded in contributing in these respects. Below is a table containing of some of the most recurring issues related to the assets and challenges of the youth in this study.

Assets which the youth in this study have to offer their congregations and which their congregations ought to acknowledge and make use of	Needs which the youth of this study have as well as the challenges which these youth present to their congregations, and which their congregations ought to consider
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>They are faithful churchgoers.</i> • <i>They show affection for the members in their congregation.</i> • <i>They have persistence when fighting for a cause. This is seen in their patience when process of change happen slower than they would wish.</i> • <i>They have abilities as intermediaries between the generations.</i> • <i>They have abilities as intermediaries between the immigrant generation and the larger society, and even feel an obligation to act as such.</i> • <i>They have competence in the areas of music and worship, and the ability to adjust, combine and experiment in finding what works in their church.</i> • <i>They feel responsible for those who are younger in the congregation.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>They need activities that are appropriate to their specific age.</i> • <i>They want parents and adults who are willing to engage themselves in youth and children’s work in church.</i> • <i>They need adults who listen to them and take their issues seriously.</i> • <i>They need churches that are willing to deal with issues related to being young and Christian in Norway today, especially related to dating and having girlfriends/boyfriends.</i> • <i>They want real influence and power, both by being represented where decisions are made, but also by not being overruled when they have been entrusted with a task which they are equipped to do.</i> • <i>They want preaching and teaching that is down-to-earth, meaning easy to apply in everyday life. They want it to be short, to the point, not so loud and</i>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>They are willing to take on responsibilities linked to areas they are interested in.</i> • <i>They take their faith seriously and are open to being challenged to practically live it out in everyday life.</i> • <i>They show respect for many different types of church.</i> • <i>They willingly encounter people with other cultural identifications than themselves.</i> • <i>They try not to judge on the basis of outward appearances but want everyone to be themselves.</i> • <i>They are skilled in negotiating, and are able both to compromise and to fight hard for a cause.</i> • <i>They are skilled in holding together their many-faceted cultural identifications without losing the sense of being one and complete self.</i> 	<p><i>not full of irrelevant digressions. Examples should be recognizable not only for the adults but for the youth and children as well.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If the congregation is multi-linguistic they want Norwegian to be the common language.</i> • <i>They want respect for their opinions even if they are young and were born in the West.</i> • <i>They want their congregation to have more contact with other churches and not be so isolated.</i> • <i>They want less judgmental attitudes related to outward appearance.</i> • <i>They want leaders and adults that can both teach and advise, not by means of a monologue but through true dialogue.</i> • <i>Those in immigrant congregations want their churches to have an inclusive attitude, not only to some specific ethnic groups, but to all people, including ethnic Norwegians.</i> • <i>They want to be respected for being different from the immigrant generation as a result of their having a different set of cultural identifications.</i>
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Appendixes

- Appendix 1: Project description with consent form
- Appendix 2: Questionnaire form
- Appendix 3: Interview-guide
- Appendix 4: Invitation to participate in the project, published at KUM's website

Appendix 1: Project description with consent form

Til kristen multikulturell ungdom og til deres foresatte/foreldre.

Våren 2012

Som masterstudent på Det Teologiske Menighetsfakultetet (MF) skal jeg skrive en masteroppgave. Den skal handle om **kristen multikulturell ungdom og deres tanker og valg rundt det å gå i en menighet**. Spesielt er jeg interessert i å få vite hvilke faktorer i en menighet som fører til at multikulturell ungdom velger, eller velger bort, en menighet.

Jeg håper på din/deres hjelp for å gjennomføre prosjektet.

Prosjektbeskrivelse:

I Oslo finnes mer enn 200 ulike kristne menigheter. 90 av disse er immigrantmenigheter. Her vokser det opp ungdommer som ofte uttrykker tilknytning til flere kulturer og etniske grupper. I tillegg til erfaring med sine foreldres menigheter, har de ofte også kjennskap til andre menighetsmiljøer. I mitt prosjekt ønsker jeg å se nærmere på hvilke menigheter disse unge velger/velger bort, og hvorfor.

KMU, Kristen Multikulturell Ungdom, er et nettverk for kristen multikulturell ungdom fra mange ulike menigheter. Det er blant ungdommer i dette miljøet jeg ønsker å starte min undersøkelse. Jeg ønsker også å komme i kontakt med kristen multikulturell ungdom fra andre sammenhenger.

