The Experience of Religious Stigma and Discrimination among Religious Minorities in Ireland: A Multi-Faith Approach

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Abstract

Olivia Cosgrove

This is an investigation of the experience of religious stigma and discrimination among eight non ethno-religious minority groups in Ireland. The study focuses on the connections between the Irish social context and the perception of religious stigmatisation and acts of discrimination. This is in order to understand the lived experience of religious discrimination and to examine the structural elements which appear to contribute the perpetuation of stigma in Irish society. This is the first study to explore religious discrimination specifically from a non ethno-religious perspective and also crucially takes a multi-faith approach to the field.

This research is placed in the context of a nation which has undergone rapid demographic and religious changes in the past twenty years and therefore an understanding of the social treatment of small religious groups is increasingly important. Drawing on existing work on stigma and discrimination, this study is underpinned by an extended research definition which encompassed both the acts of discrimination and the processes of stigma designation in order to strengthen the links between the interrelated concepts. This was designed to produce a multi-level understanding of interactions between the individual and the wider social context, looking explicitly at structural elements which appear to contribute to religious based discrimination. I argue that religious discrimination and stigma are inherently linked to the Irish religious environment which may have changed from reverent public adherence to the Church to a more culturally located identity, but still retains power in the Irish social realm.

Methodologically, this study blends survey data collected from eight research groups with phenomenological hermeneutic interviews with eight interviewees. The survey produced 989 valid responses, with over 70% reporting religious discrimination in the past five years. The research findings also point to high levels of concealment of one's religious identity. Through the interviews, this discrimination was found to be primarily indirect and discreet in nature and appeared to be strongly linked by the participants to the public stereotypes propagated by the Catholic Church, the media, the Irish education system and the lack of religious literacy in Ireland. The individual experiences were explored through the prism of identity management strategies, which connect micro-experiences to the wider social context in which they occur, and reveal the insidious nature of religious discrimination in Ireland. This study, while limited to those groups who took part, reveals an area of social discrimination which has not been previously explored in Ireland, and the results point to the need for further research in this area.
I, Olivia Cosgrove, declare that this thesis, submitted for assessment in respect of the award of Doctor of Philosophy is the product of my own work.

Signed: _________________________

Date: 21st March 2012
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A big thank you to my family and friends for all their support. To my parents, thank you for instilling in me the importance of education and the importance of asking ‘why?’ To Anthony, thank you for your encouragement, constant support and for listening to all those ‘Whys?’, and to my son, Jack for his general wonderfulness. Lastly, I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Carmen Kuhling, for her advice, guidance, support and friendship over the course of this project. It's been a pleasure to share this journey with you.
Introduction

This thesis explores the experience of religious stigma and discrimination among members of eight, non ethno-religious minority religious groups in Ireland. My objective is to explore specifically the perception of unfavourable treatment based on one's religious affiliation, where and how it occurs; the effects on the individuals involved and how this is linked to the structural environment in Ireland. Central to my aims is to connect the individual’s experience of discrimination to the various macro-structural elements which could result in small religious groups being treated differently within the Irish context.

I locate this research within the context of a nation which has undergone rapid modernisation, including sizable changes in it’s ethnic, cultural and religious diversity within the past fifteen years. Within that timeframe, the Roman Catholic Church which had been a dominant force in Irish religious, political and social matters (Inglis 1988, 1998) has been beset by scandals and internal turmoil, resulting in the Church's apparent loss of dominance, social status and privilege within Irish society (Fahey 1994; Fahey et al. 2005; Inglis 2005). These events have been accompanied by rapid decreases in church attendance (MacGreil 2011) and adherence to church teachings on
moral and personal issues such as contraception and divorce (Fahey et al. 2005). It is my contention that despite these changes, a type of cultural Catholicism is still prevalent within Irish society. The development of this contemporary cultural Catholicism is, I believe, strongly connected to the social context within which the discrimination and stigma reported in this thesis takes place.

**Research on Discrimination in Ireland**

Within Ireland, the study of religious discrimination has been largely overlooked. There are a few studies which explore the treatment of various Protestant groups in Ireland, with particular emphasis on Northern Ireland (Whyte 1990; Wright 1988; Doherty and Poole 1997). More recently, there have been studies of identity (Mitchell 2006), segregation within education (McCrudden et al. 2009; Jarman 2009) and discrimination within the workplace (Equality Commission Reports 2010, 2011, 2004), again with the focus on Catholic and Protestant denominations. Outside of the Northern Ireland context however, there has been very little research on religious discrimination within the Republic of Ireland. The economic upturn of the 1990's brought a change in the demographic make-up of the Irish nation and opened up new avenues of research into the experience of other religions in Ireland, with particular emphasis on the Muslim community (Scharbrodt and Sakaranaho 2011; Carr 2011; Colfer 2009; Flynn 2006). Findings in this area point to varying degrees of prejudice towards Muslim groups (or "Islamophobia") within the Republic of Ireland, ranging from polite social exclusion to verbal and physical attacks on members of the Islamic faith. The exact figures regarding such incidents are not readily available, as there is no official monitoring of religious based crimes in Ireland, but research indicates that the experience of prejudice based on Islamic identity in Ireland is quite commonplace.
(Carr 2010). Irish attitudes towards other religious denominations are further explored in three extensive interval studies by Micheal MacGreil. Conducted in 1972-73 (1977), 1988-89 (1996) and (2011), the study explores Irish attitudes toward various social categories. In relation to religion, only certain categories were explored in these studies due to difficulties in obtaining figures on some of the smaller religious groups (2011, p.vii), but the results provide a useful barometer of Irish attitudes to social groups across time.

MacGreil’s surveys are based on a measurement of social distance and involved certain stimulus social categories. Respondents were then asked to respond to the category and to indicate their preference towards that group ranging from "Admit members of the group into kinship" to "Debarring or Deport from the state" (MacGreil 2011, p.59) and the results are presented as a rank order of Mean Social Distance (MSD) of each category. This score ranges from 1 which indicates complete acceptance into one’s kin or family, up to 7 which indicates complete favouring of "debarring or deporting" individuals from that stimulus group. Such an approach utilises the concept of in-groups and out-groups and provides a numerical scale from which to identify both these groups. In this instance, in-groups or those favoured by the respondents, show a score of 1.500 or lower. The groups which score above 1.500 are viewed as out-groups, where the higher the score indicates the greater desired social distance from that group. This score allows an exploration of the changes in attitudes to certain religious groups in Ireland across time, based on desired social distance. The religious stimulus categories were Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Atheist, Agnostic and Hare Krishna (in 1977 results only). The results tracking the changes across the years are displayed in the appendix three. I have also included the
sample collected in Ireland's capital city, Dublin as well as the national survey for the 1988-89, 2007-08 years for comparison purposes. As the results show across the three surveys, Roman Catholics score within the in-group range, as do Protestant groups with the exception of the National survey in 1988-89, where they score just outside. The Jewish category has always been scored as an out-group, with the latest survey showing marginal decreases in desired social distance in the national survey, and a slight increase in desired social distance in the Dublin area. It is worth noting that the majority of Jewish communities in Ireland at this time were based in the Greater Dublin area (Keogh 1988). Atheists (those who do not believe in any deity) were placed in the out-group across all three, but with slight decreases in recent years.

Agnostics also score within the out-group range, but show growth in social desirability in the most recent survey. Muslims score quite high on the scale with the average score at around 3.00, which is double the distance from the Roman Catholic "in group", with slight decreases detected in the national survey 2008-09. Hare Krishna as a social stimulus category were only included in the 1972-73 survey and scored the highest of all religious categories with a desired social distance score of 4.33. Unfortunately, no follow up attitudinal study on this group has been conducted and therefore we have no data on Irish attitudes to Hare Krishna's in a contemporary survey. To put these religious groups in the context of scores relating to other social stimulus categories in 2008-09, Roman Catholics scored the lowest MSD at 1.168 of all 51 social categories, Jewish people were ranked at 31 and Muslims were ranked at 50 – just above drug addicts and below both members of the Travelling community and Alcoholics. No group across the three surveys scored as high as the Hare Krishna group in 1972-73, but no follow up research has been conducted in this area.
It is clear that these surveys indicate the presence of negative social reactions towards certain religious categories in Ireland.

In addition to Mac Greil's work, there are two other studies which explore religious discrimination in Ireland. "The Experience of Discrimination in Ireland; Analysis of the QNHS Equality Module" (Russell et al. 2008) explores all types of discrimination, its' context and the groups most at risk of discrimination within Irish society, based on the Quarterly National Household Survey conducted by the Central Statistics Office (CSO 2004). The overall findings of the report cite

...significant levels of reported discrimination. Overall 12.5 per cent of the Irish population aged 18 years and over said that they had been discriminated against in the preceding two years

(Russell at al. 2008, p.iii).

Table 2.3 shows a comparison of the types of discrimination reported, where we can see that reported religious discrimination accounts for 0.6% of the total based on a sample of approximately 24,600. This is 0.1% more than reported sexual discrimination and just 0.1% below discrimination based on membership of the Travelling community, which are both categories which have been the focus of growing research on discrimination in Ireland. As well as overall figures, the report also looks specifically at discrimination at work, while obtaining work and in relation to acquisition of services. Using the Roman Catholic group as a reference, other religious groups are compared to explore levels of reported discrimination, as well as their risk of discrimination within Ireland, which can be seen in table 2.4.
Table 2.3 Grounds of Discrimination as a Percentage of All Reported Grounds
(Ground % of All Reported Grounds)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ground</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>19.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/skincolour/ethnic group/nationality</td>
<td>16.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family status</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability</td>
<td>6.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital Status</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership of the Traveller community</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>30.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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N = 24,600 approx.

(Russell et al. 2008, p.32)

Table 2.4 Experience of Work-related Discrimination in Last Two Years

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>At Work</th>
<th>Looking For Work</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church of Ireland</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Christian</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>Higher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>Same</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Religion</td>
<td>Much</td>
<td>Same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Religion</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>Higher</td>
</tr>
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(Russell et al. 2008, p.15).

Using the Roman Catholic responses as a majority baseline, other religions are compared. Members of the Church of Ireland in the survey show no difference from the majority, which is also the case for Muslim respondents. However, respondents of “Other Christian”, ‘Other’ Religion and No Religion were all found to be significantly more likely than the Roman Catholic majority to report experience of discrimination.
at work. Also in terms of employment, those labelled as “Other Christian” respondents and those who professed ‘no religion’ also reported more problems while seeking employment than the reference group (Russell et al. 2008, p.15).

In relation to discrimination during the use of services in Ireland, Russell at al. found that those who were labelled as "Other Christian" were more at risk of discrimination in relation to five of the seven service areas covered in the survey which were health, financial, education, transport and other public services. These results were controlled for the effects of both nationality and ethnicity, and provide a clearer exploration of the effects of religion on discrimination within these sites. Individuals who claimed to be of "No Religion" were found to be more likely to experience discrimination in relation to using shops and pubs, and in accessing both the financial and housing sectors. In light of these results, the authors conclude that in relation to religion in Ireland

...respondents who are ‘Other Christian’, ‘Other religion’ or ‘No religion’ are more likely to report services discrimination than Catholics, once we account for other factors like Ethnicity and nationality in the model. Church of Ireland respondents and Muslims do not differ significantly from Catholics in the model

(Russell et al. 2008, p.49).

Despite the international trend of high levels of discrimination towards those of the Islamic faith, which I discussed above, in this survey Muslim participants did not report higher rates of discrimination overall, or in relation to work or service discrimination, except in relation to transport. This is at odds with findings internationally and the report goes on to say that

...when other factors are accounted for in the model, they (Muslims) do not differ significantly from Catholics, neither do Church of Ireland respondents. The model results do show that “other Christian”, “other religion” and “no religion” groups are all more vulnerable than Catholics, even after nationality and ethnicity have been controlled, and that these characteristics overlap

(Russell et al. 2008, p.49).
This research was replicated at a later date (McGinnity et al. 2012) based on the Quarterly National Household Survey gathered in 2010, and explored discrimination over the preceding two years, providing an interesting boom/recession comparison of discrimination. Overall, 12% of the entire sample has experienced discrimination of some sort, with most reported in relation to accessing services or in the workplace. The study found very little change in the overall picture of discrimination in Ireland, and in relation to religion those who were categorised as “Other Christian”, “Other Religion” and “No Religion” were most likely to experience discrimination mainly while looking for work and in relation to education. The tables relating to the overall grounds for discrimination collapsed the categories for religion and membership of travelling community, as the numbers were deemed to be so small. Therefore, an overall comparison with the 2008 report is not readily available.

While these two reports are a welcome addition to our understanding of discrimination in Ireland, it must be noted that the information is based on reported discrimination within Ireland. Various research studies point to over 60% of discrimination as going unreported (Herring 2006; Hyde 2004), therefore it is likely that the actual cases of discrimination, religious or otherwise, could be much higher in Ireland. The authors also point out that "our analysis shows that in many cases, the social groups who report experiencing the highest levels of discrimination are the least likely to take action" (Russell et al. 2008, xiii), which further compounds the need for in-depth further analysis. In a final note, there is the issue of the broad religious categories utilised, which the authors acknowledge is somewhat problematic in relation to what affiliations are placed in which
...'Other Christian’ may include other Protestant religions as well as Apostolic/Pentecostal and Orthodox, and ‘Other religion’ may include Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist and Sikh respondents.  

(Russell et al. 2008, p.79)

As the survey used was not aimed primarily at researching religion, there are problems with in-depth, affiliation specific religious analysis in this case. Without knowledge of which specific "Other Christian" or "Other religions" make up the survey categories, any further exploration into the specifics of religious discrimination is somewhat limited.

While these studies make vital contributions to our knowledge of social reactions and discrimination to religion in Ireland, their findings suggest that in-depth, affiliation specific research on the experience of discrimination is required in order to reach a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena in Ireland. To date, very little research exists in Ireland which explores religions outside ethno-religious groups, especially research into social reactions to the more esoteric "invisible" groups, such as certain White Christians, Scientology and Pagans, for example. The broad changes in Ireland within the past twenty years in terms of religious and ethnic make-up have, as I discussed above, brought about heightened awareness of prejudice and discrimination, culminating in anti-discrimination legislation. While this is to be applauded, further work needs to be done in this area, especially in relation to the space between the law and everyday attitudes and reactions to religious alternatives. To achieve this, it is vital to have a clear understanding of how and where religious discrimination is perceived to occur, and the effects and reactions on the individuals involved. It is through understanding the day-to-day experiences of those who profess minority religions in Ireland that we can being to uncover what factors are linked to the perpetuation and maintenance of discrimination.
Small Religious Groups in Ireland

Research in this area has become particularly pertinent at the beginning of the 21st century in Ireland, where the religious landscape has undergone rapid transformations. Figures available on minority religions in Ireland from census analyses by the Central Statistics Office (2012) highlight the upward trend in all segments of recorded religious groups over the past ten years. Questions on religion have appeared on all decennial census produced by the Central Statistics Office since 1861, but it wasn't until 1991 that a detailed question on religious affiliation appeared (McCourt 2011, p.30). Until then, the smaller religious groups were simply grouped into the category of "Other" which provides very little in the way of workable social data.

Claims outside official Central Statistics Office figures made by certain groups such as Transcendental Meditation on membership numbers have been dismissed by some as publicity seeking (Cosgrove et al. 2011, p.11) and it is doubtful that until the late twentieth century that any of the smaller religious groups has any more than a few hundred members (Mulholland forthcoming). Therefore, actual figures on such groups in Ireland are somewhat problematic as many have no official registers of membership, and some are notoriously difficult to enumerate such as Druids, Pagans and Wiccans (Heelas 1997). Many of those who take part in such practices may consider it as a lifestyle choice rather than a religion or may use such a practice in tandem with other religious affiliations, such as in Scientology. Therefore in Ireland, there are large gaps in our knowledge about the size and growth rates of certain small religious groups.
Cox and Griffin's (2011) examination of the figures from official Census data points to a slow but steady rise in the adherents of religions outside of Roman Catholicism and the mainstream Protestant denominations from the 1950's onwards. This slow growth eventually becomes more expansive and rapid at the end of the twentieth century, as is illustrated in their exploration of registered Buddhists. While in the recent past census data has become far more detailed on religious affiliation, there are still various affiliations which are classed as "Other". Of the minority religions that were fully reported, all of the following showed a percentage increase of 45% or more from the figures reported in 2006; Muslims, Orthodox, Apostolic/ Pentecostal, Buddhist, Hindu, Lutheran, Baptist, Pantheist, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Brethren. All other religious categories also showed a percentage increase, except for the category of "Lapsed Catholic" and the "Other Religions" category, which showed single digit decreases.

This research took place over a three and a half year period from 2008 to 2012, following a period of rapid expansion in membership for many of the groups featured in the research. For example, Pentecostal/Evangelical groups in Ireland grew by 157.7% in the four years between 2002 and 2006, with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints and Evangelical Christian denominations growing by 48.5% and 39.6% respectively. There was also evidence of strong growth in the census details published in 2002, where many of these groups were also placed in the category of "Other" which saw an increase of 102.5%. To place this in context until 1992, all of these groups were deemed too small by the Irish Central Statistics Office to merit a separate category in the Irish census and were simply cited as "Other" in the reports. In the most recent census report of 2011, there were still almost 9,000 individuals who
are members of religious groups which are still classified as "Other" (CSO 2012). Therefore, as this growth continues we need to understand how the rise in these religious groups is being meet in Irish society.

To date, we know very little about religious discrimination which is not inherently connected to an ethno-religious identity. In other words, there is little knowledge of discrimination in Ireland or elsewhere, based purely on one's religious affiliation rather than the more complex convergence of religion and ethnicity. Research elsewhere has drawn attention to this gap (Weller et al. 2001, 2011; Bouma 1998, 2011,) calling particular attention to what Weller calls "invisible" religious groups, such as white Christian groups, Pagans, Druids and other minority religions such as Scientology and Raelianism. High levels of discrimination and stigmatisation of such religious identities have been reported within the United States (Pew Institute 2010, Europe (ENAR 2008), Canada (Seljack et al. 2010) and Australia (Bouma 2011), but little research has been done to date on either the cause or effect of religious-based discriminatory behaviour. Therefore, this research will explore the experience of individuals whose religious identity is not explicitly connected to an ethnic background, type of dress or other public signal of religious membership. This is in order to try to isolate the reaction to the religious identity and will provide the first affiliation specific exploration of religious discrimination in Ireland. Such discrimination does not occur in a vacuum and the social context is of vital importance in situating this research and the possible social factors which are involved and the manner in which the micro and the macro-level of society are linked in this process.
Discrimination and Stigma: The Links

Having looked briefly at the research question, in this section I will explore the theoretical tools I will use in order to explore this question. This thesis looks specifically at religious discrimination which is behaviour which results in the unfair, unequal, or potentially harmful treatment of others based upon prejudice towards that religious affiliation (Weller et al. 2001, 2011; Woodhead 2011; Woodhead and Catto 2009). In its simplest form, discrimination refers to the unequal treatment of individuals or groups based on their membership of a certain group, which is perceived as "lesser" in relation to the dominant group in a society. Therefore, within the dynamics of discrimination are based on "In groups" which are acceptable to the majority and "Out groups" which are viewed lesser by the majority (Allport 1954; Tajfel 1984). It is this process of "Othering" which provides justification for the action, incitement and justification of discrimination in society and is inherently linked to the production of a stigmatised trait within that society. The related sociological concept of stigma originates from Goffman's (1963) work on the management of a spoilt identity, which can be most fundamentally defined as an "attribute that is deeply discredited" which reduces the individual "from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one" (Goffman 1963, p. 3). This conceptualisation has been utilised in studies as diverse as leprosy (Opale and Boillot 1996), exotic dancers (Lewis 1998) and intellectually gifted children (Scott 1990).

While the concept of stigma is inherently linked to the theory and exercise of discrimination (Link and Phelan 2001), this link has been under-exploited in the study of social "othering" (Crocker et al. 1998; Oliver 1992; Fiske 1998; Link and Phelan 1999; Link and Phelan 2001). Many studies of stigma have tended to focus their
exploration on the socio-cognitive processes of individual responses to hostile environments, but have failed to examine what engendered this social response, the related power discrepancies and the wider effects on life chances (Link and Phelan 2001; Oliver 1992); while discrimination studies have tended to ignore the individual effects in order to explore the structural causes (Fiske 1993).

Link and Phelan (2001) have called explicitly for greater research links between stigmatisation and discrimination in order to gain a true sociological understanding of the pattern of disadvantage, and propose this can be best achieved by placing stigma in reference to interrelated concepts. This echoes Goffman's own reflection that stigma is best observed in the relationship between attributes and stereotypes (1963, p.3) and results in the framing of stigma as that which emerges from the process of labelling, stereotypes, social separation, status loss and discrimination within a power context which enables it (Link and Phelan 2001, p.358). These five elements combine to create in-groups and out-groups, generate negative stereotypes, which leads to increased social distance, decreased social status and discriminatory behaviour, thus culminating in the creation of a stigmatised identity. This process is enforced by the dominant knowledge, discourse or power (Foucault 1991) through access to economic, social and political resources denied to the less powerful out-groups. The stigmatisation of certain identities can be also be reinforced through the socialisation process, through agents such as the media and education (Bregaa and Coleman 1999; van Driel and Richardson 1988a, 1988b). In order to effectively counter discrimination, we need to understand how stigma is created and perpetuated, the effects on the individuals, their life circumstances and how this process operates at a societal level.
Little is known academically about the process of discrimination relating to religious minorities in Ireland, especially in relation to the labelling, separation, status loss and discrimination that occur in the designation of a stigmatised identity, or the effects this process has on individuals and their life circumstances. There is also little understanding of how Ireland's contemporary social structure and prevailing attitudes to religious minorities have evolved and how these are being perpetuated within socialisation and popular discourse. By using this study to examine discrimination and stigmatisation, I will be providing an important theoretical link between the micro-events of day-to-day life and the macro-environment which contextualises and influences these events. It is this link between cause and effect and between the individual and wider society which will provide a critical insight into discrimination and stigmatisation in Ireland. By taking a multi-faceted, multi-level approach, I argue that this study can also provide a holistic and comprehensive approach to exploring the issues of discrimination and stigmatisation.

In order achieve this, I chose to build on Goffman's (1963) notion of stigma as proposed by Link and Phelan (2001) and expand this to include a multi-dimensional definition of religious discrimination, as proposed by Weller (2001, 2011) and Woodhead and Catto (2009). This expanded concept allows a far more sociologically holistic exploration of stigma and discrimination, linking the micro-aspects of individual experiences to the wider social environment in which stigmatisation operates. A dual research strategy based on a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methodologies was utilised. First, survey research explored the experience of discrimination and stigmatisation across the eight religious groups in order to gauge the scope of the problem. The second part of this study builds on the survey findings
and focuses on the management of a stigmatised religious identity in order to fully comprehend the experience of labelling, stereotypes, social distance, individual and structural discrimination.

The Research Context

It is within a context of social change that I situate this exploration of the experience of religious based discrimination in Ireland. I began my research into minority religions in Ireland with the intent of exploring the influence of globalisation on identity formation, focussing on how the sense of globality (Robertson 1992) had broadened the levels of identity formation to encompass the wider, global realm. I had perhaps naively assumed that in the wake of the Celtic Tiger and cosmopolitanism (Kuhling and Keohane 2006), contemporary Ireland would be a more open, liberal place for those within small religious groups. However, at the outset of my research as I came into contact with many religious groups - some which were new and controversial, others which were long established but which shared one commonality, namely that their members had experienced some form of discrimination or negative sanctions based on their religious denomination. Therefore, the focus of my research changed, as I began to explore the experience of religious discrimination in Ireland, how and when it occurred, the effects on the individuals and the role which exogenous factors play in the promotion and maintenance of this discrimination.

This link between micro-processes and the prevailing structural environment are, I argue, especially important in relation to religious discrimination and stigmatisation in the Irish context. Since the end of ninetieth century, the Roman Catholic Church has wielded enormous influence in Irish society, with particular power centred in welfare
provision, education, social policy and attitudes to moral issues (Inglis 1987, 1998).

Recent research has shown a steep and rapid decline in the attendance and active practitioners of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland (Inglis 1998; Anderson 2010; MacGreil 2011; Fahey et al. 1995). Yet, despite the revelations of decreased church attendance, almost 86.8% of the population self-reported as Roman Catholic in the census of 2011 (CSO 2012), pointing to the ongoing sense of religious affiliation, if only as a social identifier. Despite the recent sexual and financial scandals which have damaged the Church's status and credibility, its’ influence on what is considered religious normalcy in Ireland is still substantial. Indeed, recent survey research (O'Mahoney 2010; Iona Institute 2011) has indicated that the church is still well regarded within Irish society, and continues to hold strong cultural and ethnic connections with Irish identity (Byrne 2010), which will be explored in this thesis.

The opening up of Ireland to globalisation has brought about other changes in the religious ecology with many previously "invisible" religious groups expanding not only their membership, but also their degree of social visibility, resulting in an increase in those sharing space in the Irish religious sphere. The social space which the Church once dominated has changed, with a formal distancing between Church and State leading to differentiation within the social sphere, a growth in religious pluralism, religious privatisation and an embedded but more individualised Catholicism. This has been a gradual process, where the various actors vie to create and maintain influence within this and other social spheres. At an individual level, there may be a drop in attendance and adherence to certain church beliefs, but this appears to have been replaced with a type of Cultural Catholicism. This more individualised adoption of Catholicism has evolved from Irish religious history which
saw religion and nationalism become entwined and has intersecting with the events of contemporary Ireland, which I will discuss throughout this thesis. Despite its deinstitutionalised nature, this culturally based Catholicism is still socially powerful, and excludes those without the same access to knowledge and power. Therefore, the manner in which Roman Catholicism has become the embedded norm in both the social structures and the Irish psyche, has resulted in the casting of those outside of this as "other", and has led to the discrimination and stigmatisation of minority religious identity in Ireland. As Inglis (1987, p.2) points out, research into religion in Ireland has "avoided dealing with the larger, more general questions about the position and influence of the Church." This passive acceptance of the hegemonic position of the Irish Catholic Church has translated therefore into research which lacks the understanding of this denominational dominance and in consequence has led to the marginalisation of minority religions in an Irish context, both historically, academically and in contemporary society.

Inglis in his definitive work on the rise and fall of the Catholic Church (1987, 1998) explores how essential this adoption of a Catholic habitus became for successful social interactions during the church's dominant period, but recent changes in attitudes toward the Roman Catholic Church have made this social invocation of a Catholic identity less important, if not irrelevant in contemporary Ireland (Inglis 1998). However, I argue that this is not the case and this sense of a Catholic collective consciousness remains a pervasive force in our society and of particular importance in our relations to other religious groups. It is this collective identification which in essence defines the in-groups in Irish society and by definition results in the exclusion of others.
When considering any aspects of power dynamics a researcher must be very conscious of the relative position of the groups under investigation, both to each other and to the wider social context in which it is situated. Some small religious groups have been involved in questionable activities, ranging from unorthodox practices such as speaking in tongues in some Evangelical groups (Walter 1996), accusations of aggressive recruitment tactics in the case of Jehovah's Witnesses, or allegations of fraud and false representations such as in the case of Scientology. Obviously, such events and allegations will have an impact on how these groups are viewed in wider society and as such, some may argue that the right to discriminate based on these aspects (Barker 1996). Within the eight groups which took part in this research, there are varying degrees of access to areas such as social representation, self-initiated media presence or legal recourse internationally, which is reflected in the Irish context. Therefore, not all of these eight groups are equally marginalised, or more specifically, some of these groups appear to have more access to social mechanisms which can counter social discrimination than others, thus placing them in a more empowered social position. However, the findings of this thesis will show that despite varying levels of theoretical social power, there is a high degree of commonality in their experiences, particularly in relation to their experience of perceived stigma and discrimination.

To place this in context, I will provide a brief overview of the eight research groups, exploring their similarities, differences and controversies related to the groups both past and present. I will link these elements to their relative position in Irish society, both to each other and to the wider social environment, in order to provide an accurate reflection of the religious groups within this research.
Overview of the Religious Groups who took part in this study

Those who took part belonged to Elim Pentecostal, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Scientology, Jehovah's Witness, Druid, Baha'i, and Born Again Christian and Evangelical Protestantism.

The *Elim Pentecostal* is a Protestant group with eleven churches in the South of Ireland and over 40 in Northern Ireland. Pentecostal churches worldwide are among one of the fastest growing religious movement in the world they have been growing in numbers in the south. Their central beliefs focus on Biblical literalism, the Trinity of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and the return of Jesus to deliver the Final Judgement. Within the practices of worship, the emphasis is very much on the experiential and the individual's direct contact with the deity, especially the Holy Spirit, which is seen as bringing gifts such as healing, speaking in tongues and prophesies which can be deemed strange by outsiders (Cookson 2010). Worship is somewhat informal and expressive, with much congregational interaction led by their interaction with the Holy Spirit. No official membership figures were available, but there have been several centres of worship built in the past 10 years on both sides of the border (see [http://www.elimchurchireland.com/](http://www.elimchurchireland.com/)). As part of an umbrella of various church groups, they have strong international links, and have taken part in various interdenominational events at state level in Ireland, therefore represent a research group with access to various societal mechanisms in Ireland.

Next, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons) was founded in the United States in the 19th Century and currently has over 13.5 million members worldwide. They are a Christian group which views itself as the reformed Church of...
Christ, since other Christian denominations went astray from the true message. They base much of their belief on their bible, the Book of Mormon, which proclaims that all are spirit offspring of God. In order to return to God, one must follow the example of Jesus Christ and study scripture, attend Sunday worship, regular fasting and other religious activates such as Family Home evening. There is a strong emphasis on family and traditional values and spreading the message of the church and young members of the church often spend some time abroad spreading the message to others. The Church has been controversial in the past due to the practice of Polygamy. However, this has been renounce by the LDS since the 1890's, with only some few breakaway groups continuing the practice. Mormons also actively spread their religious message, usually in public places, by talking to passersby and distributing literature (Pew Institute 2012). The group has strong links to the Mormon group in the United States and within Europe on high level church matters. The Church claims 3000 members in the Republic and 5000 members in the North, and has also been involved in some inter-faith dialogue in Ireland (http://www.ldschurchtemples.com/statistics/units/world/country.php?country=Ireland). 

One of the more controversial religions, Scientology was founded in the United States by L. Ron Hubbard in 1952 and based on Hubbard's self-help philosophy of Dianetics and has become one of the most controversial religions. Much of this controversy is based on the perception of financial wrong doings and the private nature of those who practice scientology. Its core beliefs are centred on the concept that humans are essentially immortal beings which have lost contact with their true essence. To return to this, a process of spiritual rehabilitation is undertaken, known as auditing. It is here that the individual interacts with painful memories or engrams, which may be limiting
that individual from reaching their full potential and attempts to become "clear" from such memories. Auditing is conducted via an e-meter machine, from which trained personnel can detect engrams and through counselling can remove their influence. There are several levels through which one must proceed in order to reach the goal of "total freedom" (for more information see Hubbard 1956). Exact worldwide figures are difficult to locate, as many who take part in scientology courses also remain within their own religious affiliation. The Scientology organisation puts the figures at about 5 million, but others estimate it as between 100,000 and 200,000 worldwide (www.scientology.com). In Ireland, the mission centre estimates a "few hundred" scientologists and indicates that it is growing at a steady pace (Deegan 2012). The Central Statistic Office has not released any figures on Scientology to date. There have been many critiques levelled at the Church of Scientology, ranging from its actuality as a religion, to inhuman treatment of members, threatening of non-members and the financial cost of progressing within the church. These allegations, coupled with the esoteric practices must be viewed as instrumental when exploring discrimination among Scientologists (Kent 1999; Urban 2011). In relation to such discrimination, there have been some attempts in the United States to counter these legally, and overall the organisation is viewed as having access to highly effective resources to combat any legal discrimination. However, in Ireland, due to the small numbers and the public perception of the group, they have very little access to inter-faith dialogue, etc.

Also in the research group were the Jehovah's Witnesses, which are a Christian based evangelical movement founded in the United States at the end of the 19th century. It is estimated that there are some seven million members worldwide. They are best known
for their door to door evangelicalism, where they provide biblical literature and share their message with non-members. Their core beliefs are based on the bible which comes from God and is entirely historically accurate. Witnesses devote their entire life to God and reject much of the values of the secular world, claiming to be in the world but not of the world. Practices include congregational gathering in centres known as Kingdom Halls and informal bible study/discussion groups (Beckford 1975). The group is viewed as controversial in relation to their refusal to receive blood transfusions based on their biblical interpretation, including for children (Holden 2002). Their "removal from the world" must factor in discussions of religious discrimination as it may engender distrust in others, and also provides less access to formal social structures in Ireland.

Founded by Baha'u'llah in Iran in 1863, the Baha'i is the youngest of the major world religions. The Baha'i believe the God is known and proclaimed through the prophets, and attest to the validity of all other religions. They believe in the immortal soul and that all humans are equal and united in a single global community (Warburg 2006). All religions are simply viewed as god by another name. The Baha'i central purpose is to know and love god and this is achieved through fasting, prayer and meditation. There is little or no congregational; rituals, There is very little in the way of religious ritual, with daily prayers, wedding and funeral blessings the only prescribed rituals (www. Bahai-Ireland.com). In Ireland, the Baha'i are civically and political involved, with many representations at both local and national levels (Smith 2004). There has been to date in Ireland very little reported of a controversial nature regarding this group, but despite their social involvement they have little national profile, making them open to suspicion and misunderstanding.
Various Protestant denominations declare themselves as a Born Again group. In essence, this relates to the idea of a spiritual rebirth on accepting Jesus as their personal saviour and placing the teaching at the centre of their lives. The group which took part described themselves as born again. Other beliefs centre on Biblical literalism, resurrection, belief in the trinity, the central importance of communion with the Holy Spirit (Patel et al. 1982). The group who do not wished to be named expressly were founded in the late 1980s and have 80-100 members approximately. The main act of worship takes place on Sunday with services and are augmented by prayer/bible study groups during the week as well as Healing services and Life groups, which are in essence religious support and social groups. As a small, independent group, they have less in the way of public image in Ireland, but public knowledge of Born Again Christians may be connected to the activities of Born Again groups in the United States. There is a strong emphasis on personal morality, the sin of homosexuality and abortion, which must be factored into how they may be viewed in Ireland. Numerically small, they have restricted access to local and national representation, and have limited social visibility in Ireland.

There are many diverse groups worldwide which refer to themselves as Druids, but most share the following characteristics. They believe in the harmony and worship of nature, veneration of the environment and its natural cycles, ancestors and ancestral knowledge. There is no set dogma and no central authority. The group which took part in this research referred to themselves as Celtic Druid and based much of their beliefs and practice on what they refer to as the path, or spiritual journey towards the knowledge of the ancestors and the source – which is nature. Various techniques are utilised, such as guided visualisations and a commitment to living in the true time,
which refers to awareness of what is past, hope for the future, but living in the now. There are many feast days – often referred to as the wheel of the year, which celebrate the waxing and waning of nature's cycles, such as the winter and summer solstice (Cunliffe 2010). Ceremonies often take place on ancient sites such as Newgrange in Co. Meath and the participants often wear ceremonial robes or dress. There are no set practices or rites for Druid ceremonies and they are most often at the discretion of the group.

Within Ireland, there are no figures on the number of Druids within Ireland. However, a number of groups have emerged in the past 10 years such as the Irish college of Druids, which may indicate a growing interest in the practice. The Celtic Druid group which took part in this research had around 50 members, but not all considered themselves full-time Druids in relation to the practice of the religion. As a disparate and numerically small group, there is again limited access to social representations and inclusion in inter-faith discussions. There are also some indications that at official level, it may not be taken seriously as a religion, which may be reflected in the reaction of the wider public to the religion (for more information see www.DruidSchool.ie)

Finally, Evangelical groups have a long history in Ireland and there has been an increase in their numbers recently due to the increase in migrants. Similar to Born Again Christians, their faith centres on the acceptance of Jesus Christ in one's life and the literal truth of the bible (Smith 2002). They are numerically quite large in Ireland, but are somewhat disparate within a national context. This is reflected in their access
and representation at social levels in Ireland, both within faith based arenas and within the wider cultural and political milieu (Mitchell and Ganiel 2011).

These eight religious groups vary from each other in beliefs, worldview and practice, some quite radically and I am aware of the disparity within this group as a research collective. This approach could leave my results open to accusations of reductionism in my presentation of religious minority groups. It is not my aim to present these participants as part of a homogeneous research group, but as individuals who have the common experience of discrimination based on their religious background, which is deemed as outside the norm of Irish society. I draw specific attention to their levels of access to various manners of representation and access to social mechanisms, both internationally and nationally in order to present how these groups differ within the Irish context. As discussed, some groups have better access to socially influential mechanisms than others, yet at the individual level in relation to religious discrimination this appears to have little impact, which will be discussed throughout this thesis.

There is also almost no collective approach or initiative within the eight groups to combat religious discrimination at a national level, which appears to be linked to the difficulties of engendering any lasting change within modern Ireland, which also forms a fundamental thread within the interview section of this study. Throughout the study, I will also be examining the perceived power disparity in which this process operates, linking the study back to the wider Irish social environment and the machinations of religious based stigma. By focussing on how such an identity is controlled, we can explore the lived effects of discrimination and the manner in which
the individuals feel stigmatised. This approach crucially makes fundamental links between the experience of discriminatory acts and the designation of stigma, by connecting the lived experience of individuals to the manner in which Irish society reinforces and perpetuates discriminatory and stigmatising mechanisms.

Therefore, this study provides insight into the experience and reaction of non ethno-religious minority groups in a monolithic religious environment to religious based discrimination and stigmatisation. The research aims to answer previous calls to create more theoretical links between discrimination and stigma, and between the micro-processes of stigma and the structural components of discrimination. In addition, I chose to adopt a multi-faith, approach in order to explore affiliation specific experiences of stigma and discrimination and compare the results. This will provide an overview of how various groups feel they are treated and perceived in Ireland, as well as highlighting how the religious sphere in Irish society has become a contested space, where differentiation, religious pluralism, secularism and cultural Catholicism vie to retain or obtain social influence or power. I will be taking a Foucauldian (1991) approach to this which will examine how certain knowledge or “truths” can become more powerful or influential in a society and how this changing social space may be connected to the discrimination reported in this thesis.

The members of small religious groups who took part in this research clearly described how difficult a terrain this is to negotiate successfully and as the second half of this thesis will show, various techniques were adopted by individuals. As I discuss in chapter one and two of this thesis, power is at the heart of discrimination and stigma assignation, but knowledge is also a crucial component in how that power is
made apparent and utilised within society. A Foucauldian approach to the emerging situation in Ireland provides a paradigm from which to consolidate the findings of this thesis. Foucault’s (1991) conceptions of power and knowledge have led away from the traditional understandings of power as coercion or as a structural element, towards a more diffuse and pervasive view which declares that “power is everywhere” and “comes from everything” (Foucault 1998, p.63), creating a metapower or what he refers to as a regime of truth. In chapter four, I explored the Irish social context and the role which power plays in relation to stigma and discrimination. This laid the foundations for the interviews which followed and displayed how knowledge and power in a Foucauldian sense operates within this contested social space. In the past, the knowledge and power which a Catholic habitus (Inglis 1987, 1998; Anderson 2010) instilled provided passage through what was a much less contested space, but in contemporary Ireland, such knowledge and power are much more reactive and nuanced. The interviews in chapter seven and eight show clearly how such knowledge is required and utilised within certain situations and how mistakes are liable to be punished. This power is no longer concentrated within the institutional Catholic Church, but has become embodied and diffused, in knowledge and in discourse (Foucault 1991). This perspective enables an understanding of how the various elements – neo-secularisation, secularism, cultural Catholicism and religious pluralism are contesting the space where “power is diffuse rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than processes, discursive rather than purely coercive and constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them” (Gaventa 2003, p.1). It is this dispersal of power and the contest for the rights and knowledge which accompany it, which form a crucial component to our understanding of the discrimination and stigma reported in this thesis. Therefore, in order to understand religious stigma and
discrimination in an Irish context, it is crucial that we build on our understandings of manner in which power dispersed is not power dissipated, and how it forms a crucial link between the macro and micro-levels of society and the reproductions of discrimination in an Irish context.

Primarily, I uncovered issues relating to an embedded cultural Catholicism within Irish society which has led to others outside of this to be designated as "other" and has resulted in the stigmatisation and discrimination of such members. Despite the prevalence of this cultural Catholicism, the Irish religious environment appears to have changed from fervent displays of public adherence to a more "low-temperature" (Bouma 2011, 1998), where varying degrees of secularism, pluralism and individualism share a contested space. Underpinning this space is a nexus of locally-situated knowledge and power, where those that can produce a regime of truth can further their agenda and a by-product of this is the power to stigmatise. The interviewees explained how those that diverge from this norm can become socially excluded, and become individuals to be avoided and ridiculed, resulting in loss of social status and feelings of social isolation. Many felt that their religion was open to ridicule which would be taken more seriously if they were of an ethnic religious background due to heightened awareness of discrimination based on ethno-religious factors. Therefore, they concealed their identity in order to avoid perceived social sanctions and many retreated into their own religious communities which they considered safe. This also had the effect of increasing the sense of social distance between minority religious groups and the majority, making them less understood and more open to the process of othering, resulting in stigma and discrimination. Most of
the participants feel very distressed by their experiences, but felt they had nowhere to turn to as it would not be taken seriously.

Strongly connected to this environment is the prevalence of religious stereotypes, based on negative and often incorrect foundations, which the participants found were influential in all aspects of Irish life. I was particularly interested in looking at this aspect of the research, as it allows a clear exploration of the manner in which power is utilised in the designation of stigma at a general level, but experienced as discrimination at an individual level. Analysis of the interview data, along with numerous informal discussions with other group members, indicated perceptions of official sanction within the maintenance of these stereotypes, and their sense of powerlessness at countering them. Again, despite the vast differences in the groups, the stereotypes encountered were fundamentally similar, which related member gullibility, with a contradictory predatory nature, even in groups which did not publically evangelise.

This thesis contributes to our understanding of the issue in an Irish context, providing an affiliation specific look at the effects, and building on the gaps identified in international research. My findings seem to confirm both Weller's (2001, 2011) and Bouma's (1998, 2011) suspicions regarding levels of discrimination among pagan, white Christian and non-traditional religious groups, and how the issue of ethnicity and/or race may be obfuscating the issues of religious discrimination. Conversely, it would appear that changes at formal levels, such as an organisational level are having an effect as the participants reported very little discrimination in these areas, such as with banks or hospitals. Therefore, it is the more general public attitude towards small
religious groups that appears to be in need of review. This review needs to be linked to the Irish experience of socialisation and the many agencies which are connected to the transmission of cultural messages relating to such groups. Implicit in this complex is the issue of the power to stigmatise, which needs to be addressed as research both here and abroad finds that non ethno-religious discrimination is not taken seriously or acted upon as quickly as discrimination in other sectors. By making explicit research connections between the actions of discrimination and societal power dynamics inherent in the designation of stigma, this thesis contributes to our understanding of the machinations of stigma within micro-interactions.

**Thesis Structure**
This thesis is arranged into the following chapters:

**Chapter Two** explores the definition of religion, religious discrimination and religious stigmatisation within this study. As I argue that stigma and discrimination are inherently linked, and following Link and Phelan (2001), the presence of one almost always indicated the occurrence of the other, this section will concentrate on the discrimination dimension, as this has been far more widely researched within social science, and provides a foundation and context from which to view this study. This will be followed by an overview of the social theories of discrimination, focussing on the creation of in-groups and out-groups and the link between these cognitive and social processes, discriminatory behaviour and stigma designation. The final section of this chapter will look at the findings of empirical research into religious discrimination, exploring the findings and the current gaps in our knowledge.
Chapter Three presents the findings of the survey research based on religious discrimination and stigmatisation. The first section explores the methodology, research methods, sampling, as well as research ethics and quality. The second section presents the findings; first as a general overview of the research groups and second; broken down by religious affiliation. The final section discusses and analyses the findings and the implications that this has for our present understanding of religious discrimination and stigmatisation in Ireland. Chapter Four links the findings and analysis of the survey to possible factors in the Irish social environment. The emphasis in this chapter is on an exploration of power relationships and to provide the background to the central argument, which states that minority religions are stigmatised and discriminated against due to the embedded "normalcy" of the Roman Catholic Church. In the second section, I explore how this normalcy is contrasted with minority religions in Ireland, through an exploration of the casting of such religions as "cults", by anti-cultic organisations, the media, by the church and in consequence popular discourse, leading to the development of a stigma label. The final section explores in detail a Goffmanian approach to the management of a spoilt identity, what such an exploration can tell us and the connection to religious discrimination, the macro-environment and the aims of this research, and the contested space in which this research takes place.

Chapter Five provides a methodological overview of the qualitative section of this research. The chapter begins with an explanation of my chosen research strategies, before laying out the sampling method used, the interview techniques and how I deal with issues of quality and ethics. Chapter Six presents the findings of the qualitative interviews. First, I introduce the eight research participants, after which I explore the
perceptions and assumptions which they all displayed in their religious identity management. These perceptions and assumptions are linked expressly to stereotypes which they identified as persistent in Irish society and as such form a concrete link between the manner in which the interviewees manage their identity at the micro-level and the wider social environment. This chapter provides the underpinnings of the identity strategies which follow.

Chapter Seven describes the risk-avoiding identity strategies put forward by the participants in response to their environment. These were broken down into three categories; direct and indirect passing, self-removal from others and self-removal from religious discourse. In my discussion and analysis, I expressly connect these actions at the micro-level to the Irish social context, and explore what they reveal about stigma and discrimination. Chapter Eight describes the risk-taking techniques as discussed by the interviewees. These again could be broken down into three sections; indirect revelations, direct challenging of negative religious discourse and direct revelation of their religious identity. Following this, I discuss what actions can contribute to our understanding of religious stigma and discrimination in this context. In the final section, I connect the findings of the interviews to the survey results in order to explore the overall findings of this thesis and where it fits within the research field. Chapter Nine concludes the thesis, providing a summation of the thesis findings, further recommendations for research, the limitations of this study and its contribution to the field of research on religious stigma and discrimination.

In the past decade there has been a growing awareness of discrimination and research into the experience of such (Russell at al. 2008, Woodhead 2011) and has been
reflected in the enactment of equality legislation and support bodies, such as the Equality Authority and Equality tribunal in Ireland. Yet, we know very little of the lived experience of religious based discrimination and the effects on the individuals involved. Russell et al. (2008) in looking at the Irish situation notes that

... while our expectations of a fair society for all have become increasingly well defined in recent years, relatively little is known of the nature or extent of the problem of discrimination in Ireland; how many people are discriminated against and who is most vulnerable? Where does such discrimination occur, how often does it occur, and what type of impact does the experience have on the victim? (p.1)

This thesis explores a section of Irish society which has not been explored in detail to date and also contributes to our understanding of the process of religious based discrimination. By taking an affiliation specific approach, the result of this study provide a detailed exploration of the perception of religious discrimination in Ireland, and contributes to work in the field by linking the micro-processes of day-to-day life to the wider structural environment in which it takes place. This research will explore how the religious sphere in Ireland has become a contested space, and where various social entities compete to influence this sphere and extend this influence to wider society, and how graduations of power and knowledge are connected to the machinations of stigma and discrimination. The presence of discrimination of any kind is problematic within a society, as it engenders a sense of injustice and marginalisation in those who experience it. However, this injustice is only one facet of the problem. When these images of discrimination are seemingly perpetuated and sanctioned by the dominant social institutions, the social divisions between the in-groups and the out groups become "hardened" and entrenched within a society. This justified "othering" often becomes part of the social collective conscience resulting in negative attitudes which are very difficult to challenge and change. As Cox (2010a,
p.108) points out "anti-cult ignorance, aggressive secularism, sectarian intolerance, misinformation, prejudice and bigotry persists in Ireland" but we do not know whom it effects, to what extent and how it operates. It is the aim of this thesis to take the first steps towards understanding these issues.
Chapter Two
Religious Discrimination and Stigma

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I outlined the aims and objectives of this multi-faith exploration of religious stigmatisation and discrimination in Ireland, and gave a brief outline of Ireland's religious context, research on discrimination in Ireland and an overview of the groups which are part of this study. In this chapter, I will discuss the definitions of religion, religious stigmatisation and discrimination which underpin this thesis and describe how this research draws conceptual links between stigma and discrimination. Following this, I will explore the social theories on why discrimination and stigma occur, in order to contextualise the discussion and to frame the analysis which arcs throughout this thesis.