- ❖ Jeg vil først gjøre en enkel **skriftlig undersøkelse** som jeg håper flest mulig vil delta på.
- ❖ I tillegg ønsker jeg å **intervjue** et mindre antall ungdommer, for å gå mer kvalitativt i dybden om deres tanker og valg rundt det å gå/ikke gå i en menighet. Dette vil skje i små grupper (fokusgruppe-intervju).

Hvordan bli med?

Dersom du/dere samtykker til å delta i prosjektet, kan du/dere fylle ut skjemaet på neste side og levere det til meg eller sende det i posten. Ungdom **under 16 år** må ha **foreldrenes** samtykke. Foreldre til de under 16 år *kan be om å få se spørreskjemaet* til spørreundersøkelsen og *intervjuguiden* til intervjuene. Har du/dere spørsmål? Ta gjerne kontakt og spør.

Praktisk informasjon:

- Den **skriftlige** undersøkelsen kan besvares på kort tid, gjerne i løpet av en KMU-samling.
- **Intervjuet** tar minst en time. Kanskje tar jeg også kontakt senere, for å klargjøre noen svar eller få noen tilleggsopplysninger. Intervjuene vil bli gjort der KMU samles, eller et annet sted, dersom dét passer bedre for dem som intervjues.
- Intervjuene vil bli teipet. Opptak og notater vil oppbevares slik at andre ikke får tilgang til dem. Opplysningene anonymiseres og opptakene slettes når oppgaven er ferdig, innen utgangen av 2012.
- Studien er meldt til Personvernombudet for forskning, Norsk samfunnsvitenskapelig datatjeneste (NSD).
- Opplysningene jeg får i undersøkelsen og intervjuene behandles konfidensielt. Alle som deltar vil bli anonymisert, deres virkelige navn vil ikke bli offentliggjort i oppgaven. Det er frivillig å være med på undersøkelsen og intervjuene, og selv om du har sagt ja til å være med kan du når som helst velge å trekke deg underveis.
- KMUs styre vil motta et eksemplar av oppgaven når den foreligger, og muligvis vil den bli tilgjengelig digitalt.

Vennlig hilsen

NAVNET MITT

Navnet mitt

Gateadressen min

Postnummeret

Mobilnummeret

E-post-adressen

Svarskjema for ungdommer som er 16 år og eldre:

Ja, jeg mottatt informasjon om undersøkelsen av kristen ungdom med multikulturell bakgrunn og deres tanker og valg rundt det å gå i en menighet. Jeg ønsker:

å delta på den skriftlige undersøkelsen å bli intervjuet

Min underskrift: Dato:

Kontaktinformasjon (skriv tydelig):

Navn:

Adresse:

Telefon:

E-post:

Svarskjema for ungdommer UNDER 16 år og deres foreldre/foresatte:

Ja, vi har mottatt informasjon om undersøkelsen av kristen ungdom med multikulturell bakgrunn og deres tanker og valg rundt det å gå i en menighet.. Vi gir samtykke til at vårt barn kan:

delta på den skriftlige undersøkelsen bli intervjuet

Ungdoms underskrift: Dato:

Foreldre/foresattes underskrift: Dato:

Kontaktinformasjon til ungdom (skriv tydelig):

Navn:

Adresse:

Telefon:

E-post:

Appendix 2: Questionnaire form

Spørreundersøkelse:

Kristen multikulturell ungdom
og deres tanker og valg rundt det å gå i en menighet.

Forklaringer:

MENIGHETSTILKNYTNING. Her er det ikke snakk om medlemskap. Det som teller er hvor du har pleid å gå på kristne møter enten du har vært medlem eller ikke. (Ikke tell med tilfeldige enkeltbesøk til menigheter.)

NAVN PÅ MENIGHET: Hvis du ikke vet akkurat hva kirka/menigheten heter, snakker du med [navnet mitt].

SPRÅK: Her skriver du det språket eller de språkene som brukes på møtene/gudstjenestene. Tenk på: Hvilke språk brukes i sangene, i talene, i bønn, informasjon o.s.v.. (OBS! Det er ikke spørsmål om hvor mange språk folk i menigheten kan snakke).