The final section will explore empirical research into religious discrimination and stigmatisation, in which I will discuss their findings and the current gaps in our sociological knowledge. I will end this chapter by drawing together both the theoretical and empirical discussions and I will argue why an understanding of the experience of religious minorities in Ireland is important within the changing Irish and global religious context. I will begin this chapter by discussing what is meant by the term "religion" within the parameters of this study.
The Definition of Religion – Debates

As the central issue underpinning this thesis is the experience of negative social reactions based on membership of certain religious groups in Ireland, it is therefore essential at the outset to define what precisely I am referring to in terms of "religion". It is a term which has been of considerable debate throughout the history of sociology (Durkheim 1915; Weber 1922; Berger 1967, 1974; Glock and Stark 1965) and has been ignited again within contemporary research as various new (and old) types of religion become more socially visible and influential (Hervieu-Léger 1989; Bromley 2004; Dawson 2006; MacKinnon 2002). Perhaps the essence of this debate can be best captured by Simmel in his statement that;

... (n)o light will ever be cast in the sybillic twilight that, for us, surrounds the origin and nature of religion as long as we insist on approaching it as a single problem requiring only a single word for its solution. Thus far no one has been able to offer a definition of religion that is both precise and sufficiently comprehensive. No one has been able to grasp its ultimate essence.

(Simmel 1997 [1898], p.101).

Weller (2011) reiterates Simmel's concerns on reaching an accurate, yet comprehensive definition of religion in his review of social research on religious discrimination in Britain from 2000 to 2010. In particular, Weller highlights the growing unease within the research community with the use of "hard and fast distinctions" (2011, p.6) of religion, many of which stem from common sense conceptualisations of religion, as well as the recent emergence of the issue of religion versus belief. With regard to the latter, Weller points to the fact that the...

...notion of belief is currently undergoing considerable evolution in terms of legal understandings and application, especially following the case of Nicholson v Grainger Plc, 2009 in which "environmentalism was deemed to be a philosophical belief"

(emphasis in original) (Weller 2011, p.6).
This is an example of how the concepts of religion and belief are contested and evolving within contemporary discourse, leading to considerable difficulty in forming working definitions. Some have pointed to this definitional issue as an impediment to the production of effective social research on religion, as well as hindering adequate provisions for religious freedom within social policy and legislation (Weller et al. 2000; Hepple and Choudhury 2001; Woodhead and Catto 2009). However, I disagree with this view, as there is evidence of various other complex and contested social concepts such as ethnicity (Weller 2011, p.7), which are utilised and defined within research, legislation and social policy. Therefore, we need to look at the debates on religion and research definitional terms in more detail.

The academic disciplines within which religion has been studied have produced various, field specific definitions of religion and within sociology there has long been a strong link between the dominant methodological metanarratives of the era and the working conceptualisations of religion. For example, in the classical and early period of sociology there is much in the way of positivistic, functional definitions of religion (Comte 1891[2009]; Marx 1843[1970]; Weber 1922; Durkheim 1915[1968]), reflecting the influence of the natural sciences on social investigation, which characterised this period. Many of these early theorists predicted that religion would gradually lose its social importance in the wake of modernity and growing rationalisation, which resulted in the marginalisation of religion within the study of Sociology.

However, this demise failed to materialise and instead the 1960's saw the flourishing of many new and alternative religious groups which revitalised social research in the field. This period also marked a move away from the quest for social metatheories
towards a more qualitative approach and saw the emergence of far more nuanced and individualistic definitions of religion (Beckford 2003; Maguire 2008). The trend towards more fluid, more context specific social categories and definitions culminated with the growth of Postmodern theory (Bahnisch 2001; Swatos et al. 2008) which rejects the idea of universality and all-encompassing metanarratives in the study of the social world, choosing to instead look at the individualistic and fluid nature of modern social life and religion. While the popularity of social research paradigms periodically fluctuate across time and context, within the social study of religion, all three approaches co-exist and provide various avenues for research approaches. This results in multiple ways to frame a sociological definition of a religion or belief system, which are linked to various epistemological standpoints. Therefore, I will not be exploring in-depth the many definitions and debates which have appeared in relation to a social definition of religion. Instead, I will limit my discussion to what has been utilised as a working definition of religion in studies of religious stigmatisation and discrimination within this thesis.

The Definition of Religion within Religious Discrimination Research

Within many social studies of religious discrimination, the definition of religion used most frequently is one which emphasises religion or belief, reflecting the trend emanating from the current wording of Human Rights laws and equality legislation. In the legal field, religion and the definition of such has been approached in various ways. Some nations have attempted to produce acceptance criteria which must be met in order to be labelled as a religious group, such as in France and Russia for example. This approach can be problematic when dealing with the introduction of religions which are not native to a region, while those religions which don’t adhere to the
traditional understandings of a religious organisation can also experience difficulties. Evidence of the deficiencies of this approach as can be seen in the recent attempts by the French Government to ban the Church of Scientology from practicing as a religion in 2009 (BBC 2009), preferring instead to classify it as a sect within France based the manner in which the organisation charges for its services. A change in legislation just prior to the case meant that under French law, a group cannot be forced to disband on the grounds of fraud which was the basis of the case taken against Scientology.

In Ireland, there is no state sanctioned list of recognised religions or belief, nor is there a generally accepted working definition of religion. Under Irish Law, article 44.2.3 of the Irish Constitution states that "the State shall not impose any disabilities or make any discrimination on the ground of religious profession, belief or status". The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2008 enact this Article and specifically outlaw any discriminatory practices relating to or within employment. The definition under Irish law refers specifically to religious belief rather than religion, which includes both an individuals' background or outlook, and therefore also encompasses non-believers within the legal definition. This neatly sidesteps the problematic definition of religion as that which pertains to a belief in a supernatural/divine being, which would eliminate world faiths such as Buddhism or Jainism which are non-theistic (Weller 2011, p.7) several newer religions based on human potential such as scientology (Barker 1989; Partridge 2004; Lewis 2009), or many cyber-based religions (Dawson 2006).

Therefore, the scope and range of contemporary religions makes the working definition of religion a vital research component and it is from the work of others in
the field that best practice in this area can be found. In building the definitional elements of this research, I draw extensively on the work of Weller (2003; 2011) and his approach to religious discrimination, which has been groundbreaking in untangling the phenomena from other possible causal elements, and the work of Woodhead (2011) and Woodhead and Catto (2009) on religion, beliefs and discrimination. I will be discussing these works and their findings in more detail in the following section on discrimination and contemporary research approaches, but in relation to definitional issues, Weller proposes that within the definition of religion there are certain key elements which can be used as a guide, therefore religion is

(… perhaps best understood as a way of living in which some form of identification (either in a weaker or more general sense, or in a stronger and more specific sense of alignment with particular movements, communities and /or organisational form) is often (though not always or necessarily) to be found in conjunction with different forms of 'believing' (in various combinations of certain values, ideal and doctrines) and can be expressed through 'practice' (that is related to shared symbols, rituals, observances and ethical orientations)


However, he also makes that point that the researcher's categorisation as to what constitutes a religion is limiting, and advocates utilising the individual's own articulation as to their religious affiliation or belief system as the least problematic manner in which to approach socio-religious research (Weller 2011, p.7). Therefore, I will be building on these conceptual and definitional elements in order to conduct this research and drawing on Weller's position of self-definition of one's religion or belief as the definition of the participant's religion within this study. This is based upon my belief, which echoes that of Weller, that legal definitions are by definition limited, and to produce effective social research on religious discrimination the scope cannot be "limited to the recording of instances where the legal system has found that
discrimination has occurred" (Weller 2011, p.vi), as indirect discrimination such as polite social exclusion is almost impossible to prosecute legally. In addition, the act of discrimination is no less damaging to the individuals involved should their belief system be deemed either legally or within popular parlance as not constituting a religion.

The eight groups which took part in this multi-faith research represent some religions which are long established elsewhere, such as the Baha'i and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, but also includes groups which are relatively new religions, such as Scientology. There are also participants whose religion does not fit the traditional mould such as Paganism, which is centred on the cycles of nature; and Scientology which concentrates on the achievement of an individual's potential, rather than the worship of a supernatural deity. All eight faiths represented in this study are present in many other nations and are therefore established religions and beliefs systems within Western Europe and the United States, in various conceptualisations. I make this point in order to display the utility of the self-identification approach and the legitimacy of the participant's claim as a religious group. Having defined what I am referring to in relation to religion or belief in this thesis, in the next section I will discuss and define religious discrimination.

**Definition of Religious Discrimination**

Reaching a working definition of what constitutes discrimination is in many ways as difficult and fraught with possibilities as attempting to define religion. While the basic sociological understanding of such an act can be cited as occurring when one person, or group of persons are treated less favourably than others based on a trait, social
identity, or group membership, there are also additional issues to consider in relation to the definition of religious discrimination. For many researchers, the legal definition of discrimination is often seen as the best place to start. As Weller (2001, p.8), Russell et al.(2008) and Hepple and Choudhury (2001, pp.33-40) point out, there has been much innovation and revision of the discrimination laws within Europe in the past decade, due in part to the growing awareness of discrimination and in response to the changes in the ethnic makeup of many nations. While utilising legal definitions can provide a foundation for social research definitions, discrimination and equality legislation is often an evolving process and I argue that such an approach can be problematic, especially as many legal definitions are often system and context specific. It is therefore important to remember that

social research is not concerned merely with recording those instances where the legal system has found that discrimination has occurred…as (m)uch of the research that has been conducted on religious discrimination has in fact addressed the perception or reported experience of religious discrimination

(Weller 2011, p.8, bold in original).

In other words, what an individual may perceive as an act of discrimination may vary widely from the strict legal definition of discrimination, and studies have found that there are often high levels of discrepancy between "actual" and "perceived" discrimination (Weller et al. 2011; 2001), indicating how much more complex the socially articulated experience of religious discrimination may be. This difference between the objective and the subjective experience of a discriminatory act highlights the danger in utilising a legal definition as the sole parameter of research into the subject. As Weller (2011, p. 9) states,

...not everything that individuals may identify as discrimination can, from perspectives other than the private and the subjective, safely be presumed to be discriminatory and even a
One must also bear in mind that there may be discrimination which goes undetected by the individual - in addition to non-deliberate acts on the part of the perpetrator, making it essential to explore beyond a strictly legal definition in order to fully comprehend the experience of perceived and actual discrimination.

**Religious Discrimination: Working Definition**

As Weller points out there is no single, accepted research definition of religious discrimination (Weller 2011, p.11), therefore social researchers have explored various factors which can represent the topic's multiple facets. Woodhead and Catto (2009) use three social factors as their starting point. First, material discrimination or discrimination on a socio-economic basis, which could be in relation to employment or levels of pay received. Second, the act of attitudinal discrimination which covers a range of social attitudes to an individual's religion, such as ridicule, trivialisation, distortion of facts etc., and finally, the dimension of religious hatred. Weller et al. (2001) provides additional elements in their approach, producing a broader scope encompassing unfair treatment on both the basis of religion and the absence of religion. I will be drawing on all of the elements referred by Weller et al. (2001, 2011), Woodhead and Catto (2009) and Woodhead (2011) in order to create the boundaries of my working definition of religious discrimination. I will discuss each of these in turn and the manner in which they are explored in this thesis next.
1. Religious Prejudice
The concept of religious prejudice is based on an attitudinal approach and pertains to
the manner in which one approaches individuals of certain religious beliefs and is
reflected in many social activates. The activities may not be expressly discriminatory,
but may be offensive to individuals and help cement a sense of social exclusion.

2. Religious Hatred
Religious hatred can be defined as a more intense and directed form of attitudinal
response to a religious affiliation, often leading to violence and intimidating
behaviour towards targeted individuals.

3. Religious Disadvantage
This category takes into account various historic social factors which may lead to a
certain privileged relationships between social institutions and religious groups.
Madeley and Eyed (2003) highlight a number of these "privileged" symbiotic
relationships within their study of Europe, declaring the notion of state neutrality in
relation to religion as a "chimera" in many contemporary European states. The study
highlights the manner in which the historical foundation of religions within certain
states can secure access to constitutional, legal and social spheres which are denied to
other religious groups. This can result in religious disadvantage and in certain cases
varying levels of social exclusion, and can have effects in relation to employment,
education and other social factors (Weller 2011, p.13).

4. Direct Religious Discrimination
Religious prejudice and religious hatred may lead to direct religious discrimination,
where one receives less favourable treatment compared to another due to their
religious affiliation. This can often be evidenced in material and/or socio-economic
disadvantage (Woodhead and Catto 2009). This is defined and prohibited by law in
Ireland (Article 44.2.3°).
5. Indirect Religious Discrimination
This is a more subtle form of discrimination. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (2011) in Britain refers to causing disadvantage those of a certain religious category compared with others. This is much harder to definitely prohibit as it may take several forms and is difficult to prove. The scope can be quite wide and may include ridicule, trivialisation, and distortion of facts relating to certain religious categories.

6. Institutional Religionism
This dimension refers to the manner in which the favouring of certain religious traditions or the disadvantage of other religious groups can be found to be embedded within the social institutions of that state.

I will utilise these six dimensions in order to examine discrimination among my research participants. In addition, as discriminatory behaviour is inherently linked through patterns of disadvantage to socially stigmatised identities, I will also be incorporating the dimension of stigma within my working definition of religious discrimination. This aspect is very rarely included into definitions of what constitutes discrimination, yet is an intrinsic part of the phenomena. The processes by which stigma is achieved, following Link and Phelan (2001) is through labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss and discrimination, within a power context which permits stigmatisation to prevail. Therefore, the role of stigma will be placed in direct relation to the exploration of discrimination within this thesis and will provide the foundations for the multifaceted expanded definition which I will explore next.
Table 2.1 Dimensions of Religious Discrimination

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Prejudice</th>
<th>Attitudinal, cause hurt to individuals and is foundational in social exclusion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious Hatred</td>
<td>May grow from religious prejudice, may cause violent behaviour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Disadvantage</td>
<td>Experienced by religious groups which are not from traditional or established churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Religious Discrimination</td>
<td>Deliberately unfair action based on religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Religious Discrimination</td>
<td>The result of unexamined practices or procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutional Religiousism</td>
<td>The result of factors creating a mutually reinforcing environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stigma: Definition and Links to Discrimination

Building on the work of Goffman (1963), stigma research has grown considerably across many disciplines (Link and Phelan 2001), with the term stigma most often defined as a social "mark", "attribute" or "trait" (Stafford and Scott 1986) which is "deeply discredited" (Goffman 1963, p.1). However, such research has often been criticised as being too vaguely defined (Jones et al. 1984) and too focussed on the individual and the micro-effects of being stigmatised, rather than making links to the wider social realm from which it originates (Oliver 1992; Fiske 1988; Link and Phelan 2001). In order to counteract these criticisms and come to a more complete sociological conceptualisation of stigma, Link and Phelan (2001) propose that stigma is best understood in relation to other factors which are also present during negative social reactions, all of which I have discussed in relation to my definitional elements.
of discrimination above. These interrelated elements are labelling, where one is
designated as an in-group or an out-group; connection to negative stereotypes; the
creation of social separation; the loss of social status and resulting acts of
discrimination. Therefore, the patterns of disadvantage engendered by the stigmatised
identity and perceived in discriminatory acts are expressly linked (Link and Phelan

This call for greater research links between stigma and discrimination are reiterated
by Oliver (1992) who states that while micro-level explorations are essential to further
our understanding of the phenomena, there is a need for more "research examining the
sources and consequences of pervasive, socially shaped exclusion from social and
economic life" (cited in Link and Phelan 2001, p.366). This is echoed by Fiske (1998)
who states that far more attention needs to be paid to the structural issues relating to
stigma designation and maintenance. Therefore, within this thesis the definition of
stigma will be based on one of the more comprehensive definitions by Stafford and
Scott (1986, p.80), who define stigma as a "characteristic of persons that is contrary to
a norm of a social unit" with norm referring to "shared belief that a person ought to
behave in a certain way at a certain time" (p. 81). This definition will be placed,
following Link and Phelan (2001), in conjunction with the perception of
discrimination as part of a general pattern of disadvantage, rather than two distinct
concepts, echoing Goffman's reference to stigma as best located between an attribute
and a stereotype (Goffman 1963). This pattern is seen as consisting of five elements
which I explore below.
1. Distinguishing and Labelling Differences

Groups are distinguished and labelled in an oversimplified manner (Tajfel 1981). The labelling itself is temporally and contextually located and is externally designated, creating an out-group as opposed to the in-group.

2. Difference and Negative Attributes

The label and concept of the out-group is linked to stereotypes, which are often negative and emphasis is placed on creating social distance between the groups. This can be linked to automatic pre-cognitions, making such labelling and attribution appear automatic. Other research has highlighted the role which the embedded context plays in this creation of social distance (Crocker et al. 1998).

3. Social Distance

By linking the out-group label to negative traits and stereotypes, there emerges a rationale for the belief that the out-group is very different from the in-group, leading to a "them" and "us" situation. This forms the basis of essential dehumanisation found in stigma designation and discriminatory behaviour, and one becomes one's label, further distancing the stigmatised from shared traits within the in-group.

4. Status Loss and Discrimination

These factors combine to affect the stigmatised groups standing in the social hierarchy, which can range from polite social exclusion to complete shunning. This can lead to stigmatised groups being disadvantaged in relation to the "general profile of life chances like income, education, psychological well-being, housing status,
medical treatment, and health" (Link and Phelan 2001, p.371), resulting in
discriminatory behaviour. This link to discrimination is essential as

...the term stigma cannot hold the meaning we commonly assign to it when this aspect is left
out. In our reasoning, when people are labelled, set apart, and linked to undesirable
characteristics, a rationale is constructed for devaluing, rejecting, and excluding them.
Thus, people are stigmatized when the fact that they are labelled, set apart, and linked to
undesirable characteristics leads them to experience status loss and discrimination

(Link and Phelan 2001, p. 370).

5. Discrimination

These events culminate in the experience of discrimination where one is
disadvantaged based on a certain social identity. Link and Phelan (2001; 1999) point
to individual discrimination where one is personally treated differently based on group
membership. However, they also stress the importance of structural discrimination,
which can exist in the absence of individual discrimination which discreetly privileges
the in-group in its institutions, mindset and promotes cultural stereotypes. This is
especially important in relation to this thesis, as I argue that the implicit privileging of
Roman Catholicism as the expected social norm in Ireland plays an important part in
discrimination experienced by members of minority religions. This discreet
privileging also forms an important link to the socialisation process and the
development of lay theories in relation to stigmatised groups, which is how stigma
and stereotypes are created and maintained (Link and Phelan 2001).

Stigma, Discrimination and Power

Underpinning both stigma and discrimination is the concept of power, as stigma "is
entirely dependent on social, economic, and political power - it takes power to
stigmatize" (Link and Phelan 2001, p.375). This understanding of power allows the
dominant, or in-group in society to designate the norms and standards expected. I highlight this as it has particular resonance within the Irish cultural context within which this research takes place, and mirrors the power structures/stigma paradigm as put forth by Link and Phelan;

Because of the importance of power in stigmatization, it is critical to ask the following set of questions; Do the people who might stigmatize have the power to ensure that the human difference they recognize and label is broadly identified in the culture? Do the people who might confer stigma have the power to ensure that the culture recognizes and deeply accepts the stereotypes they connect to the labelled differences? Do the people who might stigmatize have the power to separate "us" from "them" and to have the designation stick? And do those who might confer stigma control access to major life domains like educational institutions, jobs, housing, and health care in order to put really consequential teeth into the distinctions they draw? To the extent that we can answer yes to these questions, we can expect stigma to result.

(Link and Phelan 2001, p.376)

As discussed in Chapter one, the Irish Roman Catholic Church in Ireland had extended and unfettered access to education, health care, welfare provision and the media (Inglis 1987,1998) and as such I argue has been able to put "really consequential teeth" into the demarcations between them and us in a religious based context. Throughout the analysis which follows, I will explore this aspect of power as an underlying facet of stigmatisation, and the manner and ends to which it is utilised. I will address this issue in more detail in chapter four where I explore the prevailing social environment and the power dynamics relating to small religious groups in a democratic, yet monolithic state. What is important to underscore in this chapter however, is the essential role of power within stigmatisation and discrimination, and the manner in which it will be incorporated into my research framework.

Therefore, my exploration of religious discrimination and stigmatisation in this study will be based on a combination of a stigmatised pattern of disadvantage and the six
dimensions of religious discrimination as discussed and it will be premised on the subjective articulation of the phenomena; or in other words, religious discrimination as perceived by the participants. The working definition of religious stigmatisation and discrimination within this study is

...the convergence of labelling and its links to undesirable characteristics, creating a rationale for devaluing, rejecting, and excluding the individual who consequentially experience status loss and discrimination which is felt or perceived as ‘unfair treatment’ manifested through the reported experience of;

religious prejudice; religious hatred; religious disadvantage; direct religious discrimination; indirect religious discrimination; and ‘institutional religionism’, and linked to perceived actions of disfavour in relation to employment, or services and displays of social attitudes including ridicule, exclusion, religious distortion or trivialisation.

This definition will form the bases of the questions posed throughout the survey, as well as the interview guide which underpins the interview section of the study. I chose to focus on the term discrimination within the survey rather than the term stigma, as the latter is far more recognisable and used in everyday discourse. It is my contention that this extended definition of discrimination will allow greater links to be formed between the individual experience and the wider social context in which it takes place, enabling a multi-level understanding of the phenomena. There is one further important definitional issue which deals with the overlap of religious discrimination and other protected characteristics to address, which I will discuss next.

Overlaps of Religious Discrimination and Other Protected Characteristics

The overlap of various personal/categorical/group characteristics which may be connected to discrimination and stigmatisation is known as intersectionality (Schiek and Lawson 2011; O'Neill, Rice and Douglas 2004; Bagilhole 2009). This refers to the manner in which individual or groups may be treated unfairly based on a
combination of factors, such as ethnicity or religious affiliation. In recent discrimination studies, there has been a strong emphasis on the connections between ethnicity and religion, with many studies centring on ethno-religious groups such as the Islamic, Hindu, and Jewish communities to such an extent that "religion has been seen as certainly a functional and almost, sometimes an instrument reinforcement of a primary category of ethnicity" (Weller 2011, p.10), resulting in the sidelining of the religious element within research. While religion and ethnicity may be separated in a theoretical and analytical sense; in the process of day-to-day interactions, this is not always possible. In addition to the complexity of ethno-religious identities, one must also bear in mind that reactions to such identities are highly context specific and are related to the history of the state. In other words, the manner in which certain personal characteristics such as race, ethnicity or religion are perceived are directly linked to both the history and trajectory of previous religious and migratory patterns. In addition, one must be also cognisant of the manner in which religious groups are socially positioned relative to other religions and the existing social structure (Beckford 1999; Weller 2011) within each social context.

The manner in which some religious affiliations emphasise the close connections between ethnicity, culture and their religious identities such as Judaism, further adds to the complexity of exploring reactions to a specific religious identity. However, Mitchell's (2006) and Stewart's (2009) approach to identity studies argues forcibly for the recognition of religion as a primary social category or determinate in social interactions, which Weller (2011) echoes stating that "it is important not to lose sight of the (discrimination) experience of others where, generally speaking, ethnicity does not play a part" (p.56). Much of the current research explores discrimination towards
Muslims, the Jewish community and other visible or ethno-religious groups, leaving a distinct lack of research into what Weller (2011) refers to as "invisible" groups - namely religious groups which have no outward social identity marker, in terms of dress or ethnicity. Weller also notes the perception that discrimination against non-ethno religious groups, especially white Christians is not taken as seriously as reported discrimination against ethnic groups, and research

...that further explores the continuum of ‘visibility’ and ‘invisibility’ in relation to how ‘religious discrimination’ occurs might be a fruitful focus. Such research might include an exploration of the position of Pagans and New Religious Movements in particular.