KONFESJON/KIRKESAMFUNN: Eks. Dersom du går i statskirka så er *konfesjonen* luthersk og *kirkesamfunnet* heter Den norske kirke. Det er ikke farlig om du ikke husker begge deler.

Andre eksempel på konfesjoner: pinsevenner, katolikker, metodister, baptister, ortodokse, eller ikke-konfesjonelle (dvs. hører ikke til én spesiell konfesjon). Hvis du ikke vet, skriver du bare et spørsmålstegn.

FLERE ALTERNATIVER: Ikke sett strek over eller under noen alternativer. Bare sett kryss i ruta for det som passer for deg og din situasjon.

KODENAVN (Ikke skriv noe her, 5028 fyller ut etter undersøkelsen.):

NOEN FAKTA

Alder:

Kjønn: MK (M=mann/K=kvinne)

Land jeg hvor jeg har bodd ett år eller mer:

.....
.....
.....

Kulturer jeg føler **tilhørighet** til:

.....
.....
.....

1. OM MENIGHETSTILKNYTNING NÅ:

a Jeg går fast i bare én menighet to ganger i måneden eller mer

en gang i måneden eller mindre

- Navn på menighet:
- Språk som brukes i gudstjenesten:
- Konfesjon/kirkesamfunn:

b Jeg går i flere menigheter:

- Navn på menighet:
- Språk som brukes i gudstjenesten:
- Konfesjon/kirkesamfunn:

to ganger i måneden eller mer

en gang i måneden eller mindre

-
- Navn på menighet:
 - Språk som brukes i gudstjenesten:
 - Konfesjon/kirkesamfunn:

to ganger i måneden eller mer

en gang i måneden eller mindre

-
- Navn på menighet:
 - Språk som brukes i gudstjenesten:
 - Konfesjon/kirkesamfunn:

to ganger i måneden eller mer

en gang i måneden eller mindre

c Jeg går ikke i noen menighet nå. d Jeg går fast i en menighet, men besøker gjerne andre menigheter av og til.

HVIS DU GÅR I EN MENIGHET NÅ:

e. Det er ungdomsarbeid i menigheten min.

Jeg synes det er **mange** ungdommer omtrent på min alder i menigheten min.

Jeg synes det er **få** ungdommer omtrent på min alder i menigheten min.

f. Det er ingen spesielle tilbud for ungdom i menigheten min.

Jeg synes det er **mange** ungdommer omtrent på min alder i menigheten min.

Jeg synes det er **få** ungdommer omtrent på min alder i menigheten min.

g. De viktigste grunnene til til at jeg går i en menighet er:

.....
.....
.....

h. De viktigste grunnene til til at jeg går i akkurat denne menigheten er:

.....
.....
.....
.....

2. OM MENIGHETSTILKNYTNING TIDLIGERE:

a Jeg har aldri gått i en menighet

b Jeg går ikke i noen menighet nå, men før har jeg gått i:

- Navn på menighet:
- Språk som brukes i gudstjenesten:
- Konfesjon/kirkesamfunn:
- Navn på menighet:
- Språk som brukes i gudstjenesten:
- Konfesjon/kirkesamfunn:
- Navn på menighet:
- Språk som brukes i gudstjenesten:
- Konfesjon/kirkesamfunn:

De viktigste grunnene til at jeg ikke går i denne/disse menigheten(e) lenger er:

.....
.....
.....
.....

c Jeg gikk i samme menighet før som jeg gjør nå.

d Nå går jeg i menigheten som jeg skrev på punkt 1, men TIDLIGERE gikk jeg i:

- Navn på menighet:
- Språk som brukes i gudstjenesten:
- Konfesjon/kirkesamfunn:
- Navn på menighet:
- Språk som brukes i gudstjenesten:
- Konfesjon/kirkesamfunn:
- Navn på menighet:
- Språk som brukes i gudstjenesten:
- Konfesjon/kirkesamfunn:

De viktigste grunnene til at jeg ikke går i denne/disse menigheten(e) lenger er:

.....
.....
.....
.....