(Weller 2011, p.ix)

It is my aim to explore in this study the perceived social reactions based primarily on an individual's religious identity within Ireland. Therefore, I attempted to isolate (as much as one can within social research), the participant's experiences based on their membership of certain religious groups. To achieve this, I chose groups which were not intrinsically ethno-religious and which were largely populated by white people, in an attempt to study groups who were generally parallel to the vast majority of Irish people's social identities, with the exception of their religious affiliation. In other words, I endeavoured to eliminate other social characteristics such as race, ethnicity, religious dress, etc. in order to explore reactions based on religious affiliation. These groups did, of course, contain people who were of other ethnic and national background than white Irish, but the numbers were quite small. My survey, which targeted eight groups throughout Ireland, received 1012 replies, of which 989 were valid and provided a sample containing over 70% with a white, Irish background. Therefore, my purposive sampling technique provided a sample with the required social characteristics.
Social Theories on Discrimination

Having laid out the conceptual elements of what constitutes the definition and scope of religious discrimination and stigmatisation within this thesis, it is essential to give an overview of the theoretical perspectives relating to negative social reactions and the theories will be utilised in this study. At its most fundamental level, discrimination and stigmatisation centres on the prejudicial treatment of certain elements or social identities possessed by individuals as less favourable by the majority. There are several social theories which seek to explain why this occurs and how discriminatory behaviour may be dealt with. Firstly, the functionalist perspective views society as an integrated, functional whole striving for harmony and is based on the notion of social consensus, where the vast majority agree on what is best for society and the means of achieving and maintaining this state (Oliver and Barnes 1998; Farley 2005). Those who are in the minority are viewed as possible causes of dysfunction and as a threat to the stability of the whole, leading to discriminatory behaviour in order to maintain the status quo. Functionalism, especially Parsonian theory (Parsons 1961) sees the solution as minority assimilation into the majority society, therefore eliminating the threat and returning to equilibrium. This perspective has been widely critiqued due to its emphasis on the maintenance of majority privilege and the view that the whole is greater than the sum of the individuals who populate it.

However, this is not to say that such an approach is without merit. This perspective could be a useful tool in exploring the Irish case of religious. Within Ireland in 2011, 84.2% of the population declared themselves as Roman Catholic (CSO 2012), and the Catholic Church has enjoyed considerable influence within social spheres such as education, health, and social policy throughout the history of the state (Inglis 1987,
1998; Donnelly and Inglis 2010). The lack of options within services, such as
education, in Ireland for minority religions or those of no religion has become a
serious issue, and has led to the monitoring of the situation by the United Nations
Committee on the Elimination of Racism and Discrimination (CERD 2005). Despite
calls since 2005 from the UN for Ireland to establish more non-religious schools (Irish
Human Rights Commission Report 2010), very little has been done in this area to
date. It is my contention, that much of the social attitudes towards those of other
religions in Ireland are transmitted via socialisation, through the media, education and
other social avenues. This privileging of the Roman Catholic affiliation as the
accepted norm within Irish social life has, I believe, a direct influence on the portrayal
of small religious groups as "out-groups" and is reinforced through Irish society,
creating a stigmatised social identity and resulting in discriminatory behaviour
towards such groups.

An alternative to such a functionalist approach is to explore discrimination from a
conflict perspective, which views discrimination as ultimately tied to class. Again, it
is the most powerful class within society which may use and foster prejudice and
discrimination in order to maintain their own rights and privileges at the expense of
the minority groups. Conflict theorists believe that it is only by tackling class
discrimination in relation to power, production and political influence that all forms of
discrimination may be eradicated (Collins 1971; Newman 1973). Such an approach
has been critiqued on the grounds of economic reductionism and overemphasis on the
negative elements of human society (Brown 2011; Hawkins 1987) and I feel that to
wholly adopt such an approach within this research would disregard many essential
micro-elements, such as the lived experience of religious discrimination
There is however, a third way to frame this research by utilising the theories of Symbolic Interactionalism and Social Identity theory. I argue that by exploring identity within an individual is treated and perceived, we can uncover threads of the wider societal response to that specific identity trait and gain a greater understanding of minority religious discrimination in Ireland. In addition, a micro-analysis can also examine the perception of power exerted by the majority on small groups and shed light on the concept of religious disadvantage at a personal level. I will explore the Goffmanian approach to symbolic Interactionalism in chapter four, which will underpin the qualitative section of this thesis, however at a macro-level this is based on in-group/out-group dynamics which I will discuss next.

**Theories of Identity, Discrimination and Stigmatisation**

Identity theories of prejudice and discrimination use various approaches to understand how and why groups develop negative attitudes towards other social groups, with most centring on the presentation and perception of both individual and intergroup identities. While identity as a conceptual label may be relatively new (Gleeson 1983) the notion of each of us having a sense of self originated with William James' (1890) concept of the social self. This was later developed by C.H. Cooley (1902) who explored our “looking glass” self, which is based on how our sense of self is created through interpersonal relationships within society and the perceptions of others. G.H. Mead (1934) extended the scope to include identity dynamics, tracing the process by which a sense of self can be conceived as constant yet changeable within interactions.

More recently, Erikson’s theory of identity (1959) clearly acknowledges the importance of this interplay between an individual's personality framework and the
social framework through which it navigates, stating that a functioning, healthy identity depends on coherence with various group values and identity. Therefore, a social identity has traditionally been predicated on the ability of the individual to be both an individual, a member of various groups and also belong to a wider, social community. Much of the sociological based research on identity stems from this juncture, with the internalisation of social group membership being seen as a foundational part of one’s self construct and hence one’s identity (Tajfel 1981), developing "in-groups" which are seen as socially desirable to the individual, and "out-groups" which are not.

**In-Group, Out Group Dynamics and Discrimination**

Allport's (1954) exploration of the social dynamics of in-groups and out-groups provides a sound theoretical basis for understanding how and why social prejudice and discrimination occurs. Based on the principle of social categorisation and the tendency for individuals to form groups based on shared characteristics, it explores how stratification can lead to negative othering, superiority and prejudice. Therefore, as humans we divide our social worlds into "in-groups", which are social groups with which we share traits and goals, and "out-groups" which are perceived as different, and/or socially undesirable. Studies have shown that we consciously and unconsciously use these categorisations to form evaluations of others, often incorrectly (Aboud 2003; Alexander et al. 2005; Haslam et al. 1999) and tend to over-generalise the traits of the out-groups, i.e. "All Americans are the same", (Cottrell and Neuberg 2005; Alexander et al. 1999). Research has also found over-estimations of the distance between one’s in-groups and the out-group, i.e. "They are nothing like us" (Crabtree et al. 2010; Locksley et al. 1980; Campbell 1967). It is this process of
"othering" which Allport points to as the starting point for stereotyping, prejudicial attitudes and acts of discrimination. To relate this theory to religion in the Irish context, since official census records began on religion in 1861 (McCourt 2011, p.30), the Roman Catholic religious affiliation has been the largest religious denomination within the state. The next largest religious groups within the Republic of Ireland are Protestant affiliations, namely Church of Ireland (2.8%), Orthodox (1 %,), Presbyterian (0.5%) and Methodist (.15%). Therefore, it would not be altogether surprising if these religious affiliations were cast as out-groups by the Catholic majority.

Yet despite the turbulent history of conflict between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, surveys conducted in the 1970's, 80's and 90's indicate that these Protestant groups are viewed as "in-groups" in Ireland by the vast majority (MacGreil 1977; 1988; 2011), while all other religious denominations covered in the surveys were portrayed as out-groups. This can be surmised as based on familiarity and shared social traits, despite religious differences between Roman Catholics and Protestants. One must also bear in mind that until recently, religious groups outside of these two affiliations were numerically very small, but were also not socially visible, leading to an increased perception of social distance from the majority. Therefore, I will be using this paradigm of in-group/out-group dynamics in terms of structural explorations within Irish society, as well as its impact on individual identity in order to underpin this study. As other religious groups in Ireland continue to grow (along with Atheist, Humanists, and Agnostic systems of belief) in numbers and social visibility, the response from the majority could be one of increased social distance, leading to prejudice and discrimination.
My choice to focus on discrimination and stigmatisation as a consequence of negative social identities within this thesis correlates with a growing concern about identity within academic and popular discourse, referred to as "veritable discursive explosion around the concept of identity" (Hall 1996, p.1). This turn to identity has had an influence on how we now approach social and political issues. Within the political arena, the awareness of specific identities has come to the fore within policy provision, and is reflected in the struggle within many nations to legitimise and represent many minority identities (Rouse 1995). Therefore, we can see that this heightened awareness of identity has become a focal point within our conceptualisation of social relationships; at one level between the individual and the collective, but also as a lens through which to examine the dynamics between the cultural and the political and the individual and the state. Yet, the importance of a religious identity or in particular a non ethno-religious identity has been downplayed or ignored, especially in the period following the terrorist attacks on the US in 2001 (Weller 2011; Bouma 1998; Bouma et al. 2011).

As religion is almost always a collective activity in some form, the development of identity theory should have contributed to our comprehension of the dynamics of religious identity within an individual/group nexus. However, the majority of studies have omitted to include religion as a foundational identity for either groups or individuals on society (Appiah and Gates 1995; Frable 1997; Howard 2000), with a greater research emphasis being place on exploring gender, ethnicity and class. There have been some studies within the sociology of religion on the dynamics between religion and group identity with particular emphasis on the role it plays in the maintenance of solidarity, especially among immigrant communities (Ebaugh and
However, within these investigations the focus has been on the connection between ethnicity and religion rather than religion exclusively, finding that religion plays a vital role in the continuation and preservation of traditional ethnic and cultural practices, rather than majority/minority dynamics.

In this study, I propose that a synthesis of in-group/out-group dynamics, stigmatisation and an analysis of identity strategies of these out-groups can help best understand how religious discrimination can occur and the reactions of those who experience it. This will also allow theoretical links to be made between the micro-level, through explorations of individual identity management and the macro social context, reflecting my use of an extended definition of discrimination and stigmatisation and providing a holistic approach to the phenomena. Having laid the theoretical foundations for this study, I will now explore the current state of the field of research into religious research in order to situate this thesis, its aims and findings.

**International Research into Religious Discrimination**

Recent geo-political events, particularly related to the Middle East, have placed religion and our social understandings of it back on the research agenda. Such events, coupled with greater human mobility and increasingly diverse populations have led to a growing need for research into religious discrimination. Linda Woodhead's (2011) review of research on religion, discrimination and good relations in the United Kingdom reflects on the "explosion of academic research on topics of religion, equality and discrimination – and to a lesser extent, good relations – in the last few years" (p.3). There has been much research into religion and identity among the
Muslim communities (Hopkins 2009; Ryan, Kofman, and Banfi 2009; Malik 2010), various Sheik and Indian denominations (Purewal and Kalra 2010; Beckford et al. 2006), which have focussed on the intersectionality of race, ethnicity and religion. However, due to recent events such as the 9/11 attacks and subsequent geo-political events within the Middle East, much of the international focus within discrimination research has been on ethno-religious identities and their reception within various, often Western societies (Rippy and Newman 2006; Weller 2006; Sheikh et al. 2012; Scharbrodt 2011). While this is essential research in its own right, others highlight the lack of research focus on non ethno-religious groups and point to the need to untangle the social reaction to ethnicity or ethno-religious identity in order to explore reactions on a purely religious basis (Mitchell 2006; Woodhead 2009; Weller 2011).

To my knowledge, there has been little or no research on social reactions to Paganism, Wicca or other non-traditional minority religions, such as Scientology, UFO-based religions such as Raelianism, or longer established religious groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses. Many cite the small numbers which make up these minorities as the cause of the dearth of research in these areas. Yet, I argue that it is essential that we have a sociological understanding of social reactions to these religious groups, the levels of prejudice and discrimination which takes place and also the effect that such social behaviour can have on the individuals involved. As religious pluralism and the boundaries of "religion" are continuously evolving, research into this area is essential, as the discrimination of any sector of society has a detrimental effect on that society. Therefore, I echo Woodhead's (2011, p.5) belief that "academic specialists can play an important role ..., assessing the consequences and defensibility, and suggesting
alternative approaches to the resolution of such conflicts"; and as such are deserving of their place on the social research agenda.

There have been some national or continent wide reports and reviews on religious discrimination which highlight the concern with the growth and consequences of such intolerance. Within the United States, there has a marked increase in the reported incidents of discrimination based on a Muslim background since 9/11, as well as sporadic incidents of anti-Semitism (Pew Institute 2010). Outside of ethno-religious identities, there has been some evidence of high levels of hostility toward the Mormon community (Pew Institute 2012), with over 46% reporting some experience of discrimination on religious grounds. Recent research has also indicated rising intolerance and discrimination against Pagans/Wiccan based religions within both civic and political spheres (Shuck 2000; Starhawk 1989; 1997), as well as in relation to those who claim No Religion or Atheists (Martinez 2012). Within popular discourse and media reports, there has been growing concern with discrimination against Christians in the United States, with the emergence of the term "Christophobia" within media discussions on negative social attitudes towards Christian elements (Ali 2012). Krattermaker (2007) suggest reports in the United States regarding discrimination against Christians is over exaggerated, but more research would be required to explore the extent of the issue, as well as any racial and contextual elements involved.

Weller's review of a decade of research in the field within the United Kingdom (2011) also finds a wide range of work exploring the experience of Muslim and Jewish communities in Britain, with a strong emphasis on the ethno-religious aspects. Those
studies which deal more prominently with discrimination on a religious basis have focussed on how various religious groups access education (Li, Devine, and Heath 2008), health (Karlsen and Nazroo 2001), prison treatment (Beckford 2007; 2004), as well as studies of the Spirituality of the excluded such as within the Roma Community (Vincett and Olson forthcoming) and reactions to the display of religious symbols in public spaces (Evans 2009; Cumper and Lewis 2009). The review however, also highlights the lack of research in certain areas, especially in relation to minority Christian groups, various New Religious Movements and Pagans, many of whom had previously reported high levels of social hostility based on their religious affiliation. Weller also draws attention to the need for consistent research in all areas of religious based research, as many studies are essentially episodic in nature, making any longitudinal study of oscillations in discriminatory behaviour quite difficult (Weller et al. 2001, p.vi-viii).

Within the broader European context, a review of religious discrimination in Europe by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) concludes that "(r)eligious discrimination is a problem that is increasingly coming to the fore in today’s European societies" (ENAR 2007, p.3), and points to the lack of research into the area. This is despite one notable Europe wide survey, the European Values Study (2007) revealing that over 73% of Europeans belong to some religious denomination, and over 44% of the survey professed the belief that religious discrimination is widespread within Europe. Again, as we have already seen in relation to religious discrimination in the United States and Britain, most of the research in a European context has large overlaps with other protected characteristics, such as ethnicity or race leaving it "often difficult to distinguish between discrimination on the grounds of
religion and discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin" (ENAR 2007, p.3). Many of the studies have focussed on Islamophobia (Saz 2011; Fekete and Sivanandan 2009; Fekete 2008; Werbner 2005; Jensen 2010) or attitudes towards the Jewish community (Cohen et al. 2009; Pulzer 1998; Bunzl 2005), which dilutes the findings in terms of primary religious discrimination. In terms of protection from discrimination, the report notes that many European nations have since the 1990's implemented legislation in relation to the protection of religious freedom, but also highlights the vast differences between member states in relation to religious numbers and state approaches. For example, the state of Russia refuses to allow the Church of Scientology to register as a religion within the state, yet is free to claim its religious status within certain other European nations (ENAR 2007, p.6). In addition, the complex nature of the various legal positions and the gaps in anti-discrimination legislation throughout the continent, point to the need for the European Union to perhaps propose a more comprehensive, extensive legislation on religious discrimination. This points to a real need for raised public awareness and education in relation to religious diversity, in order that society can help "bridge the gap between the legal text and the reality facing religious groups and individuals" (ENAR 2007, p.20). The report concludes that the

...increasing visibility of religious diversity in Europe has been accompanied by a rise in discrimination and prejudice against ethnic and religious minorities. While a great deal of progress has been made, discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin and religion is still a problem for many people in our societies, although this is difficult to measure accurately due to a lack of data on the religious composition of the population of the EU, particularly as regards minority religions

(ENAR 2007 p.22).
What is becoming increasingly apparent in both academic and policy overviews is the ongoing importance of religion within contemporary society. In particular the fact that minority religions although

...small in number, are of disproportionate significance in contemporary society, and are likely to continue to be so. They have a symbolic as well as a real significance. Thus, even micro-studies are helping to illuminate pieces in a much wider picture, whose main outlines are starting to come into clearer focus

(Woodhead 2011, p.5).

Therefore, this research will provide both an overview and some individual insights into this lived experience of the eight minority religious groups the Republic of Ireland and will aim to focus primarily on religion rather than ethnic or racial characteristics. Although the eight groups who take part in this research form a tiny fraction of the Irish population, I argue that their experiences will allow an important insight into the wider issues which underpin negative social reactions and crucially will allow an insight to the perceived social attitude towards such groups.

Research in Canada has shown some striking similarities to the Irish situation (Seljack 2008; Seljack and Bramadat 2008). There has been increased migration within the last ten years in Canada which has resulted in the growth of new and previously established minority religions, reflecting the Irish experience. Nationwide research has uncovered two main factors which appeared strongly linked to the growth of religious intolerance in Canada. Firstly, the authors underline the emergence of a "closed secularism", which refers to an implicit social attitude which holds the view that "all religions are essentially unenlightened, tribal, anti-egalitarian and potentially violent" (p.4). While I question the validity of the assumption of violence, media explorations of religion within Canada have found many instances of the framing of religion as essentially unmodern and unenlightened (Haskell 2007; Wiseman 2009;
Lefebvre and Guyver 2009). Second, Canada, like Ireland, has a Roman Catholic majority and there is a strong historical precedence which infers that "To be a Good Canadian is to be a Good Christian" (Seljack and Bramadat 2008, p.14). There is evidence that this social expectation is somewhat still relevant today, with the researchers highlighting the lack of separation of Church and State (Seljack et al. 2007; 2008) and the high levels of Christian privilege at all levels of society, essentially sidelining all other religious minorities, which has much in common with the Irish context as discussed in Chapter One. These two factors have led to a paradoxical juxtaposition within Canadian society, mixing Christian expectation and privilege with implicit secularity, which I will argue has also become the case in Ireland. With projections of further population increases forecast for Canada, the research conclusions call for explorations into the causes, experiences and reactions to such discrimination in order to foster a more inclusive, harmonious multi-faith state. While the rate of migration in Ireland may have reversed, the heterogeneity which characterised the state in the past has been altered, and must also be addressed so that Ireland can develop true religious diversity.

As well as having much in common with the Canadian experience, Ireland also displays some similarities to recent findings on religious discrimination in Australia (Bouma et al. 2011; Bouma et al. 1999). The change in Irish religiosity from public and fervent (Inglis 1987) to compartmentalised and indifferent (MacGreil 2011) has strong resonances with Bouma's (1999) research on religious attitudes in Australia, and the expectation of "low temperature" religion", which finds that

...religion is most tolerated when it is not obvious, not worn, not demonstrable, does not interfere with ordinary life by dietary or feast/fast days, or special clothing; so long as it is private and unnoticeable

(Bouma 1999, p.8).
In a related report on tolerance of religion within Australia, Bouma (2011) finds substantial levels of discrimination in relation to Muslims as is the case with almost all research within a Western context, but also points to high levels of discrimination, prejudice and social and political underrepresentation in relation to those of Pagan denominations, certain orthodox Christian groups, Scientologists and the Baha'i. There were again concerns raised over implicit assumptions of secularism within contemporary discourse, resulting in the framing of religion as unmodern, as well as the presentation of mainstream Christian (that is Roman Catholic and main Protestant denominations) as the expected norm. The study shows, like the Canadian situation, the social expectation of mainstream Christianity, but with an implicit secular attitude to religion, which has I argue much in common with the current Irish experience. It is only by exploring and acknowledging this juxtaposition in the current national psyche, that we, like Australia can start making provisions for our changing religious landscape. Bouma concludes his report with an emphasis on the need for education on religious diversity as "critical", as well as engaging all partners in the civic and political spheres. Crucially, despite the depth and scope of the Australian report, the author feels that the "methodology employed did not enable the research team to measure the weight behind each voice" (Bouma et al. 2011, p.82), which emphasises the limitations of survey and structured interviews in reaching the more complex and nuanced issues. Therefore, I chose in this study to blend survey research with in-depth, phenomenological interviews in order to try to explore such factors in more detail.

Overall, international research into religious discrimination has highlighted the lack of consistent research into this area, particularly in relation to non-ethno religious
identities, which explores the context and wider meso and macro social environments within which this discrimination takes place. There is also very little research into the lived experience of discrimination, which takes a qualitative look at the effects on the individuals and their response to such actions. I feel that my mixed methodological approach will help build on the foundations of these international findings, providing an overview of religious discrimination, as well as providing an in-depth qualitative exploration of the lived experience of such. By concentrating on non ethno-religious groups, I will also be able to explore discrimination towards "invisible" religious groups and the reality of implicit secularism in contemporary Ireland. I argue that only by understanding the true effects of these social actions that religious discrimination, particularly among non ethno-religious groups, will be taken seriously and that effective social policy and civic enactment can be implemented.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I laid out what is meant in this study by the definitional terms religion religious discrimination and stigma, exploring the difficulties in achieving specific, yet encompassing research definitions. I argued that a multi-level examination of negative social attitudes was best served by combining the dimensions of discrimination with the processes of stigmatisation. Therefore, I presented my working definition of discrimination based on Woodhead (2011), Woodhead and Catto (2009) and Weller et al.'s (2011) multi-dimensional approach, coupled with Link and Phelan's (2011) stages of stigmatisation. This allows individual experiences to be connected to the wider social structure and power contexts, to provide a comprehensive understanding of religious discrimination and stigma.
The next section reviewed the current field of research on religious discrimination and examined the commonalities and the gaps in our current findings. All of the research discussed examined the high rates of discrimination experienced by the Muslim communities across westernised nations, along with anti-Semitism. However, the growing conflation between religion and ethnicity in social research may skew the factors truly underlying acts of discrimination, and highlighted the lack of research into non ethno-religious groups. Smaller, esoteric groups such as Paganism, certain white Christian groups and non-traditional groups such as Raelianism are mainly absent within social research into discrimination, yet findings indicate that these groups are especially vulnerable to prejudice and negative social reactions. Culturally, there are strong indications in Canada, Australia and Britain of a move towards implicit secularism, juxtaposed with mainstream Christian privileging and expectation, which I will argue to also be the case in Ireland. This can make the social environment hostile to other religious groups on two fronts, adding to the complexity of religious discrimination in an Irish context.

To date, little is known about such discrimination in an Irish context, especially in relation to religions which are not tied to an ethno-religious identity, yet research indicates that discrimination based on religious affiliation could be a social problem in Ireland. In addition, there has been little research into why these groups are so open to discrimination and the day-to-day effects on the individuals involved. Therefore, this thesis will build on international findings relating to the discrimination of “invisible” or non ethno-religious groups, and will provide an affiliation specific exploration of the phenomena, which has often been missing. My research parameters will also extend the usual definition of discrimination to incorporate the definition of stigma,
which will, I argue, provide a more holistic, multi-level approach than legal definitions. This analytical approach strengthens the links between the micro-level of individual experiences and the wider social environment within which discrimination and stigma operate, and allow an exploration of power dynamics, both in the broad Irish context and relatively within the groups. The thesis will also examine the gaps between our official sanctioning of religious freedom and the day-to-day reality of the situation, furthering the questions on ethical relativism and religious tolerance within western democratic societies.

I believe that I have demonstrated the strong need for in-depth analysis of which religious groups in Ireland are affected by negative social attitudes and I will begin to address this with the discussion of my survey findings into eight Irish religious groups in the next chapter. This will provide an overview of incidences, frequency, impact and reaction to their experiences of religious discrimination and thus, provide a contextual basis for the in-depth individual interviews in the second half of this study.
Chapter Three
Survey Methodology and Findings

Introduction

In this chapter I will present the findings of my research survey on the experience of religious discrimination, exploring discrimination in variety of social settings, as well as the effects and reactions to discrimination, which deals more directly with the generation of stigma. The results also provide information relating to the stigmatisation of religious identities, and the social reactions encountered in Irish society. Having explored the current research in the field, I chose to employ a mixed methods approach, blending survey research with qualitative interviews for the following reasons. The survey element provides an overview of the experience of discrimination within the eight groups, exploring the frequency, impact, context and impact of negative social reactions. These results provide a snapshot of their experiences in Ireland, allowing a breakdown of the results by religious denominations to further investigate the phenomena, as well as providing context for the in-depth interviews which follow.

I chose to explore as much as was possible the experience of religious discrimination and avoid ethno-religious identities which can result in layers of intersectionality blurring the causes of discrimination. Therefore, the eight groups I worked with; Elim Pentecostal, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Scientology, Jehovah's Witness, Druid, Baha'i, Born Again Christian and Evangelical Protestantism are
groups not known to be expressly tied to a certain ethnicity in Ireland, allowing the primary focus to be on reactions to their religious identity.

In the first section of this chapter, I will lay out the quantitative section of my research methodology, with an overview of the methodological options available, the sampling strategies employed and justify their inclusion in this study and the ontological and epistemological aspects underpinning the survey. The second section will present my survey findings, where I provide a general overview and a group specific view of the results. In the final section, I will discuss and analyse the findings, make connections to my central thesis and explore what conclusions may be drawn from the results.

Survey Research Design

This section will explore the methods employed in conducting this research and the rationale behind its inclusion in the research design. Firstly, the paradigm of quantitative methodology and the basis for its selection will be explored. Secondly, the rationale for survey research design will be covered, followed by an outline of the questionnaire design and pilot phase. The final section will deal with issues of sampling.

Quantitative Research

The inclusion of a quantitative element within this study has several advantages, such as allowing general comparisons with previous research on religious discrimination, which have, as I discussed in chapter two, been largely based on survey findings. Secondly, quantitative research allows the researcher a great degree of objectivity and also has the advantage of replication (Jick 1979). This will also provide an overview
of the problem within the groups and will help form explicit links with the micro-
exploration of stigma management in the interview section of this study.
In this instance, there are also practical considerations, as many of these groups are
widely spread across Ireland and attempting to employ a large scale, completely
qualitative research methodology would be highly expensive and time-consuming.
Also, many members of the small religious groups in this study were willing to
partake in survey research, but were wary of participating in more in-depth research
by their own admission, due to fear of discrimination. By utilising a quantitative
research strategy, the aims of the research and the level of confidentiality afforded to
the participants can be fully explained at the outset and the data collection method, i.e.
questionnaire, can also be examined by the participants. This allows the individuals to
fully comprehend the research aims and what the study entails, and encouraged higher
participation rates.

Survey Method

My initial research plan was to draw on a pre-existing data set, such as the European
Values Study or the Eurobarometer, to ensure as large and representative a sample
from Ireland as possible. However, closer inspection revealed that they were
unsuitable for this project for two main reasons. Firstly, there was insufficient
information in relation to individuals’ religious affiliation, with many religious groups
outside the main religious traditions being generally recorded as “Other”, as discussed
in chapter one. Also, despite many religious groups having extremely varied sub-
denominations, almost all major surveys report respondents by the main religious
label. For example, Protestantism has a large amount of sub-divisions, some of which
vary fundamentally, yet most are recorded as simply as ‘Protestant’. This would be
insufficient for the scope of this project, as the exploration of which specific religions are affected by religious discrimination is a research objective. In consequence, a revision of the research plan was required.

The revised research framework utilised a self-completion questionnaire, which as the name suggests, are completed by the respondents themselves and as such has several advantages. Firstly, it is relatively cost effective as interviewers are not required. Secondly, questionnaires can be dispersed quickly across the country. Self-completions questionnaires can help to eliminate interviewer effects on respondents, which has long posed a problem for sociological research, where issues such as the interviewer’s race, sex or appearance can influence responses (Davis and Silver 2003; O’Muircheartaigh and Campanelli 2002). As highlighted before, some individuals in Ireland have suffered abuse and intimidation based on their religion and in light of such, the use of self-completion questionnaires could be most effective in ensuring participation. It also provides a degree of anonymity and confidentiality which is of importance to those in minority religions. Finally, they are convenient for the respondent, as they can complete it at their own pace and at no cost, as in this case a secure ballot box was provided for collection purposes.

There are of course also some disadvantages to surveys and the use of self-completion questionnaires, such as the inability to clear up any misunderstandings, however many can be eliminated or reduced at the survey preparation stage. When preparing a survey the researcher is limited in the type of questions one can effectively ask, with long, open questions often leading to poor response rates and respondent fatigue (Denscombe 2008; Bryman 2004). Shorter, closed questions where the respondents
choose the most appropriate answer are used far more frequently, but can result in the respondent becoming bored with quick fire questions, leading to indiscriminate replies. One must also address the problem of question order effect. Johnson, O'Rourke and Severns (1998) found that the positioning of questions could affect responses. For example, if one was asked to indicate the level of agreement with a statement in a repeated number of questions, there is a tendency to choose the same answer or patterns of answers, which may not be a reflection of the respondent’s opinion on the matter. To counteract the above problems, the introduction of a survey pilot element is essential. By testing the questionnaire on a cross-section of society, any problems can be identified and revised. Thus, piloting the questionnaire can pinpoint problems with layout and question length, thus helping to reduce respondent fatigue and question order effect.

Recent demographic changes in Ireland, which has seen a large increase in foreign nationals living here, must also be borne in mind during the production of a questionnaire. While a questionnaire in multiple languages would be ideal, it would be outside the scope and budget of this project. In an attempt to counteract this problem, the final draft of the questionnaire was piloted on individuals who do not have English as their first language to help identify any problematic areas which were revised accordingly.

**Questionnaire Design**

Designing a survey questionnaire is quite a finely balanced art. One must include enough questions to generate sufficient data for statistical analysis, but it should be as short as possible “in order for it to be less likely to deter prospective respondents from
answering” (Bryman 2004, p. 137). Therefore, the use of open questions should be kept to a minimum (Dillman 1983), as they are time consuming for respondents, separate coding frames would be required and while allowing greater flexibility, previous research has shown that response rates are lower (Griffith 1999), with many replies found to be illegible. Therefore, I chose to use pre-coded, closed questions throughout, with the exception of one open question, which I included due to difficulties in relation to the parameters of the response and which I will discuss in detail below. Again, questions selected were pre-tested to check for exhaustibility of responses and clarity.

Next, the layout was considered. Dillman (1983) notes that an “attractive layout is likely to enhance response rates” (cited in Bryman 2004, p.137). It was decided that a vertical presentation style would be used. While this resulted in the questionnaire being a little longer than had a horizontal style been selected, it has three main advantages. Firstly, it allowed clear, open presentation making it easier for the respondent. Second, problems which can occur with a horizontal format, such as ticking the incorrect box, can be greatly reduced. Finally, the use of Likert scale responses, where the individual must indicate their level of agreement with a statement were used for certain questions and can produce certain problems in survey analysis, known as order effect. Artingstall (1978) identified a respondent bias to the left hand side of a self-completion questionnaire, which can be somewhat eliminated by the use of vertical response layouts and no significant layout problems were indicated during the pilot phase of design.
Clear instructions were included with the cover letter (appendix A) for the questionnaire (appendix B) and also preceded every question, which were tested for clarity, logical progression, comprehension and ease of response. Any problems identified led to a rewording or repositioning of either question or response involved, which were subsequently retested satisfactorily. The elements of religious discrimination which made up the working definition of discrimination in this thesis, in conjunction with the overall research aims to explore the experience and reactions to discriminatory behaviour were broken down into their constituents and formed the basis for the questions posed.

Sampling

As my research aim was to target non ethno-religious groups in Ireland, certain specific sampling steps had to be taken. Random sampling is the most commonly utilised method in survey research design as it displays known qualities during statistical analysis and consequently it permits generalisabilty. However, in the relation to this research, a random sample of the Irish population would in all likelihood, not result in the inclusion of very many members of small religious groups and accessing such subgroups directly poses difficulties at logistic levels. As there are no readily accessible sampling frames, I chose to purposely sample by researching suitable groups and locations in order to secure some level of access. In order to access these groups, I needed to define my research parameters and select the groups which would best meet the needs of my research aims. As my objective is to focus primarily on non ethno-religious groups, I chose eight affiliations which exploratory research through existing literature, internet searches and several preliminary onsite visits revealed were not tied intrinsically to any ethnic identity within Ireland. As this
research parameter meant that random sampling would be ineffective, I chose a type of purposive sampling known as Chain Referral Sampling (CRS hereafter).

**Chain Referral Sampling**

Chain Referral Sampling is a type of sampling similar in style to snowball sampling, where an individual who has undergone the events under investigation can provide access to another individual who also experienced the same phenomena, thus "snowballing" the sample size in the process. CRS is quite similar to the snowball sampling but with a critical difference. Penrod et al. (2003) define CRS as a method which

...relies on a series of participant referrals to others who have experienced the phenomenon of interest. That is, the chains of referrals (or multiple snowballs) are carefully established and meshed together to form a sample that more closely resembles a representative sample of the study group (p.102).

In other words, some members of the target group will be approached to take part in the survey and will then be asked if they could refer another person who would fit the research criteria. When utilised correctly, such sampling can be empirically sound with the conceptual underpinning being that initial research participants will know and refer others who are similar to themselves. Biernacki and Waldorf (1981) note that this technique is particularity applicable in sociological endeavours, as it allows for the sampling of “natural interaction units” (Biernacki and Waldorf 1981, p.141). The main advantage of CRS over other types of purposive sampling is that one can access multiple social networks, emanating from a more diverse subject base which should lead to a more generalisable sample.
However, Penrod et al. (2003) emphasise that snowball sampling can be a somewhat “haphazard activity” (p.102). Best practice guidelines for such procedures are poorly defined and can result in a lack of methodological rigour. One must also consider that it is entirely possible that only those within a single social network will be accessed, giving the information collected limited applicability. In this study, to counteract this possibility, I chose to sample various chapters of each group within a wide geographical area, in order to introduce more variability. Zapata and Shipee-Rice (1999), Corbett (1999) and Papadopoulos (2000) have employed this methodology which they claim helped improve the methodological rigour of the sample provided. Importantly, the research strategy also proved theoretically fitting, providing access to the specific groups required by my research questions, as well as being both cost and time efficient.

Martin and Dean (1993) provide a comprehensive research template for utilising a CRS based strategy, employed in their multi-generational study of AIDS sufferers in a U.S. city, which I will incorporate in this study, along with Penrod et al.’s (2003) seven step strategy for using CRS, which I will discuss in detail next.

**Sampling Strategy**

1. **Identify Population and Identify Subjects**

In this study, the target population were members of small, non ethno-religious groups within in the Republic of Ireland as defined by my research aims. The participants were Elim Pentecostal, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Scientology, Jehovah's Witness, Druid, Baha'i, and Born Again Christian and Evangelical Protestantism. I chose a multi-faith approach in order to explore any differences in
social responses. Some groups such as Druidism and Scientology are relatively new and unfamiliar in Ireland, while others groups such as Jehovah's Witnesses and the Elim Pentecostal groups have been in Ireland for many years, but have had little social visibility in Ireland. This social distance may have a bearing on how such groups are perceived and treated in society. Therefore, a multi-faith approach allows an exploration of any differences between these groups and the levels of perceived stigmatisation and discrimination experienced in an Irish context. The respondents were also required to be over eighteen years of age and resident in Ireland, but not necessarily Irish.

2. Selecting and Assessing Settings

Having selected the population under study, the next step involved appropriate locations, which can affect the representativeness of the sample and issues of sampling bias. CRS practitioners (Martin and Dean 1993; Penrod et al. 2003) aim to access as diverse a range of settings as possible, thereby generating a wide variety of respondents. Therefore, regular sites of worship or religious meetings were the obvious starting point. However, approaching only churches or organised religious meetings would lead to institutional members being over-represented with less regular attendees being excluded. With this in mind, in addition to approaching official organisations, members of the target groups were also approached via the internet in religious discussion forums, as well as bookshops and libraries, hence attracting a wide variety of religious members.
3. Access

The process began by approaching leaders of the religious group, if there was a clearly identified leader. This allowed for a clear explanation of the research aims and objectives and for the questionnaire to be examined for inappropriate material. This is a method frequently used in qualitative methodology, where one approaches a “gatekeeper” who can provide access to others (King and Horrocks 2010; Seidman 2006; Arcury and Quandt 1999). Having gained consent to approach the group members, arrangements were made to put up information posters, and to have questionnaires and pens left at the meeting site. The group leader would explain the research and indicate the questionnaire during or after the group meeting and encourage participation. A secure ballot box which I alone could access was also provided for completed questionnaires. All questionnaires contained an informational covering letter and clear instructions (see appendix a). The letter also requested respondents to recruit one other person if they could, who had not attended the meeting and who met the research criteria, which was clearly explained in the letter, to complete a questionnaire if possible.

The collection box and questionnaires were left in place for the duration of three group meetings, after which they were removed. A thank you note was forwarded to the group with thanks for their participation and instructions that any uncollected questionnaires could be sealed and left with the group leader for later collection. Similar religious organisations in different geographically areas were approached in an attempt to maximise the response rate over a six month period from February 2012 to July 2012. This method proved quite successful for a number of reasons. Firstly, the approval of the group leaders appeared to encourage the members to participate in
the survey, as did the provision of a secure ballot box which ensured confidentiality and the lack of identifiable personal information in the questionnaire. In addition, the lack of any direct researcher-respondent contact ensured that the respondents’ identity remained confidential even to the researcher, which proved to be important to many of the participants.

Organisations with a less institutional structure such as Druids were approached via the internet. Websites and discussion forms were accessed with a request to participate in the research. While this provided access to less visible religious populations, it also provided the added bonus of responses from members of organised churches who were not attending religious services on a regular basis. Bookshops and libraries were also approached, with a note briefly explaining the research being displayed and a short leaflet with the aims, research criteria and email address provided should anyone wish to participate. Again, the aim was to extend the respondent profile to collect as close to a representative sample as possible.

4. Initiating Chains and Locators

The main premise behind chain referral sampling is that one respondent will be able to provide access to others of the target population. Essentially, the participants then become locators in the research process. For all of the different access locations noted above, each participant was asked to locate one other member of the target population to complete a survey. For example, the automated ‘thank you’ response for completion of the email version of the questionnaire contained the request to pass it on to one other, with a link to the questionnaire. In more institutional settings, participants were asked to take a survey home and attempt to have a target respondent,
who has not attended the service or meeting, to compete it. The information letters contained precise information on the criteria required for participation to assist identification of possible respondents. Again, this proved quite successful, with a far greater response rate than anticipated, particularly in relation to institutional settings, though in the case of the internet very few referrals were generated.

5. Pacing and Monitoring of Chain Referrals

Monitoring responses from referrals is crucial. It is inevitable that some chains will provide larger responses and can result in overrepresentation of that sector. Careful monitoring makes it possible to suspend or add chains which are over or underrepresented, allowing the sample to be carefully constructed (Penrod et al. 2003). In this case, the response was quite high across most sectors, with a large number of referred respondents also being generated. This assessment was based on knowing the average meeting attendance, which was provided by the gate-keeper and the number of collected responses, which exceeded the former in most cases.

6. Completion of Sampling

Once an adequate sample is acquired, it is necessary to bring all outstanding referral chains to a close. Those acting as gate-keepers or locators were informed and internet or public areas requests for participation were removed.

The use of CRS provided a far greater research scope than simple convenience or snowball sampling. The accuracy and efficiency of the sampling was also enhanced by monitoring the spread of target population, which provided the necessary diversity and sample control while respecting ethical and privacy issues.
Having laid out my sampling procedure, there are some issues regarding CRS and bias reduction which need to be addressed at this point. The reduction of bias is essential in producing a sample which can be viewed as approaching statistical significance. Heckathorn (1997) has identified potential sources of bias within such respondent driven sampling. Each of these issues will be addressed and the countermeasures employed in this research design will be clarified. The first risk of bias occurs during initial sample selection, as respondents are chosen by theoretical underpinnings in that they were members of a particular group, rather than by random selection. This can result in a sample which is overly similar in its content. In this case, however as the target population of this research is quite wide, encompassing several minority religions as opposed to a single homogeneous population, the problem with initial participant bias is greatly reduced (Heckathorn 1997). Therefore the sample should provide adequate socio-metric depth.

In addition to in-sample bias, within survey research there is always the question of how to avoid non-duplication (Salganik and Heckathorn 2004). In relation to email respondents, this was dealt with by employing an appropriate email questionnaire management system (SurveyMonkey) in which all responses were time-stamped coded and IP (Internet Protocol – identifying number for computer) addresses were noted. If any responses appeared carrying the same IP address, indicating the same computer was used, the response was examined for response similarities. It is plausible that members of the same religious group may share a home or computer access, so if the questionnaires differed in responses, they were deemed valid. All IP addresses were subsequently deleted from the printed versions of the questionnaires to
maintain confidentiality. In relation to questionnaires collected by ballot, the accompanying letter requested that those who have already completed such a questionnaire, either by hand or electronic means, should not complete it again. As it can be difficult to get subjects to complete a questionnaire once, it would be doubtful that there were many duplicates.

A final issue addresses the problem of impostors, where individuals will pose as a member of the target community. As there is a degree of separation between the researcher and the research participants in the collection of the survey element of this research, there is no definitive way of knowing that the respondents are in fact members of the community that they claim to be. However, there were no incentives - financial or otherwise, to participate in this project therefore it is hoped that participants have little motivation to provide false research information. Overall, the sampling strategy provided 1012 responses of which 989 were valid. Those 23 responses deemed as "missing" contained inadequate information to be included in the results. 244 were collected via the internet and 768 responses were collected from official meetings or sites of worship.

**Ethical Issues in Relation to Sampling**

There are certain ethical issues which must be addressed at this juncture. As Kalton (1993a; 1993b) states there are “unique challenges in terms ... of the influences of social stigma on recruitment and participation” (cited in Penrod et al 2003, p.103), which also raise ethical questions. Being a diverse minority group, members of small religious groups could be classified as hard to reach or “hidden” populations, thus making identifying and sampling such individuals a difficult task. As my research uncovered, many of the individuals who took part were concerned with remaining
anonymous, therefore the sampling process attempted to access such populations
whilst simultaneously preserving members’ confidentiality. In balancing these ethical
issues, the research was designed so that

...the welfare of research participants is not adversely affected by their research activities.
They should strive to protect the interests of research participants, their sensitivities and
privacy, while recognising the difficulty of balancing potentially conflicting concerns

(Sociological Association of Ireland 2008, p.6).

In practice, Stevenson et al. (1993) maintain that issues relating to privacy and
confidentiality can be managed by careful planning at the methodological stage.
Ensuring collected data will be coded in a manner which renders the participants
unrecognisable, along with secure data storage/disposal and a clear understanding of
who will access the raw data can help with these issues. Therefore, within this
research, I ensured that the questionnaire contained no identifiable material as to the
individual's identity, I collected the responses from a sealed ballot box, to which I had
the only key and I alone read and coded the responses.

Ethical issues can also arise in relation to respondent referrals, such as the CRS
method used in this study. In many instances, a person who fulfils the research criteria
is approached and is asked to provide the names of others who also reach the criteria.
This can take place without the others knowledge and can be viewed as a violation of
their privacy. In response terms, the referred may not wish to participate due to the
violation of privacy and the research must seek other seeds to restart the process. As
ethical concerns are of great importance when dealing with such populations, steps
were taken to counteract this problem. Issues regarding privacy violations were
addressed by asking respondents to take or forward electronically, if they wished, a
second questionnaire and ask someone who meets the criteria to complete it at their
own discretion. This prevented unwanted referrals and allowed respondents to maintain their privacy. I entered the data into a statistical programme (SPSS 16), which generated random numbers for each individual questionnaire, further insuring confidentiality. All of the data generated was saved in a desk-top remote modem, which was not connected to the internet, therefore ensuring that no one but the researcher had access to the information. Despite these measures described above, I do not claim generalisablity in the findings which I present here in the strict statistical sense. Instead, I am utilising the results as a contextual framework in order to highlight the experience of religious stigmatisation and discrimination within these groups and to provide an overview of the scope of such within these specific groups. This will also give an insight into affiliation specific experiences of religious discrimination which has not been explored before in an Irish context, and I will present my findings in the next section of this chapter.

**Survey Results**

I will present my survey findings in three sections. The first section will present the survey statistics, in relation to religious affiliation, gender, nationality and ethnicity of the participants. Section two will deal with the overall results relating to the experience of discrimination among the groups and finally, section three will present the results as broken down by religious affiliation. I will conclude this chapter with a discussion of my findings and what they contribute to the overall thesis.
Table 3.1 – What is Your Religious Affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elim Pentecostal</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah’s Witness</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born Again Christian</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>12.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baha’i</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druid</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientology</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 989 (Total sample 1012, Missing 23)

Survey Statistics

Table 3.1 shows the breakdown of the responses in relation to religious affiliation. The benefits of CRS as a sampling strategy is evident here, as all of the groups are represented and there are a significant number of responses in each category.

The results show Elim Pentecostal as the highest respondent group with 17.9%, followed by Evangelical Christians with 17.2%, Mormons at 16.9%, Born Again Christians at 12.6%, Baha'i at 11.6%, Druids make up 8.5% and finally Scientology respondents make up 2.1% of the survey results. Table 3.2 indicate the respondents' nationality; which shows that the majority of the respondents claimed to be Irish at 72%, followed by just under 20% which were of another European nationality. 5.7% of the respondents originated from North America, while African and Asian participants made up 1.8% and 1.2% of the response respectively. Finally, 0.2% of the respondents claimed to be Australian.
The survey also contained an additional question on Ethnicity in order to examine issues of intersectionality between religious identity and other protected categories and the general categories were drawn from the Central Statistics Office breakdown of ethnic backgrounds in Ireland (CSO 2012).

The results in table 3.3 show quite a parallel with the results of the nationality question with over 71% of respondents self-identifying as white Irish and over 25% of the remainder claiming to be of other white background. Black Irish (African) was the next biggest category with 1.1% of respondents, followed by Asian Irish (Indian) at just under 1% of the sample total. Other Asian background and Asian Irish (Chinese) make up the remaining 0.4% of the responses. Therefore, the sampling strategy of identifying and targeting non ethno-religious groups has provided a sample where over 70% of the sample claim to be Irish and white, and should allow a deeper investigation into the religious based aspect of discrimination rather than the possible intersectionality that comes from ethnically linked religious groups.
Table 3.3 Please Indicate your Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White Irish</td>
<td>705</td>
<td>71.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Irish Traveller</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any Other White Background</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or Black Irish - African</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or Black Irish – Other Black Background</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Asian Irish - Indian</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian or Asian Irish – Other Asian Background</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Background (including mixed background)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 989 (Total sample 1012, Missing 23)

Table 3.4 relates to the gender division of the survey participants, which indicates a slight majority of males at 57.1% to female 42.9% respondents, but which greatly reduces the possibility of gender bias issues in analysing the results. I will be further exploring the relationship between these factors and the results in relation to specific questions on discrimination in the second part of this chapter.

Table 3.4 – Please indicate your Gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>564</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 989 (Total sample 1012, Missing 23)

Therefore, it is evident that the sampling strategy provided a sample which was made up of members of religious minorities in Ireland, where the participants were primarily white and of Irish nationality with a very slight gender discrepancy. This should allow the analysis to concentrate on the issue of religion, rather than ethnic elements, as a discriminatory factor.
Survey Results - Discrimination Overall

Having presented the demographics which make up the research sample, the overall response to the question "In the past five years, have you personally felt discriminated against due to your religious affiliation?" is shown in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 In the past five years, have you personally felt discriminated against due to your religious affiliation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>673</td>
<td>68.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 989 (Total sample 1012, Missing 23)

The results indicate that an overwhelming majority of the respondents, over 68%, felt they were discriminated against due to their religious affiliation, with only 14% responding "No". Almost 18% replied "Unsure" to the question, which may point to issues in relation to the framing of the definition which accompanied this question (see Appendix B for questionnaire), despite being taken from the survey question utilised by Russell et al. (2008) and pilot runs of the survey which did not indicate any issues. This large "Unsure" response may reflect Weller's (2011) discussion of the problem of perceived and actual discrimination as discussed in chapter two, where there is a gap between what is understood as discrimination in the legal sense and discriminatory behaviour within everyday actions. This was quite an unprecedented rate of response which confirmed my suspicion that non ethno-religious affiliations are also vulnerable to discrimination in Ireland, but to a greater extent than was perhaps previously thought. In addition to seeking information on the incidence of perceived religious discrimination, I also asked the participants to indicate the effects this had on them personally which can be seen in table 3.6.
Table 3.6  How would you best describe the effects of discrimination had on you?  
Please tick NOT APPLICABLE to this question if you answered NO to Question 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Distressing</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>29.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quite Distressing</td>
<td>411</td>
<td>41.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Little Distressing</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Distressing at all</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Applicable</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 989 (Total sample 1012, Missing 23)

The results indicate that almost 30% found the experience very distressing with 41.5% reporting the experience of religious discrimination as quite distressing. Only a small percentage, 1.8% claimed that such discrimination caused them little or no distress. There is some disparity between those who claimed to have never experienced discrimination in question 5, (14%) and those who ticked that this question was not applicable to them, which was 14.7% may also relate again to confusion surrounding religious discrimination. It is also possible that the discrepancy may relate to participant or coding errors.
Table 3.7 How many times in the past five years have you experienced religious discrimination?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Discrimination</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Once</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two to Four Occasions</td>
<td>445</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Five to Ten Occasions</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than Ten Occasions</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>17.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 989 (Total sample 1012, Missing 23)

In addition to the effects of perceived religious discrimination on the individuals, I felt that it was important to check the frequency of such events, as one isolated incident within the past five years would not be able to tell us much sociologically. Therefore, I posed the question as to how many times in the past five years the respondent had experienced religious discrimination. I chose to explore only the past five years, as research has shown that accurate recollections of such events may become questionable after any longer period of time (Thrasher 2012; Hassan 2006) and may skew the findings.