3. ØNSKER FOR EVT. **FRAMTIDIG** MENIGHETSTILKNYTNING:

a Hvis jeg f.eks. flytter og må bytte menighet, ønsker jeg å finne en menighet som.....

Skriv om dine ønsker her:

.....
.....
.....
.....

b Jeg går ikke i en menighet. Hvis jeg skulle gått i en menighet, skulle jeg ønske at den menigheten.....

Skriv om dine ønsker her:

.....
.....
.....
.....

b **Jeg vil ikke gå i en menighet fordi.....**

Skriv din begrunnelse her:

.....
.....
.....

4. OM KMU (kun hvis du går på KMUs samlinger)

a. Jeg hørte om KMU

Gjennom venner Gjennom menighet Gjennom familie

Oppslagstavle/internett/flyer/andre media

Annet:

b. Omtrent hvor lenge har du vært med i KMU?

c. Hvorfor kommer du på KMU-samlinger?.....

.....
.....
.....



Appendix 3: Interview-guide

Kristen multikulturell ungdom og deres tanker og valg rundt det å gå i en menighet.

I forkant av intervjuet: Se gjennom besvarelsene på **spørreundersøkelsen**.

HUSK Å SKRIVE SAMME KODENAVN I TRANSKRIBERINGEN AV DETTE INTERVJUET SOM PÅ BESVARELSEN AV SPØRREUNDERSØKELSEN.

Intro: Det meste skal handle om ditt forhold til menigheter/kirker og litt om KMU. Det er ingen rette/gale svar. DU er fasiten. Det er viktig at du ikke svarer det du tror at jeg eller andre mener er riktig. Det som er riktig i denne sammenhengen er det DU faktisk mener og det DU faktisk gjør. I den ferdige rapporten kommer ingen til å vite hvem som har sagt hva. En av måtene jeg sikrer dette på, er at jeg gir alle et "fake" navn. Hvis du får lyst til å trekke deg fra hele greia underveis, har du rett til dét. Det er bare å si ifra.

Har du noen spørsmål før vi starter? Evt. i forhold til prosjektbeskrivelsen, - var den forståelig?

5. Hvis han/hun har **NÅVÆRENDE MENIGHETSTILKNYTNING**:

a. Du har skrevet at du går i (referer svaret i spørreundersøkelsen).

Hva er grunnen til at du går i akkurat denne menigheten/disse menighetene?

b. Beskriv det som er typisk for din menighet. (Eks. Hvem er der? Ledelse? Møteform? Fokus i forkynnelsen? Hvilke arbeidsgreiner?)

c. På hvilken måte har følgende stor eller liten betydning for at du går der:

- Språk
- Ungdomsmiljø
- Konfesjon
- Møteform
- Musikk
- Forkynnelse
- Undervisning

- Bibelsyn
- Bønneliv/andre «aktiviteter»
- Venner
- Familie (forventning? tilhørighet?)
- Eventuelle oppgaver du har i menigheten
- Lederne
- Gammel vane
- Andre ting som er viktige?
- Hva er absolutt ikke viktig?

d. Tror du at noen av disse punktene har mer/mindre betydning for deg enn for dine foreldre (hvis de går i en menighet)?

e. Hvis du har besøkt/besøker andre menigheter enn den du går i:

- Hvorfor?
- Hender det du sammenlikner din egen og andre menigheter?
- Hvis ja: Hva kommer ut som positivt og negativt for menighetene du sammenlikner.

f. Beskriv ungdomsmiljøet som er i din menighet.

g. Hvis du har gått i andre menigheter før, men slutta: Hva var årsaken?

6. Hvis han/hun ikke går i noen menighet, men hadde MENIGHETSTILKNYTNING **FØR**:

a. Hva er grunnen til at du sluttet?

b. Hadde disse tingene stor/liten/ingen betydning for at du sluttet (forklar gjerne):

- Språk
- Ungdomsmiljø
- Konfesjon
- Møteform
- Musikk

- Forkynnelse
- Undervisning
- Bibelsyn
- Bønneliv/andre «aktiviteter»
- Venner
- Familie (forventning? tilhørighet?)
- Eventuelle oppgaver du har i menigheten
- Lederne
- Gammel vane
- Andre ting som er viktige?
- Hva er absolutt ikke viktig?

c. Hva er grunnen til at du ikke har funnet en ny menighet? (*Bevisst valg eller andre faktorer*)

7. Hvis han/hun **aldri** har hatt MENIGHETSTILKNYTNING:

a. Hva er årsaken til at du aldri har gått i en menighet?