Table 3.7 shows the results and there is a firm indication that the questionnaire has performed effectively as the replies to "Never Having Experienced Religious Discrimination" in question 5 tallies almost exactly with the "Never" response in this question. 21.4% of respondents had one experience of religious discrimination, with just over 41% indicating between two and four incidents in the past five years. Only 1.4% of the sample reported religious discrimination and 2 respondents out of the 989
valid questionnaires indicated more than ten instances of such behaviour. Again, there are a high percentage of those who were "Unsure" at 17.5%, but the wording of the question makes it unclear as to whether they were unsure as to the number of incidents of discrimination, or unsure if an incident of discrimination had taken place. This underlines how issues with questionnaire design can arise after the survey has taken place, and with this knowledge I would now redraft this question to include a space for those that were unsure as to the number of incidents which took place, or to indicate that the participant was unsure as to whether the incident constituted religious discrimination. In hindsight, such a question would have provided some information on the existing knowledge of actual discrimination, legal discrimination and those incidents of unfavourable behaviour which are essentially discriminatory, but are not formally viewed as such at present. This is an issue that I would hope to explore in future research. Overall, there were quite high rates of discrimination reported, with the vast majority indicating more than one occasion of discrimination on religious grounds in the past five years.

In keeping with Russell at al.'s (2008) exploration of the sites of discrimination, I requested that the participants indicate where these incidents took place and includes areas such as employment, services and other social arenas. I purposely did not make the list exhaustive, as research indicates that participants respond poorly to very long list of responses (Bryman 2008), but instead aimed to cover the major social areas where most individuals interact. Participants were asked to tick as many as were applicable and the rank order of the sites of discrimination are shown in Table 3.8. The results are presented in rank order as the participants could choose as many options as applied. Religious discrimination in the workplace came highest followed
by issues relating to education. Placed third was discrimination in other social groups, followed closely by discrimination from friends/acquaintances. While the results relating to work and education are in line with the findings of Russell et al. (2008) in an overall sense, the figures relating to other social groups and friends/acquaintances are significantly higher than I anticipated.

Table 3.8 Where did this discrimination take place?
(Please indicate all which apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In the workplace</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. In relation to education at any level</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Within other social groups (parent groups, community groups etc)</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. From friends or acquaintances</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. While seeking work</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. In a public place (walking down the street, playground, car park etc)</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Within your family</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. While in shops, pubs or restaurants</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. While looking for accommodation or housing</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. In relation to the services of banks, insurance companies/other financial institutions</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Elsewhere</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. While accessing any other public services</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. In relation to the health services (GP, hospital, specialist treatment)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. While accessing transport services</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 989 (Total sample 1012, Missing 23)

The reports of discrimination in relation to seeking work are lower overall than in previous research (Russell et al. 2008), but the incidents of perceived religious discrimination in a public place, such as a car park or street and within the family are quite high. Interestingly, the results indicate that discrimination experienced while accessing many services, such as financial, health, other public services and transport were extremely low. This could perhaps be due to the implementation of new
employment policies, education and guidelines within the past ten years. Research has shown that religious education and anti-discrimination training can greatly reduce the incidents of religious based discrimination, both intentional and accidental (Hart et al. 2010; Paludi 2010; Barlett 2009), but only more in-depth research into this area could provide definitive answers in the Irish context.

The high rates of perceived incidents within the workplace and education are factors for concern. Whether this is experienced in relation to the organisational structure, their superiors or from work colleagues is unclear. From informal discussions with many of the group members, it would appear that unfavourable behaviour from both sources were, at least anecdotally, commonplace and often consisted of "discreet" discrimination were one is politely socially excluded, or is the target of religious based jokes etc. In relation to education, there are many issues at present in Ireland relating to the provision of primary education by the Roman Catholic Church, the centrality of a Catholic based ethos. This has led to the sidelining of other religious traditions within religious education curriculums, which has, I argue, an influence on the levels of religious literacy within Ireland, which has been cited as a major contributor to prejudice which underpins religious stigmatisation and discrimination (Bouma 1998, 2011; Weller 2001, 2011; Woodhead and Catto 2010). This concern was also highlighted in casual discussions with several members of the eight groups, who referred to issues with education as stemming from indirect rather than direct discrimination, leading to a sense of trivialisation of their religious traditions and discreet social marginalisation within the school system.
I will be exploring these issues in far more depth in the qualitative section of this thesis, as the survey results highlight the extent of the problem among the groups, but provide very little information on the dynamics of the various situations. This displays the utility of a mixed methodology effective within this study, as the survey results provide a broad overview of the phenomena, in addition to the in-depth, specific understanding which qualitative interviewing provides.

In chapter one and two, I discussed the manner in which negative stereotypes are linked to prejudice and discrimination, based on the creation of in-groups and out-groups. Therefore, I felt it was important to take account how the groups felt they were perceived within Irish society. In table 3.9, the responses to the question "In your opinion, which best describes the public perception of small religious groups such as yours in, today's Ireland" are displayed, based on a scale which ranges from "Very Positive" to "Very Negative". The majority of the responses are at the negative end of the spectrum, with a combined 83.1% indicating that the belief that groups like theirs were viewed in negative fashion. Only 1.5% thought small religious groups were viewed as very positive in Ireland, with just 6.6% responding that the public perception was somewhat positive, and 8.8% were unsure as to the response. The high number of respondents which considered small religious groups to have a negative public image was a great deal higher than I anticipated at the outset. Primary interviews and casual discussions with members on the topic revealed that many of them felt that being a member of a minority religious group in Ireland was akin to a "social stigma" (Michael, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints); "like a big black mark" (John, Druid) or something that "sets you out as different, very different... not good different" (Susan, Baha'i). The overall results indicate that many of the
participants agreed with this view and that the negative perception/reception of other religious identities in Ireland may be far more widespread than anticipated.

Table 3.9 In your opinion, which best describes the public perception of small religious groups such as yours in today's Ireland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very Positive</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Positive</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat Negative</td>
<td>568</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very Negative</td>
<td>254</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 989 (Total sample 1012, Missing 23)

In addition, I was interested in what the participants deemed as perpetuating the public perception of such groups within Ireland, as other research internationally has identified various elements as instrumental in the creation and propagation of negative images of certain minority groups, such as the media (Beckford 1994) or education (Aboud and Amato 2001). However, as I did not wish to bias the replies I chose to leave this as an open question, where the respondents were free to reply as they wished. All of the replies were then coded and placed into categories, the results of which can be seen in table 3.10.
3.10 In your opinion, which factor has most influence on the public opinion of small religious groups in Ireland?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor on Public Perception</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Church</td>
<td>324</td>
<td>32.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of Religious Understanding</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>238</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Education System</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>12.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish History</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fear of Difference</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 989 (Total sample 1012, Missing 23)

As anticipated, there were a wide range of responses, but could be placed under six main headings. The majority of respondents, 32.7%, referred to the influence of the Roman Catholic Church on public perception of other religions such as theirs, while just over 27% claiming a lack of religious literacy was endemic in Ireland. The media was referred to as a factor in the negative perception of small religious groups by 24.1% of the sample, with 12% pointing to the Irish education system. Only two other factors were mentioned by a small number of respondents; first, the impact of Irish history on current day perceptions (2.4%) and second, the fear of difference which 1.6% felt played a role in social reactions.

As I discussed in my introduction to this study, it would appear that the close relations between the church and state has had an impact on the manner in which religions are viewed in Ireland today, and although only a small percentage of the sample noted it directly, I argue that the influence of this relationship, past and present, is perceptible
in both the Irish education system and the lack of religious literacy in contemporary Ireland. The media and its influence on negative social perceptions have been noted in numerous studies (Scheufele and Tewksbury 2007; Hallahan 1999; Mok 1998; Taylor and Stern 1997) and also in relation to small religious groups in particular (Beckford 1999; Richardson 1996; Wright 1997; Pfeiffer 1992). Again, this survey result provides a framework from which to begin exploring more in-depth issues within the interview section and to work with existing research in this area.

As I began preliminary interviews before conducting the survey element of the study, I became aware how important the avoidance of possible discrimination was to many of the participants, across all of the research groups. For many participants, the simplest manner to avoid prejudicial behaviour was to conceal their religious identity from others. This is a reaction to discrimination which is often seen in relation to other socially stigmatised identities, such as homosexuality but has recently also come to the fore within research on religious identities (Peek 2005; Beatty and Kirby 2006) in particular those who conceal various identities which are incompatible with their own religious affiliation (Faulkner and Hecht 2011). There has not been a great deal of social research into concealing one's religious identity, with the exception of Peek's (2005) work on the manner in which individual Muslim identities can develop within western contexts, and Mir's (2006) exploration of Muslim female undergraduates in the United States. While instructive on the reactions and effects on the individual, within both studies there is a great deal of crossover with social reactions to their ethnicity as well as their religion. Therefore, there is not a great deal of theoretical work on the reactions of those whose religion is deemed as unfavourable within society, where elements such as race, ethnicity and visible religious apparel may be
much less obvious. I posed the question "Have you ever concealed your religious identity within the past five years?" in order to ascertain the level of religious identity concealment among the groups. This can be indicative of the extent of negative social reactions, as well as highlight the level of fear of stigma and discrimination among the respondents. The overall results in relation to religious identity concealment are shown in table 3.11, with just over 70% of the sample claiming to have concealed their religion, 26.2% had not and 3.7% were unsure.

Table 3.11 Have you ever concealed your religious identity within the past five years?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>693</td>
<td>70.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>259</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Sure</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 989 (Total sample 1012, Missing 16)

Again, as with many of the other results in this study, the scale of the response was unprecedented with almost 700 of the participants claiming to have hidden their religious affiliation within the past five years. While this is a convincing figure, it is important to bear in mind that there may be any number of circumstances which could have been included. For example, concealment in childhood/teenage years for younger respondents may not have the same motivational factors as for older respondents, so therefore I added a further question on the context of the concealment and asked that the respondents chose as many as was applicable, the results of which are shown in table 3.12. I opted to present these results in rank order rather than
percentages in order to display the most commonly indicated sites of religious concealment.

The most frequently indicated site was in the workplace, which had substantially more responses than the other options. In second and third position, and only narrowly separated were the category of concealment from friends and acquaintances and within other social groups. Concealment while seeking work was ranked fourth, while in relation to education and from family came fifth and sixth. Concealment from financial institution was ranked seventh, while the other categories, education, health, accommodation, shops/pubs, while in public, other public services, transport and elsewhere where selected by very few respondents.

The very high level of concealment within the workplace is concerning, but correlates with the responses to the question 4, which indicated that most discrimination occurs in the workplace. Again, this result does not indicate whether this was due to fear of formal or indirect discrimination among the participants, but will be explored in detail throughout the interview section of this study. Concealment from friends, within social groups and while seeking work which also scored over 300 responses will also be discussed with the interview participants in order to explore the motivations for such behaviour.
Table 3.12  Please indicate where you concealed your religious identity.  
Please tick all locations which apply.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Order</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In the workplace</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From friends or acquaintances</td>
<td>328</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within other social groups (parent groups, community groups etc.)</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While seeking work</td>
<td>321</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In relation to education at any level</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within your family</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In relation to the services of banks, insurance companies/Other financial institutions</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While looking for accommodation or housing</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elsewhere</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In relation to the health services (GP, hospital, specialist treatment)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While in shops, pubs or restaurants</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In accessing other public services either at a local or national level</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a public place (walking down the street, playground, car park etc)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While using transport services</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 989 (Total sample 1012, Missing 23)

As an overview of the general results of the survey section, the findings show very high levels of perceived religious discrimination (68%) among the groups surveyed. The sample contained over 70% who were white Irish with no appreciable gender disparity, therefore the results are more focused on non ethno-religious factors of the groups. Most of the respondents claimed two to four incidents of religious discrimination within the past five years, with most taking place in the workplace, seeking work, in relation to education, various social groups, in public areas, from ones family and friends/acquaintances. The reported incidences in relation to public
services were very small. Overall, 83.1% of the sample felt small religious groups such as theirs were viewed negatively in Irish society, with most connecting this to the influence of the Catholic Church, the lack of religious literacy in Ireland, the media and the Irish educational system. In relation to the concealment of identity over 70% had concealed their religious identity, with most being in relation to the workplace, from friends/acquaintances, in other social groups, while seeking work, in relation to education and from one's family. These results indicate how widespread the perception of religious based discrimination is among those surveyed, while also of concern is the high level of religious concealment. This confirms my initial suspicions that religious based discrimination is far more prevalent in Ireland than previously suspected, and that small religious groups feel they are perceived negatively by others. Having taken a broad overview of the survey results in the next section, I will present the results broken down by religious affiliation, in order to generate affiliation specific comparisons.

**Survey Results by Religious Affiliation**

Research on religion in Ireland and indeed internationally has up to this point not explored many of the smaller denominations due to the small numbers and difficulties in accessing members. I argue that in the case of discrimination, it is essential to know which groups feel most affected by religious based discrimination, where and how it takes place and their reaction to it, in order to deal with it effectively at all levels.
Table 3.13 Religious Affiliation and Nationality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>Irish</th>
<th>European</th>
<th>American</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>African</th>
<th>Australian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientology</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah's Witness</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druid</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baha'i</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born Again Christian</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 989 (Total sample 1012, Missing 23)

Table 3.13 displays the nationalities which make up each group with the vast majority being Irish or European, with Druid showing the highest percentage of Irish with 95%, with Mormons having the lowest Irish make-up with a still sizable 54%. Table 3.14 also shows the ethnic backgrounds indicated by the participants with the exception of Elim Pentecostal sample which has indicated 14% Black Irish–African and the Baha'i which consisted of 20% Asian background (Other). All other ethnic backgrounds outside of White Irish and Other White Background were under 10% of the reported sample. Despite having a more multi-ethnic make-up than the other groups, both the Baha'i and the Pentecostal group reported less instances of religious discrimination than the more homogenous ethnic groups, such as the Born Again Christian or Evangelical groups. Therefore, it is quite possible that ethnic background or nationality has very little intersection with the discrimination reported in this study.
Table 3.14 Religious Affiliation and Ethnicity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>White Irish</th>
<th>Any Other White Background</th>
<th>Black or Black Irish - African</th>
<th>Black or Black Irish - Other Black Background</th>
<th>Asian or Asian Irish - Chinese</th>
<th>Asian or Asian Irish - Indian</th>
<th>Asian or Asian Irish – Other Asian Background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientology</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah's Witness</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druid</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baha'i</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born Again Christian</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 989 (Total sample 1012, Missing 16)

Table 3.14 displays the results of experience of discrimination, frequency of incidents, frequency of religious identity concealment and the effects on the individual, broken down by religious groups. Column A shows that all of the respondents who were Scientologists had experienced religious discrimination within the past five years, with 97% of Druids and 89% of Born Again Christians also indicating some form of negative social reaction. These high figures are perhaps to be expected in relation to Scientologists and the Druid groups, which are non-traditional religions, are small numerically in Ireland and have also experienced quite a lot of negative press coverage in the recent past. The same cannot be said of Born Again Christian groups which are far more traditional in religious form and have quite a sizable presence in Ireland. There could perhaps be links to international coverage of Born Again Christians, such as in the United States where certain sectors of the media portray
such groups quite negatively, which could have an influence on Irish reactions to the group.

The influence of globalised media might also be linked to the fact that 76% of Mormons felt discriminated against in Ireland, as the group has repeatedly railed against inaccuracies and negative stereotyping of its practices in the United States which may also be influential here. In relation to the Baha'i participants, 68% of the sample reported experiences of religious discrimination, followed by 61% of Evangelical Christians. It is possible that the Baha'i as a religious group have a much lower public profile especially in Ireland, and therefore are treated with some level of suspicion, as may also be the case with those from the Evangelical denomination, whose energetic and passionate forms of worship may be viewed as far removed from Roman Catholic or mainstream Protestant worship in Ireland. Interestingly, only 32% of the Elim Pentecostal respondents and 26% of Jehovah's Witnesses claim to have experienced discrimination which was the lowest reported instances among the groups. These low figures may be linked to the length of time that both the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Elim Pentecostal groups have been established in Ireland. Research shows that incidents of positive interaction with groups seen as other can alter attitudes towards that group (Goodman 2006), so it is possible that a certain level of familiarity has been achieved between these groups and the wider Irish public.

Column B displays the event frequency, with the majority of the respondents claiming two to four incidents of religious discrimination within the past five years. Starting with the most recorded incidents, individual Scientologist and Druid respondents indicate more than ten experiences of discrimination in the past five years. Both of
these groups, in addition to the Born Again Christian group and those from the Evangelical affiliation also reported most five to ten incidents of discrimination within the past five years, with Scientology and Druids slightly higher. Evangelical were highest in the two to four incidents category, followed by Mormons, Born Again Christians, Druids and Scientologists. The Baha'i, Elim Pentecostal group and the Jehovah's Witnesses reported the lowest incidences in this category. Interestingly, it is Jehovah's Witnesses and the Elim Pentecostal who make up the most incidences in the single incidence category, followed by the Baha'i, Mormons, Born Again Christians, Scientologists and Evangelical Christians. This reverse of the groups' positions in this category highlights the dangers of basing any studies of discrimination on the recording of a single incident, as the occurrence may be accidental or isolated, with little or no social impact. This would also be very misleading in relation to the level of discrimination encountered by the individuals of each group, but provides a context within which to analyse the more frequent incidences among the groups and highlights the difference between the religious groups.

Column C reveals the percentage of the sample who report having concealed their religious identity, which was far greater than I anticipated at the outset of this study. Again, it is Scientology with 100% of the sample admitting to concealment of their religious identity with members of the Druid group showing that 95% had hidden their identity in some social circumstances. Born Again Christian came third with 89%, followed by the Baha'i with 69% and Evangelical Christians at 68%. The Mormon respondents were quite low in a relative sense at 49%, followed by the Jehovah's Witnesses with 41% and Elim Pentecostal with only 6% reporting religious identity concealment. Again, it is clear that Scientology, Druids, Born Again
Christians, the Baha’i and Evangelical report more incidents of religious
discrimination, as well as higher incidents of religious identity concealment than the
other groups who participated. Column D displays the effect of discrimination on the
individuals involved, with the vast majority reporting the experience of discrimination
as Quite Distressing or Very Distressing, even among those denominations which
reported fewer incidents in the survey. This could indicate that the effect of
discrimination could be far greater that the frequency indicates, either in its severity or
on the impact on the individual. I will be exploring this in more detail in the
qualitative section of this study, but this result highlights the importance of research in
this area, as discrimination of any kind is detrimental to the society from which it
comes. The impact on the individual can be therefore have far-reaching consequences,
and as such requires an in-depth exploration, while being mindful of the fact that from

...the perspective of those who report ‘religious discrimination’, their subjective experience is
very relevant so that suspicion of their reported experience can lead to anguish for those who
seek to articulate it to a wider audience, further compounding the pain of the original
experience.

(Weller 2011, p.vi)
Table 3.15 Experience of Discrimination by Religious Affiliation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>(A) Respondents who experienced Religious Discrimination within the past five years (%)</th>
<th>(B) Frequency of Religious Discrimination within the past five years (%)</th>
<th>(C) Respondents who have concealed their Religious Identity within the past five years (%)</th>
<th>(D) Effects of Incidences of Discrimination On Individual (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elim Pentecostal</td>
<td>32 %</td>
<td>88% 12% 0% 0% 6%</td>
<td>12% 74% 12% 2% 0%</td>
<td>Very Distressing 74% Quite Distressing 12% Not Sure 2% Little Distressing 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>76 %</td>
<td>21% 79% 0% 0% 49%</td>
<td>69% 25% 0% 6% 0%</td>
<td>Very Distressing 69% Quite Distressing 25% Not Sure 6% Little Distressing 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientology</td>
<td>100 %</td>
<td>14% 68% 12% 6% 100%</td>
<td>95% 5% 0% 0% 0%</td>
<td>Very Distressing 95% Quite Distressing 5% Not Sure 0% Little Distressing 0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah's Witness</td>
<td>26 %</td>
<td>98% 2% 0% 0% 41%</td>
<td>26% 38% 12% 21% 3%</td>
<td>Very Distressing 26% Quite Distressing 38% Not Sure 21% Little Distressing 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>61 %</td>
<td>11% 84% 5% 0% 68%</td>
<td>64% 18% 2% 12% 9%</td>
<td>Very Distressing 64% Quite Distressing 18% Not Sure 12% Little Distressing 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druid</td>
<td>97 %</td>
<td>15% 74% 8% 2% 95%</td>
<td>79% 12% 2% 5% 4%</td>
<td>Very Distressing 79% Quite Distressing 12% Not Sure 5% Little Distressing 4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baha'i</td>
<td>68 %</td>
<td>59% 41% 0% 0% 69%</td>
<td>36% 45% 17% 10% 2%</td>
<td>Very Distressing 36% Quite Distressing 45% Not Sure 10% Little Distressing 2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born Again Christian</td>
<td>89 %</td>
<td>20% 75% 5% 0% 89%</td>
<td>74% 15% 5% 6% 0%</td>
<td>Very Distressing 74% Quite Distressing 15% Not Sure 6% Little Distressing 0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N= 989 (Total sample 1012, Missing 23)
Having looked at the experience, frequency and effect of discrimination in a group specific analysis, I further broke down the results in order to explore the sites of the reported discrimination. Table 3.16a and 3.16b shows the sites indicated by the participants in relation to where they encountered discrimination, which could relate to multiple social situations. I display the results as a percentage of the response rate per religious group rather than percentage of the overall sample, in order to further analyse the differences between the groups. Members of the Elim Pentecostal groups indicate the following experiences of discrimination in descending order, in the workplace (58%), in relation to education (19%), within other social groups (14%), from friends/acquaintance (12%), while seeking work (9%) and 1% from their within their families. Mormon respondents reported 71% of religious discrimination in the workplace, followed by in relation to education (31%); from friends/acquaintances (28%), in other social groups (24%), while seeking work (7%), within their families (7%) and in public places (1%).

Scientologists replied that 87% of the sample had experienced religious discrimination in the workplace, with 35% occurring in relation to friends/acquaintances. This was followed by in relation to education (24%); in other social groups (21%), while seeking work (15%), from their family (12%) and in a public place (9%). Members of the Jehovah's Witness community replied that 62% of those who encountered religious discrimination did so in the workplace, with 19% experiencing the same while seeking work. In relation to education, 27% of the groups reported discrimination. Within other social groups, 18% of Jehovah's Witnesses reported discriminatory behaviour, followed by from friends/acquaintances (12%), from one's family (5%), in a public place (4%) and in Shops/bars (1%). The
Evangelical group reported that 74% of the sample had encountered workplace discrimination followed by within Other social groups (23%), from friends/acquaintances (21%), in relation to education (19%); In public places (18%) and while seeking work (7%).