8. ØNSKER FOR EVT. **FRAMTIDIG** MENIGHETSTILKNYTNING:

a. I den første undersøkelsen svarte du på ett av følgende spørsmål:

- Hvis jeg f.eks. flytter og må bytte menighet, ønsker jeg å finne en menighet som.....
- Jeg går ikke i en menighet. Hvis jeg skulle gått i en menighet, skulle jeg ønske at den menigheten...
- Jeg vil ikke gå i en menighet fordi...

Du sa..... ..

Kan du utdype dette? (Hvorfor er de tingene du nevnte viktige for deg?)

9. KULTURELL TILHØRIGHET

- a. Hva legger **du** i begrepet «multikulturell ungdom»?
- b. Definerer du deg selv som «multikulturell» (i den forstand du nettopp har beskrevet)?
- c. Hva pleier du å svare på spørsmålet «Hvor kommer du fra»?
- d. Hvordan definerer du «ikke-multikulturell»?
- e. Har du venner som du vil beskrive som **ikke** multikulturelle?

10. MENIGHETER SOM PASSER

- a. Finnes det noen typer menigheter som du mener passer spesielt godt for multikulturell ungdom?
- b. Hvis ja:
 - Har du konkrete eksempler på slike menigheter?
 - Gi eksempler på hva det er som gjør at disse menighetene passer så godt.
- c. Hvis nei:
 - Hvorfor ikke?
- d. Har du, med din multikulturelle bakgrunn, vanskeligere for å finne deg til rette i en menighet enn annen kristen ungdom?
 - Hvis ja: Hva er årsakene til dét?
- e. Hvis du svarte ja på spørsmål d; Kjenner du flere som synes det samme? (*Dvs. er dette et tema dere snakker sammen om?*)
- f. Hva er ditt personlige inntrykk: Går multikulturell ungdom mer eller mindre på møter enn annen kristen ungdom?

11. Kun for de som kommer på **KMU**-samlinger:

- a.** Du har hørt om KMU gjennom og gått her i (tid). Kan du utdype svaret om hvorfor du kommer på KMU sine samlinger. *(Hva gjør at du kommer tilbake?)*
- b.** Av det du har nevnt, hva er det viktigste ved KMU for deg?
- c.** Er det noe ved KMU opplever du som likt/forskjellig fra andre kristne tilbud til ungdom som du har vært borti?
- d.** Hvis du ikke har tilknytning til noen fast menighet, opplever du at KMU hjelper deg (eller andre som kommer på KMU) til å finne en menighet?

Appendix 4: Invitation to participate in the project, published at KUM's website

Er du mellom 13 og 26 år?

Er du kristen?

Er du multikulturell?

Da kan du bli med på en undersøkelse som handler om:

**Hvilke valg gjør multikulturell kristen ungdom
rundt dette med menighet?**

**Hvilke tanker har kristen multikulturell ungdom
om den menighetserfaringen de har?**

For å bli med i undersøkelsen klikker du på lenken til **prosjektbeskrivelsen**.

Denne må du **lese** godt og så **skrive under på** at du vil være med i undersøkelsen (**samtykke-erklæring**).

De som er under 16 år må ha foreldrenes underskrift i tillegg. (16 år er religiøs myndighetsalder i Norge.)

Undersøkelsen skal resultere i en masteroppgave som KMU vil få en kopi av når den er ferdig.

Flere detaljer og praktisk informasjon finner du når du klikker på lenken til prosjektbeskrivelsen.

De som har med ferdig underskrevet samtykke-erklæring på førstkommende KMU-samling, kan gjøre undersøkelsen den dagen. De som underskriver mens de er på samlingen, må gjøre undersøkelsen senere.

Håper mange av dere vil være med! Send meg gjerne en mail eller ring dersom dere lurer på noe. Det samme gjelder dersom noen av foreldrene vil se spørreskjema og intervjuguide på forhånd, før de underskriver samtykke-erklæringen.

Vennlig hilsen

NAVN

Telefonnummer

E-post-adresse