Those who identified as Druid reported that 63% of discrimination in their experience was in the workplace, followed by from friends and acquaintances (26%), in relation to education (26%), while seeking work (18%). While in other social groups, 18% of Druids felt some level of religious discrimination, with 18% also reporting discrimination while seeking work. Finally, 14% reported discrimination from their family and 5% in a public place. The Baha'i respondents cited the workplace as the most frequent site where discrimination occurred in their experience (45%), followed by education (30%), while seeking work (21%), in other social groups (17%), from friends/acquaintances (9%), Family (8%) and 2% reported experiencing discrimination in a public place. The final group, Born Again Christians reported that 59% had experienced discrimination in the workplace, with 25% finding the same in relation to education in Ireland. 25% of Born Again Christians indicated discriminatory behaviour within other social groups, followed by from family (21%), from friends and acquaintances (18%), in a public place (14%) and finally while seeking work (7%).
Table 3.16 Religious Affiliation and Sites of Discrimination (Workplace, Public Areas, Education, Social Spheres)

(Please note that multiple sites were indicated by respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>In the workplace</th>
<th>While seeking work</th>
<th>Education at any level</th>
<th>Within other social groups (parent groups, community groups etc)</th>
<th>In a public place (walking down the street, playground, car park etc)</th>
<th>Within your family</th>
<th>From friends or acquaintances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientology</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah's Witness</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druid</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baha'i</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born Again Christian</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.17 Religious Affiliation and Sites of Discrimination (Transport, Services and Elsewhere)

(Please note that multiple sites were indicated by respondents)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>Banks, insurance companies/other financial institution</th>
<th>While in shops, pubs or restaurants</th>
<th>Accommodation or housing</th>
<th>Health services (GP, hospital, specialist treatment)</th>
<th>Accessing transport services</th>
<th>Accessing any other public services</th>
<th>Elsewhere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientologist</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah's Witness</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druid</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baha'i</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born Again Christian</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.16b shows the results of discrimination experienced in relation to banks, insurance companies/other financial institution, while in shops, pubs or restaurants; accommodation or housing; Health services (GP, hospital, specialist treatment); accessing transport services; accessing any other public services and elsewhere. All of these categories for all group counted for less than 5% of each groups' responses, with the highest rated being for the Evangelical group who reported that 4% had experienced discrimination in shop/pubs and restaurants, as well as 4% in relation to seeking accommodation or housing. 3% of the Baha'i participants reported discriminatory behaviour in relation to seeking accommodation or housing. Again, the low figures reported especially in relation to public services and other service outlets is perhaps indicative of the improvements made within the Irish public and private sectors to increase staff awareness and education in relation to minorities in the state, with the exception of education provision which is a much more complex area, and which will be discussed in detail in chapter four.

The final religious specific table looks at the top sites of religious identity concealment, indicating the social areas where the participants had concealed their religious affiliation from others. The initial overall figures were unprecedented in their scale, and the break down in table 3.17 shows the range of sites selected. I have chosen to present the top six sites as the remaining categories were very sparsely populated across all groups. Again, all sites that applied could be selected; therefore the percentage shown is per religious affiliation. Over half of the Members of the Elim Pentecostal group (52%) reported hiding their religious affiliation at work, with 34% concealing their religious identity while seeking work; 32% has concealed from friends and acquaintances, followed by from their family(27%), within other social
groups (24%), with 14% concealing their religious background in relation to education. Mormons also cited the workplace as the place where most concealed their identity (74%), followed by education (62%), seeking work (55%), from friends and acquaintances (45%), within other social groups (25%) and only 8% from their families. This low figure in relation to familial concealment may be related to high rate of religious hereditary within the Mormon religion (Pew 2012), making concealment in this area unnecessary.

Scientologists reveal high levels of concealment across all six categories, with 94% claiming to have not revealed their religious identity in the workplace and 86% reporting to have concealed their identity in relation to other social groups. 79% have concealed their religion while seeking work and 78% indicate having concealed their religious identity from friends and acquaintances. This is followed by concealment in relation to education (71%) and from one's family (49%). Members of the Jehovah's Witnesses also cite the workplace as the most frequent site of religious concealment (65%), followed by in relation to education at 35%. This is followed by from friends and acquaintances (32%) and while seeking work (21%). The response figures in relation from one's family and from other social groups were very low, at 14% and 6% respectively. The low figure in relation to other social groups could be contributed to the manner in which members of the Jehovah's witnesses in essence withdraw from the world to concentrate on their religious activities and as such may not take part in many other social groups.
The Evangelical group, in common with all the groups, reported the workplace as the most common site of religious concealment (67%), with 60% not revealing their religious background in relation to education. This is followed by from friends and acquaintances (55%), in other social groups (54%), while seeking work (34%), with 15% of the group concealing their religion from their family. Again, there is quite an even spread across the sites, with the assumption that it may be harder to conceal a religious identity from one's family, hence the low scores in the category. In relation to Druids, who reported consistently high levels of religious discrimination throughout the survey, 88% have concealed their religion at work, with 81% not revealing their religious background to their friends/acquaintances. This is followed by in other social groups (74%); while seeking work (64%); in education (63%) with 29% choosing to conceal their religious identity from their families, perhaps echoing again the difficulty of concealment from one's family.

The Baha'i respondents indicated that 51% had hidden their religion at work, with 49% choosing to conceal their identity while seeking work. 35% replied that they had concealed from friends/acquaintances, followed by education (32%); in other social groups (16%) and within their family (14%). The low figure in relation to other social groups is incongruous with many of the others and therefore, I chose to explore the issue with some members of the religious group. It would appear that there are many social groups attached to the denomination, such as social action movements, community projects, etc. and that the members might spend more time in church related groups than in other more secular gatherings.
Finally, the Born Again Christian respondents claimed to have concealed their religious identity with most frequency in the workplace (78%), with 66% concealing their religion from friends/acquaintances. 64% admitted to concealment while seeking work, followed by in relation to education (58%), in other social groups (43%), with over 33% concealing it from their family.

The results point to religious based discrimination as a sizable problem across the groups surveyed, with all groups indicating areas within which they have received or anticipated negative social reactions. Therefore, the issues would seem to be somewhat commonplace across all eight groups, with some small variations. To put these results in some context, the report on all types of discrimination in Ireland by Russell et al. (2008) found that 12% of the sample had experienced some form of discrimination, which was deemed as "quite high" (p.6). Within this study, 32% was the lowest indicated figure in relation to experiences of discrimination by the Jehovah's Witnesses. Discrimination is also indicated to be related to a variety of social spheres, some of which are more formal such as in employment or education, while others are more informally regulated, such as in social groups, or with friends and acquaintances. However, these results do not indicate if discrimination stems from the formal work or educational environment (owner, management, teacher, board of management, etc.) or relates to the more informal aspects, such as from colleagues or others accessing education. The high level of reported concealment across all groups is also an issue which requires closer inspection.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>In the workplace</th>
<th>From friends or acquaintances</th>
<th>Within other social groups (parent groups, community groups etc)</th>
<th>While seeking work</th>
<th>In relation to education at any level</th>
<th>within your family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mormon</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scientology</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jehovah's Witness</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelical</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Druid</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baha'i</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born Again Christian</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion and Analysis of the Affiliation Specific Results

Overall, all groups claimed the workplace as the highest site overall where they experienced discrimination, followed by education, in other social groups, from friends/acquaintances and family, in public and while seeking work. However, the results show a wide spread of discrimination across the sites and across the various groups, so much so that no set pattern appears in relation reported discrimination. Scientologist and Druids report high levels of discrimination across many of the sites, as do the Born Again Christian groups, Mormons and Evangelicals. The response rates fluctuate across the sites, with Scientology scoring highest in relation to discrimination in the workplace, while Mormons report the highest levels in relation to education.

In relation to identity concealment across these sites, there is a far more definite pattern emerging, with Scientologist, Druids, Born Again Christians, Evangelical and Mormons reporting the highest levels of concealment across the sites selected. All eight groups cited the workplace as the most frequent site of concealment, with over 50% of each group having at least one incident to report. As discussed in chapter one, each of the groups have had controversial elements in their past or present. Scientology and Druidism are both non-conventional forms of religion, indeed some would argue that they qualify as religions at all (Kent 2008). Scientology in particular has been allegedly involved in fraudulent practices, financial coercion and tactics of intimidation (Barker 2006, Wallis 1976; Melton 2001; Urban 2011) which may contribute to negative social reactions. There are also those that question its claim as a religion, with some critics claiming that this is solely for tax purposes, or that its religious aspect is just one strand of a multi-faceted organisation. Druidism,
particularly in an Irish sense dates back to at least the seventh century (Humphrey 2009) and has recently undergone a revival in contemporary Ireland (Cunliffe 2010). There have been several, unsubstantiated reports of Druidism and its association with Satanism and satanic practices, which have largely gone unchallenged with an Irish context. Several Druids during informal discussions regarding this research reported that in their experience, the vast majority of people know little or nothing about actual Druidism practices or beliefs. One Druid leader spoke openly of his attempts to become part of a governmental inter-faith discussion group on religious pluralism in Ireland, which was turned down on several occasions. To my knowledge, no Druid or Pagan group has had national level representation, on matters of inter-faith dialogue or religious pluralism.

While there are various groups which label themselves as Born-Again Christian, there are no set religious criteria for what such a group actually entails, other than that they claim to be reborn again in Christ. There have been strong connections in the United States between Born-Again Christians and Mormon denominations with fundamentalism and right-wing politics, which has been prominent in the media and could affect Irish perceptions of such groups (Bromley and Breschel 1992; Beckford 1994; Wright 1997). The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints also suffers from historical connections to the practice of polygamy, and association with the breakaway group the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, whose leader has been found guilty of various criminal activities in the United States (Wright and Richardson 2011). Evangelical groups may also engender the suspicion of others with worship which involves possession by the Holy Spirit, speaking in tongues and exuberant displays during church gatherings (Emerson and Smith 2001).
In addition, many of the research participants expressed the lack of any true understanding of their religions within the Irish general public, and the absolute lack of objective, factual material available, so that people may make an informed decision. There is a tendency for those in small religious movements to promote only the positive elements, while those in anti-cult movements tend to focus exclusively on negative aspects. Objective representation of such groups lies in between these two extremes (Barker 2001) and it appears that this lack of factual information, positive, negative and neutral in Ireland is may be affecting public understanding and perceptions of these religious groups. The inaccuracy of some of the public discussion in Ireland on minority religions in is highlighted in the media portrayal of pacifist Baha'i and Buddhist groups as violent, extremist cults (Mulholland forthcoming). Research has indicated that the media is the source of information on small religious groups for most people (Barker 2001) and that most of it is negative (Richardson 1996; van Driel and Richardson 1988a, 1988b) Therefore, we cannot underestimate the manner in which the Irish and indeed wider global media, can influence public perceptions and inaccurate lay theories on religions such as these.

The issue of concealment also appeared prominently in the survey results, and has, I argue, much to tell us about the experience of and reactions to discrimination, and in consequence the wider social reaction to minority religious identities. Research into other stigmatised social identities, such as various sexual orientations; have shown that the reactions to negative social interaction and anticipated negative reactions are strong barometers of social attitude towards that identity (MacGreil 2011). However, we know very little sociologically about the concealment of religious identity. By exploring the experience, impact and reactions to discrimination, both actual and
anticipated, among the participants, I believe it is possible to gain insight into the lived experience of the individuals, across a variety of social sites and develop a deeper understanding of religious discrimination in Ireland. This will show what public perceptions, reactions and treatment they experience in their lives, and the level of reaction will enable this thesis to take the level of analysis from the micro-level to the macro-level, in keeping with my stated research aims.

It is my argument that the Irish social environment still displays much of the influence of the Roman Catholic Church in relation to religious affiliation, behaviour and norms, which has become entrenched in both our social system, media, our national psyche and openness to others. The response of the survey participants indicates the frequency of perceived religious discrimination, as well as the impact on the individuals, but crucially also seems to indicate the seriousness of not adhering in this social expectation in Ireland, so much so that concealment is the preferred option of many. This links back to the findings on discrimination in Canada (Seljack et al. 2007, 2008) and Australia (Bouma 2011) which indicated high levels of Catholic/Christian privilege and a type of institutional religionism, where it is implicitly expressed within society that this is the expected norm. Therefore, it may be the case that those who fall outside of this are in danger of being labelled as deviant and risk the consequential behaviour which that label engenders.

While the survey has been instructive in uncovering the scope, impact and reactions to discrimination among the groups, in order to comprehensively understand the dynamics between minority religious identities and Irish society, a qualitative approach is, I argue, also required. This will help understand the motivations and
effects of participants, as well as allow an exploration of their perception of the expected role and place of an individual's religion, especially a minority religion within Irish society. Therefore, the actual dynamics of how and why such discrimination within these settings requires further in-depth analysis, as it only by examining the perception of what is seen and felt as discriminatory, that we can being to understand the intersections of individuals, groups and Irish society, and examine how and why such identities become targets of negative social reactions, and the impact on those involved. In order to contextualise this further analysis, it is important to explore the evolution of Ireland's religious background, which has I argue a strong role to play in relation to how religious minorities are perceived and treated in Ireland, which I will discuss in chapter four. I will also extend the discussion in relation to in-group/out-group power dynamics and discrimination to the Irish context and explore how members of small religious groups might become labelled as "out" or "deviant" within the current Irish context.

Conclusion

This chapter displayed the results of the survey conducted among members of the eight minority religious groups. Following a discussion of the quantitative research strategy which underpinned this section of the study, I laid out my questionnaire design and the type of purposive sampling I utilised, known as Chain Referral Sampling. This resulted in a research sample which was predominately white and Irish, therefore achieving the research aim of focussing primarily on religious rather that ethnic factors. An overview of the groups showed high levels of religious discrimination across all groups which took part, across a wide range of sites. The most frequently cited sites of discrimination being In the Workplace, Education,
Within Other Social Groups and From Friends and Acquaintances. The study also revealed very high levels of identity concealment, with over 70% confirming that they had done so within the past five years. This correlated with the participants sense that small religious groups were predominately viewed as negative in Ireland, which most connected to the Roman Catholic Church, a lack of religious understanding and the media. The final section explored the affiliation specific breakdown of the results, and showed that while all groups showed relatively high levels of discrimination, Scientology and Druids scored most highly followed by Born Again Christians, Evangelicals and Mormons.

In my discussion and analysis, I explored these results in the light of the controversies which surround these groups, research on what influences negative social reactions and the prevailing social environment. In order to truly contextualise these results, a full exploration of the Irish social context, the reach of the media and the history of our religious landscape is required, which I cover next.
Chapter Four
The Irish Religious Context

Introduction
The previous chapter of this thesis laid out the findings of my survey research into religious discrimination and stigmatisation among eight non ethno-religious groups in Ireland and the results indicate high levels of discrimination and religious identity concealment. Groups which reported very high levels were Scientologists, Druids, Born Again Christians, Mormons and the Baha'i. In order to further analyse these findings in a contextual manner, in this chapter I will explore the possible reasons behind this experience of discrimination by examining the historical and contemporary social environment and making links to the theoretical perspectives which I am using in this study.

Ireland's relationship with religion is complex and appears to be deep-rooted within the social structure and the national psyche (Anderson 2010). The Roman Catholic Church has completely dominated the religious landscape since the end of the nineteenth century and has come to influence many spheres of Irish social life. This was the outcome of a complex interaction between social, political and religious change (Hornsby-Smith & Whelan 1994), where the Catholic Church became the primary provider of education, health care and welfare, as well as providing a moral compass on the personal issues of the nation (Inglis 1987, 1998; Anderson 2010).
Despite recent changes in the church's social status and influence which have caused some to herald the end of Catholic Ireland (Kenny 2000), I argue, following Andersen (2010) and Inglis (2007, 2005) that the influence of the Church is still strongly tied to social identity in Ireland and may be a contributing factor to the treatment of minority religions in Ireland.

In this chapter, I will examine several interrelated elements which I argue may help create and maintain a social environment which is inhospitable to small religious groups. In the first instance, I will examine the evolution of Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, examining the changing formations of Irish Catholicism since the nineteenth century. This socio-historical analysis will culminate with the emergence of a type of cultural Catholicism at the beginning of the 21st century, which has become separated from the institutional Roman Catholic Church, but is still socially powerful and may have a direct bearing on the negative treatment of small religious groups in Ireland. Next, I will discuss the impact of this Catholic hegemony on other Irish religious minorities, which effectively sidelined such groups from research agendas and public narratives, instead casting them in a negative and dangerous other in society. Finally, I will explore how these elements became infused in the growth of "anti-cult" sentiments and anti-cult organisations in Ireland. The social perceptions of minority religions have an important role to play in the action and justification of discrimination and the designation of stigma; and in order to understand the current attitudes to small religious groups in Ireland, I feel it is essential to trace the trajectory of these anti-cult stereotypes in Irish society. I will examine the documented history of anti-cult sentiments, the influence of the media and sensationalist framing of small religious groups in Ireland will be also be explored, as these were extensively
highlighted by the research participants. These elements will then be brought together in a Foucauldian exploration of discourse, knowledge and power, displaying how the confluence of historically designated identity, contested social space and the discourse surrounding the provision of “truth” or knowledge in a society can be instrumental in the creation of discrimination. Power, as Link and Phelan (2001) state, is at the heart of stigmatisation and as such forms an important element of this study's exploration of discrimination.

The Roman Catholic Church in Ireland

In this section, I will explore the backdrop to the creation of Ireland's religious landscape and examine how Ireland’s religious history may impact on the perception of religious groups outside of Roman Catholicism. Until recently, the Republic of Ireland was viewed as an essentially monolithic, highly religious nation (Fahey et al. 2005; Fahey 1994; Hornsby-Smith and Whelan 1994). As late as 1986, Inglis (1987) noted that "one of the first impressions of the country that marks it out as different from other Western societies, is that the Catholic Church is a strong and active force in everyday life" (p.1) and many researchers have pointed to the manner in which Roman Catholicism appears "imprinted in Irish culture" (Kenny 2000, p.17). Since the 1990’s there have been marked changes in the levels of mass attendance, belief in church teaching and various other aspects of religious practices as discussed in chapter one and which I will discuss at greater length in this chapter. However, despite these changes in outward expressions of religiosity, it is my contention that a type of cultural Catholicism is very prevalent and powerful within contemporary Irish society. Anderson (2010) for example, in her exploration of nationalism and Roman Catholicism, highlights the almost symbiotic relationship between Irish national,
religious and personal identities, culminating in the creation of a culturally distinct habitus (Bourdieu 1977, 1990). The concept of habitus refers to the idea of embodied practices, dispositions and beliefs within individuals which emanate from interactions with the social environment around them (Bourdieu 1977) and Anderson uses it effectively to explore this change from a very public religiosity in Ireland’s past to a far more muted, individualised but still Catholic religiosity since the 1990’s. Inglis (1998, 1987) has also utilised the concept of habitus in his sociological exploration of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, where he explored how an individual's social status stemmed from their normative behaviour as a "Good Catholic". He argues that within the past twenty years the links between this public display of Catholicism and social status has greatly diminished, due to a decline in church involvement in social institutions, wider social changes and various scandals within the church itself, but remains still an essential component of Irish cultural identity.

**History of the Irish Catholic Church**

The history of Irish Catholicism is a complex one, while it is not within the scope of this thesis to fully explore this trajectory, a brief overview of the religious history of Ireland in relation to the Catholic Church is vital to contextualise the contemporary social environment in which this research takes place. It is widely agreed that Ireland began a conversion to Christianity from the 5th and 6th century onwards (Flanagan 2010; Herran and Brown 2002). Previous to this, Ireland was a nation based on various folk religious beliefs consisting of various strands of Paganism, Druidism and types of Shamanistic practices (O’hOgain 2002; Cuniffe 1997). Following the conversion to Christianity by the Roman Empire in 380 AD (Duffy 2002), the budding Roman Catholic religion began to spread throughout Europe, with
missionaries working to convert the populace to this new religion. It was found that when attempting to convert the Irish that there was less resistance if various elements of the traditional religious forms such as Druidism or Paganism could be incorporated (Gibbon 1992; Carroll 1999). Therefore, some of the cultural elements of Roman Catholicism that emerged were particular to Ireland, such as the making of St. Brigit’s Crosses from reeds on the first day of February, which echoes Wiccan and Pagan practices at the commencement of Spring (Carroll 1999). This set the tone for the formation of a type of religiosity which incorporated the historical and cultural experience of the nation.

Irish Catholicism continued to evolve amid the background of various invasions over the centuries from the Vikings circa 800 A.D. to the Normans in the late 12th century, which culminated with Ireland being under direct British rule from 1169 until the declaration of Independence in 1922. Despite this duration of time, the British rule of Ireland has been referred to as nominal up until the late-medieval period (Haigh 1993), when complex religious issues and competing political views altered relations between the two nations. Henry VIII explicitly declared himself King of Ireland following a failed Irish rebellion in 1534, but it wasn’t until the British crowns’ break with the Catholic authorities in Rome following their refusal to grant Henry a divorce, that the divisions between Roman Catholics and Protestants become far more entrenched (Haigh 1993). This seemingly remote event would come to have a direct bearing on the religious climate in Ireland - the consequences of which are still evident today. As Britain evolved into a nation with various types of Protestantism, Ireland remained staunchly Catholic and became increasingly opposed to British Rule. In order to quell this, a process of colonisation within the Island of Ireland which
became known as the Plantations took place, with religious hierarchies being created not only within the nation, but also within very specific regions (Littleton and Rynne 2009). While evidence of such plantations date back to the late 12th century, with the repopulation of citizens to outside of Dublin (or “The Pale”) and Mary I’s plantations of the midlands in 1556, it was the Munster plantations dating from 1585, the Ulster plantations of 1603, along with the Jacobean plantations and Cromwellian land plantations of the 17th century that were most relevant in this context. Historians have described the plantations as being a poorly organised, slow, reactive process with little foresight and punctuated with various rebellions. Yet despite this they would have a deep and lasting effect on the religious climate in Ireland (Rutherfurd 2011; Moody et al. 2009). In a practical sense, these plantations were no more than the resettlement of sectors of the population. However, within a sociological context such actions clearly signalled the perceived threat which Ireland posed to its conquerors and how the solidarity of religious-based nationalism became a rallying force for an oppressed nation (Hempton 1996). This re-settling of the Catholic and Protestants allowed the emergence of religious hierarchies and divisions, particularly in the Munster and Ulster regions which would have a long and divisive effect on religious and social relations (Cairnes and Mercier 1984).

While these divisions is especially true of Protestants and Catholics within the context of Northern Ireland, these events could have a bearing on the perceived reactions to other small religious groups in the Republic of Ireland. This has not been explored in a sociological context to date and could provide a fertile line of enquiry into the genesis of the Irish contemporary religious climate, not simply into the divisions between Roman Catholics and Protestants in Ireland, but also into reactions to other
religious groups. By manipulating the religious demographics of the nation, a basic climate of distrust of religious others may well have been created (Madeley 2003), demarcating the boundaries of Irish national identity in the process. In connecting the significance of such events to the topic of this research, it is possible that this element of distrust could still be evident today, but as yet little research exists in this context.

**Institutional Church, Church-State Relations and the Rise of Irish Cultural Catholicism**

Following the Plantations and solidification of Irish opposition to British rule, a clearer sense of Irish identity began to emerge, and it was an identity which became fused with the Roman Catholic religion. A Marxist analysis of the institutional dominance achieved by the Church since the 19th century (Madeley 2003) clearly points to the manner in which this mass adoption of religion by the Irish was also actively encouraged by the ruling British class, as it provided a distraction from revolting against the status quo. By 1845, this element of social control was passed from the apparatus of the state to the hands of the church, who had by then "become an independent power bloc to which the British state had decided to bequeath the task of civilising and socially controlling the Irish people" (Inglis 1998, p.102-103). From the 19th century onward, the involvement of the Church in such social institutions as education, welfare and health brought religion into almost every realm of Irish life and solidified the convergence between Irish ethnicity and Irish religious affiliation (Keogh and McNamara 2007; Keogh 1994). This relationship between the Catholic religion and the Irish sense of itself as a nation would be further cemented through the struggle which the Church and the emerging Irish state shared in creating an independent state (Hornsby-Smith and Whelan 1994), leading to a complex
The intertwining of Church and State. The Church's success in achieving this domination can also be linked to the shared vision of the state and Church in creating and maintaining a Catholic, rural, traditional Ireland (Inglis 1998). What emerged was a state which had significant levels of Church influence within social institutions, essentially turning Ireland into a confessional state with the provision of "special recognition" of the Roman Catholic Church in the 1937 constitution (Keogh and McNamara 2007).

These complex factors factored into the Church's rise to social, political and moral dominance in Ireland and combined with few religious alternatives and high levels of censorship from outside sources, Catholicism became the accepted norm (Kenny 2000; Inglis 1987, 1998). Importantly, it is at this juncture that we can begin to see the emergence of Irish religious uniformity, in respect of religious affiliation and within state institutions (Nic Ghiolla Phadraig 1995) which further solidifies the normalcy of Roman Catholicism at both individual and organisational level. Inglis (1998) provides a succinct snapshot of this social penetration in his comprehensive exploration of the Church and state in Ireland. In the 1970's, the religious orders had direct control over 46 private hospitals, 25 nursing homes and 32 old age homes which not only demonstrates their hold on the care sector (ref). Inglis (1998, p.61) also argues that the Church held the “monopoly of knowledge” relating to the life course, the body and sexuality in Ireland. Such penetration at all levels helped to solidify the processes of religious socialisation, the power to designate what is known and not known and to legitimise a preferential discourse within Irish society (Inglis 1998).
This dominance was further augmented by the Church’s powerful influence over Irish media output at the time (Donnelly and Inglis 2010) which contained little or no critique of the institution or its’ practices. A closer analysis of media output on Church-related matters from the establishment of the Free State in 1922 until the early 1990’s highlights the promotion of a Catholic ethos in relation to the coverage of social, political and moral debates (Breton 2007), which also effectively sidelined other religious denominations from the public forum in Ireland (Cosgrove et al. 2011). The level of Church influence within the education sphere was considerable, as it brought about socialisation within the faith, with little or no outside input or accountability

...from the 1920s to 1950s, the Church’s role in national self-definition, in law and the constitution, in social policy, education, healthcare and many other areas grew—to the extent that in some areas (such as schooling), the church was the institutional system to an exceptional degree


The intent of this can be seen in a Council of Education report which stated that “the dominant purpose of secondary schools is the inculcation of religious values and ideals” (Council of Education Report, 1962, p.14). Coupled with its’ influence on education, health and welfare, the power of the Church on public discourse in Ireland was such that it became "embedded" within both the social structure and the national psyche (Anderson 2010), leading to the development of a Catholic doxa in Irish society where it became the norm to view the Irish as almost naturally Catholic (Inglis 1998). This dominance would last from the turn of the nineteenth century until the 1960's (Keogh 1988; Inglis 1998; Hornsby-Smith and Whelan 1994), which saw the Irish state move away from the vision of a traditional, rural Ireland and towards the promotion of a more modern, industrialised state (Anderson 2010).
Nic Ghiolla Phadraig (1995) illustrates the steady decline in the Church’s influence on both societal and personal matters from this period, the number of church personnel (Inglis 1998), and individual levels of religiosity (Andersen and Lavery 2007; Fahey et al. 2005). Keogh (1988) traces this change in church-state relations and points particularly to the process of liberalisation in relation to censorship, educational reforms and economic positioning to be key factors in the separation of church and state. This paradigm change, coupled with the removal of Article 44 of the Constitution regarding the special position of the Catholic Church in 1972, led to debates surrounding the appropriateness of Church involvement in the political realm (Keogh 1988) and the State began to formally extricate itself from the previous symbiotic relationship.

In addition to these wider social developments, there were also important changes within the Church over the corresponding period. The 1960's became a period of reassessment for the Church both in Ireland and worldwide, leading to internal changes within the Catholic denomination and culminating with the Second Ecumenical Council of the Vatican 1962-1965 (Vatican II). Major institutional changes saw a move away from a totalitarian religion which demanded obedience and reverence from its followers, to a more individualised, inclusive (Flannery 1975) but essentially relativized and somewhat fragmented religion (Anderson 2010). These changes had the effect of altering the perception of religion for a new generation of Irish people (Fogerty et al. 1984). The Church became viewed as one voice among many on social issues, with many Irish people forming their own opinions on personal matters, rather than simply submitting to the Church's stated position (Fahey et al. 2005). The Church's reluctance to admit culpability for various financial and sexual
scandals, which have led to internal divisions within the organisation, are also seen by Inglis (1998, 2010) as particularly damaging to its’ public image in Ireland. However, the Church still retains a dominant influence in education and health through its ownerships of many schools and hospitals in Ireland.

As Ireland became a more outward-looking nation, moving to free trade models of business and became a member of the European Economic Community (EEC), the population consequently became more aware of global attitudes and developments in terms of lifestyle and society (Collins and Cradden 2004). From the 1970's onwards, the state moved towards slowly towards modernity, culminating with the Celtic Tiger era (1994-2006) which saw Ireland becoming one of the most globalised nations on earth (Foreign Policy Index 2003). This period was characterised by a rise in immigrants, low unemployment, substantial increases in GDP and the growth of females in the workplace, as well as increased consumerism, global influences and awareness of lifestyle choices (Donovan and Murphy 2013). These broad socio-economic changes resulted in an important change in Ireland’s collective psyche (Kuhling and Keohane 2007, 2004), accompanied by increased functional differentiation at a systemic level and a rise in individualism at the micro-level, all of which impacted on in its relationship with the Catholic Church, which I will examine next.

**Modernity and Secularisation in Ireland**

The changes in attendance and adherence to the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland in the past 20 years, accompanied by increases in societal modernity, have led to explorations of secularisation in Ireland. Secularisation has a long and controversial
history within sociological theory. Secularisation theory concerns itself with the decrease of the influence of religion in the various realms of the social and individual world (Malesevic 2008) and is often connected to the impact of differentiation, rationalisation, modernisation and the rise of individualism (Swatos and Christiano 1999; Tschannen 1991). Its’ origins can be traced to the rise of rationality at the time of the Enlightenment, which was predicted to replace the need for reliance on supernatural or irrational ideas (Bellah 1971) to explain our world. Secularisation as a theory of change has, however, been controversial with many claiming that it is less of a process and more of a proclaimed doctrine or agenda which remained essentially untested (Luckmann 1983; Hadden 1988; Stark and Bainbridge 1987). Perhaps most problematic for adherents to secularisation theory is the ongoing growth and emergence of New Religious Movements (Stark and Bainbridge 1980) and the growth and spread of various fundamentalisms in various parts of the world in spite of growing modernity and differentiation, especially in Islamic nations where the impact of modernity seems to have actively reinvigorated religion (Berger 1992).

The links between modernisation and secularism have also long been made, but there is evidence of high levels of persistent and growing religions in ultra-modernised nations such as the United States, and conversely the presence of secularisation before the onset of modernity such as in Berger’s exploration of the high culture of China (Berger 1992). Such evidence has forced secularisation scholars to reassess the processes of secularisation, looking instead at the secularisation as multi-level, context specific series of outcomes (Wilson 1966; Stark and Bainbridge 1985; Berger 1999; Lechner 1991). Therefore, it appears that secularisation can be a very context-specific process and one which must be borne in mind when exploring the social
context related to the religious discrimination reported in this thesis. Malesevic (2008, p.24) is very much aware of these issues and utilises a more nuanced neo-secularisation theory to explore the Irish context. Neo-secularisation theory looks at various social realms exploring how religious change becomes manifest at various societal levels (Dobbelare 1999) Malesevic has produced a view of the theory which will be useful in this context:

...secularisation can be seen in the decay of influence and control of churches over society, in the decrease of people’s interest in a religious explanation the world and nature, in the replacement of religious values by empirical, measureable, rational values and in the decrease of attendance at mass and the number of people who take religious sacraments.

Building on Yamane’s (1997) and Chaves’s (1994) work to increase the scope of secularisation theory from one of inevitable religious decline to a sociological exploration of religious change in various realms, Malesevic (2010) utilises an exploration of inter-institutional systems which views religion as just one of a number of actors in the social realm, echoing Berger (1992) theory of pluralisation. Therefore, a neo-secular approach would examine the context specific elements of religious change, the various levels of societal analysis required to holistically examine religious change and the various processes involves. Malesevic (2008, p.26) highlights how

... taking into account specific geographical and social areas, together with the distinctions between micro (individual), mezzo (organisational) and macro (societal) levels of analysis, secularisation is understood as a process of changing the scope of control exercised by religious authority in various spheres of life.

At a macro-level, the emphasis is very much on the impact of differentiation on the social spheres and specifically at the manner in which modernised society has become functionally differenced (Parsons 1966, 1971; Luckmann 1967). Evidence of this can be seen in surveys exploring aspects of Irish religiosity such as the European Values Study (1981, 1985, 1990) which show marked decreases in the how individuals are
influenced by the church’s teaching on moral and personal issues. Many now point to how the Church is viewed as providing for individuals spiritual needs, but has declined in its importance in other realms. Church attendance in Ireland, although still one of the highest in Western Europe, has declined rapidly, dropping from around 90% in the early 1970's to 50% in 2003 (Fahey et al.2006).

Table 4.1 reflects Malesevic’s (2010) discussion on changes in various age cohorts’ attitudes towards the Church and how the changes at an institutional and organisational level are connected to the individual level of religious behaviour in Ireland. At an individual level, survey evidence highlights a decrease in mass attendance, adherence to the basic teaching of the Church, especially in the younger cohort, leading to what Inglis calls the emergence of “Individualist Catholics” who have distanced themselves from the institutional Church, but who retain their Catholic identity and some rituals of the church, but reject many of the Church’s doctrines or teachings (Inglis 2007; Malesevic 2008; Dowling 2000).

Some would argue that religion should be seen as different from secular spheres as by its very nature it does not fit into the rationalised world (Berger 1992, 1967; Luckmann 1979, 1983). However, neo-secularisation theory looks at how the trajectory of system differentiation is not a top-down process, but rather a lateral one where religion looks to expand the scope of their power within other institutions in society (Malesevic 2008). When exploring Ireland, Malesevic (2008) declares that such societal differentiation is a new process for Irish society (p.27) and one that must be approached with caution in relation to any analysis of societal change.
Table 4.1: Weekly mass attendance in the Republic of Ireland 1981-1998

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>Comments</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>94%</td>
<td>Older people</td>
<td>Survey of Diocese of Cashel and Emly published in Irish Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>People over 65</td>
<td>MRBI poll for Irish Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>All people</td>
<td>European Values Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>Connacht/Ulster people</td>
<td>MRBI poll for Irish Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>All people</td>
<td>European Values Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988/89</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>All people</td>
<td>Mac Gréil (1996)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>All people</td>
<td>MRBI poll for Irish Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>People 18-34</td>
<td>Survey of Diocese of Cashel and Emly published in Irish Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>All people</td>
<td>RTE Prime Time poll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>Dubliners</td>
<td>MRBI poll for Irish Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>18-24 yr olds</td>
<td>MRBI poll for Irish Times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>Urban unemployed</td>
<td>European Values Survey</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As discussed above, there came a gradual parting of the state and Church from the 1960’s onwards, with marked changes in economic and political priorities which eventual culminated in the Celtic Tiger era (1998-2006). However, while the Church may appear to have been relegated to just another voice trying to influence the Irish state, Inglis points to its enduring symbolic and ideological influence in Irish cultural life, and institutionally within the education system (Inglis 2007, 1998). His study of the changing forms of Irish relations with the church has stated that Irish Catholics are becoming more detached from the institutionalised church, but have not untangled themselves from Catholicism as part of their identity and historical legacy (Inglis 2007, p. 213-4). Therefore, it is essential to explore how secularisation manifests
within Irish society and how this may make a contribution to our understanding of reactions to other religious groups in Ireland.

As the previous discussion on the history of the Church and state in Ireland highlighted, the dominant position which the Church enjoyed and the power it exerted over the populace (NicGhiloa Phadraig 1995; Inglis 1998) coupled with the intertwining of religious identity and nationalism meant that...

...Catholicism and nationalism became the two pillars on which Irish political culture rested. Because Irish became synonymous with being Catholic for 95 percent of the population of the Free State from 1922 onward, it has proved difficult not (to) be a Catholic in Ireland, for fear of losing one’s national identity (1966, p.139).

There is ample evidence from recent surveys indicating that despite these issues and the apparent anti-Catholic discourse in Ireland, that the Church still retains a well-respected position in the state. Research conducted in 2009 finds that the "Church is well regarded in Ireland, but this does not translate to regular weekly Mass attendance or individual professions of belief in some of the tenets of Christian teaching" (O’Mahoney 2010, p.19). To put this in context, the Iona Institute has explored the level of confidence in social institutions and found a greater level of confidence in the church within the Republic than any other social institution (Iona Institute 2011), though it should be noted that the Iona Institute is a conservative, Christian-orientated organisation (see http://www.ionainstitute.ie/ for more information).

These findings calls into question any assumption of the Church having little or no status in contemporary Irish society, and reinforces my argument that despite changes in attendance and individual issues of morality, the Roman Catholic Church remains a
shaping force within Ireland, within both its social structures and the cultural milieu within Irish society. It is my position that this influence, which appears to operate in tandem with some degree of secularism and religious pluralism, could be shaping social attitudes to minority religions in Ireland. When asked about the perceived influence on public perceptions of small religious groups in Ireland, the majority of my survey sample (32.7%) cited the Roman Catholic Church as the main source of negative images, followed by the lack of religious knowledge (27.2%), and the media (24.1%). Therefore, the casting of minority religions as an out-group in Ireland appears to be linked by the respondents to the two main agents of transmission regarding religion in Ireland. This provides an important link from the individual's experience to the Irish social environment, and also underscores the power of the Catholic culture and the media in creating other religious groups as "other".

This acknowledges that institutional change may be occurring, but still retains a powerful cultural significance. To further emphasise the caution which must be taken when examining secularisation in Ireland, a description of a move to the privatisation of religion as a description of Ireland would also not be accurate at this juncture. Instead, Malesevic (2008, p.30) points to

... a gradual loosening of the hegemonic presence of not only the Catholic Church as an institution in the public sphere, but also the weakening of Catholicism as the guiding principle – it is more about utilitarian rationality brought about by social and economic changes than personalised religion.

What this discussion of neo-secularisation theory highlights is the issues of individualisation, differentiation and pluralism which have only begun to really take effect in Ireland and the complex and non-linear manner in which religious change
can operate, leading to the loss of religious authority, religious monopoly and the rise of “creative Catholics” which create a personalised bricolage of what the Roman Catholic church has to offer (Inglis 2007).

In summarising the evidence of secularisation in Ireland, research has shown marked age difference in relation to attitudes to the institutional church as Malesevic (2008) points to the contagion model of religious change (Dobbelaere 1999) as being most applicable to the Irish situation. The contagion model of religious change shows how behaviours can lag behind changes in religious belief and the examination of cohort changes in beliefs in Ireland may show evidence of this, as the level of belief and confidence and reliance in the church and its teachings are falling generationally (see table 4.1). Therefore, a neo-secularisation approach is more applicable in the Irish circumstances for the following reasons. The process of modernisation, urbanisation and functionally differentiated society are viewed as tied to the process of secularisation. Yet, as Malesevic (2008) and Inglis (1998) point out industrialisation, as is commonly understood, did not really take place in Ireland and economic modernisation has only occurred within the past twenty years.

This economic change was followed much more slowly by a gradual social and cultural modernisation of Ireland, so therefore we cannot make any definitive pronouncements on the links between such agents of modernisation and religious change. The separation of Church and state in Ireland has only occurred very recently therefore any pronouncements of widespread secularism are quite premature. Neo-secularisation theory allows for more context specific analysis and a far more nuanced exploration of the processes and interconnections between the societal, organisational
and individual spheres of religious activity and participation, which I argue is very much required in exploring the changing religious environment in Ireland.

Inglis (2007), Anderson (2010) and Malesevic (2008) conclude at this juncture that Ireland has experienced a great deal of societal secularisation, referring to the reduction of religious authority in other aspects of social life in Ireland and a moderate degree of individual secularisation. Evidence from various surveys (European Values Studies 1998; Iona Institute 2011) have pointed to a reduction in the numbers who believe in the Church’s right to authority over personal and moral issues, but a large proportion of the public believe in spiritual issues such as the existence of Heaven, God and an afterlife (Fahey et al. 1994, p.14). Interestingly, the adoption of a neo-secular perspective also takes into account how individuals may still be influenced by religious organisations despite their functional differentiation at a societal level which must also be taken into account in any exploration of religious change.

Finally, and in this case most pertinently, while the stronghold which the Roman Catholic Church once enjoyed in Irish society may have waned, the legacy of that stronghold has been slow to dissipate. This is most notable by its continued presence at various Irish public events, such as political pronouncements (Malesevic 2008) and especially within the retention by individuals of various ritualistic aspects such as christening, marriage and funeral rites (Inglis 2007). Therefore, the religious changes in Ireland are far more complex than a simple moving away from the institutional Church and could a contributing factor in any analysis of reactions to other religious groups in Ireland. Inglis points out that
... Irish Catholics still like the Catholic way of being spiritual and moral; they like being recognised and accepted as part of a community and the feeling of belonging and bonding. Being Catholic is part of their cultural heritage. It will not disappear quickly (Inglis 2007a, p. 218).

There is still strong evidence that a form of cultural Catholicism remains in Irish society, but we can see a change in the societal placing of the Catholic Church in relation to the reminder of society. The media became a crucial player in the orchestration of this change, playing an influential role in reconfiguring the role of the church in a newly globalised society. Inglis (2000) in fact pinpoints the power of the media within the past two decades as being directly instrumental in the Church's fall in social status. Previous to this, the Church enjoyed a preferential relationship with the media, who avoided reporting on certain religious events as they were "regarded by news executives as so extraordinarily hazardous (from a legal point of view) as to preclude detailed investigation" (Horgan 2003, p. 236). Brereton (2008) in his media analysis of the era from the establishment of the Free State until the 1980's, points to the underlying "major cultural considerations, with editors and journalists reluctant to challenge the prevailing religious orthodoxy" (p. 1). Since then, we have seen media critiques of church's stance on abortion, contraception, as well as critical coverage of financial and sexual scandals and the resulting church cover-up (Donnelley and Inglis 2010). In fact, some commentators, even those who are themselves critics of the Roman Catholic Church, have noted the growth of a distinct anti-religious slant in Irish media coverage (O'Toole 2012; Brereton 2008) creating a "very hostile environment" (O'Toole 2012, p. 4) for people of faith.

As well as reconfiguring the nations' relationship with the Church, the media has also applied this apparent anti-religious bias in their coverage of minority religions, and is
cited by the interviewees as instrumental in the spread of aggressive secularism within Irish public attitudes which appears prominently throughout the interview section of this thesis. Aggressive secularism has been defined as a publically aggressive attitude toward public displays of religion and religiosity and effectively espouses the removal of religious input and visibility from the public spheres of life. There is in fact, a harking back to the principles of the Enlightenment as discussed above in relation to rationality with proponents stating that

...on matters of society and science, religious belief should not even be a consideration yet, all too often, rational discourse is abandoned in favour of ancient religious assertions without a modicum of evidence or logic behind them. Stem cell research, gay marriage and abortion rights are just some of the issues where frank discussion is clouded by often misinformed religious objections

(Iona Institute 2012).

Such attitudes have been discussed at length within the Irish media context, but have had very little exploration in an academic sense. There have been a growing number of high profile proponents of secularism in Ireland such as the Irish Humanist Society which proposes the removal of religion from any contact with the public sphere and into the private arena, but it is debatable if such a stance could be labelled aggressive. Leading Irish columnist, John Waters (2009) has declared that secularism has led to increases in drink and drug consumption as well as rampant consumerism and adds that without religion we are less than human and our action reflects this. David Quinn of the Iona Institute (Quinn 2012) goes further to declare that such aggressive secularism “disenfranchises religious believers” and is now reaching cult-like status in Ireland. While there is some evidence of a growing interest in such matters judging on the sales of popular titles on secularism (Irish Times Book List 2012) and the growth of groups such as the Irish Humanist Society, very little is actually known about the
impact of this ideology at an empirical level in Ireland. Despite this, the Taoiseach (prime minister) of Ireland spoke in the Dail of his objection to the removal of religion from the state and reaffirmed his belief that religion deserves a space in the public sphere of Irish society (Malesevic 2010, p.38).

There are strong echoes of Cohen’s idea of moral panic in the tone and issues identified here, as there is very little evidence of the actual removal or the proposal to remove religious elements from public spheres. What appears to be occurring is increased sensitivity to other religions at an institutional level which may have previously served an almost total Catholic population – such as schools and hospitals for example. Very few of my research participants actually reported any issues with asking for the removal of Catholic religious objects within their hospital room or had issues with their specific dietary requirements. This may be better understood perhaps as a pluralisation of Ireland’s public sphere in relation to religion, rather than a removal of religion completely, as the accommodations for other religious and in fact no religious backgrounds are made. However, more research is required in this area before any firm indications can be made, but the findings discussed later in this thesis point to a growing removal of certain elements in relation to religiosity from the Irish public sphere.

In addition to Irish media coverage and the apparent influence of aggressive secularism, the ready availability of global media now provides Irish people with many lifestyle and societal alternatives, in essence replacing previous moral heterodoxy provided by the Church (Anderson 2010). Inglis (2000) reiterates this view by citing the media as the current primary shapers of the modern moral compass,
with a strong emphasis on material consumption and liberal individualism, quite at odds with the notion of self-sacrifice which the Church espoused. This change in the national way of "doing" religion – from all-encompassing, public and fervent displays of adherence to a far more compartmentalised and restrained approach is however, I argue, still staunchly Roman Catholic in its orientation. It is a central tenant of my argument that despite this increasingly secular approach, the emergence of Cultural Catholicism is still socially powerful, but operates in an evolving, paradoxical social climate where religion is seen to some extent as non-enlightened and irrational, yet is required in order to ensure smooth social interactions. This section has looked at the enduring power of the Church's position in Ireland, and forms an important element of my exploration of discrimination. Much can be gleaned from an exploration of the history of religious minorities and social research in Ireland, which despite its paucity is informative and provides a barometer of the Church's social power as well as a foundation for contemporary explorations of the Irish religious landscape, which I will discuss next.

**Minority Religions in Ireland**

A search of the research archives on religion in Ireland confirms that "it is as if the Irish have always been a holy and religious people who are devoted to the Catholic Church" (Inglis 1987, p.1), yet this has not been the case. As Cox points out, the dominant position of the Catholic Church in all aspects of Irish social life may make it seem so, but it would be "a mistake to think of a ‘traditional’ past of religious uniformity" (Cox 2010, p.6). From fields as diverse as archaeology and literature, there is ample evidence supporting the existence of numerous pre-Christian religions in Ireland (Raferty 1994), which were often of a diverse and essentially local nature.
In addition, historical research has shown that it wasn’t until the growth of the Catholic middle classes in the late nineteenth century that Catholic attendance at Mass began to grow until it reached a level of 89% at the turn of the century (Central Statistics Office 2011). Following this period, the Catholic Church became a dominant social force in Ireland influencing the political, educational, and moral discourses of the nation (Moran 2010; Lee 1988) as discussed above and effectively submerged the presence of any other religious groups in Ireland. So much so, that in compiling the research on minority religious groups in Ireland, like other scholars (see Mulholland forthcoming), I found few academic sources and therefore had to include the scant news archives available in order to attempt to build a comprehensive picture of Ireland's religious past.

There were many religious groups which managed to maintain a small, but marginalised presence in Ireland since the nineteenth century, based on my analysis of the social and academic research of the relevant period. The post-Reformation era saw an increase in the number and varieties of Protestant groups in Ireland such as the Anglican Church (Ford 1997), Presbyterianism in the sixteenth century (Fulton 1991) and the Quakers in the seventeenth century (Harrison 2008). During the eighteenth century, there is evidence of the presence of Unitarism (Edwards 1935) and Methodism (Hempton 1986), and the nineteenth century saw affiliations such as Christadelphians (Binfield 1982) start to take root in Ireland, along with a fluctuating Jewish population (Keogh 1998). These studies provide some evidence of the presence of minority religions in Ireland, alongside the Catholic Revival in the nineteenth century.
As capitalist expansion began to take place, world trade, colonisation and religious missionaries became more widespread, leading to increased contact with unfamiliar cultures and religious practices for the Irish who travelled. Many of those who were involved in such missionary work kept journals and records of their travels which were disseminated in Ireland, mainly among the middle classes (Cox 2010), which displays the existence of interest in religious and cultural "others" among the Irish of the time. Along with the increase in trade and travel, the transmission of knowledge increased greatly during the nineteenth century as the theories and perspectives of the Enlightenment reached Irish shores. Royle (1974) in his exploration of the hedge schools in Ireland found that the works of the English political thinker and radical Thomas Paine were frequently used as texts and were subsequently identified as a contributing factor in the rise of secularism which existed for a short time in some areas of Ireland (Cox 2011). However, this period would coincide with the rise of a Romantic Nationalism (Lennon 1994; Hutton 1991) which saw various elements of Ireland's cultural history being woven together to form a type "cultural religion" which became long embedded in Ireland's social and religious fabric. Hence, the privileged position of the Church was not based purely on religious elements, but was culturally bound to the changes of the time and the emergence of the Irish nation.

Despite this convergence of identities throughout the nineteenth century and into the first decades of the twentieth century, other established religions such as the Church of the Latter Day Saints (Barlow 1987), Islam (Scharbrodt 2011) and Buddhism (Cox 2011; Cox and Griffith 2011) were to be found in Ireland. At the turn of the twentieth century, groups such as the Jehovah's Witnesses (Cosgrove et al. 2011) and the Baha'i (Armstrong-Ingram 1998) began to establish themselves, and grew slowly as the
century continued. In addition, some other more esoteric practices such as Spiritualism, Theosophists (Cousins 2008; McCorristine 2011) and Astrology (Roberts 2009) displayed growth in certain sectors of the Irish population. I located some evidence of the influence of such groups, particularly among the cultural elite, reflected in the literature of the period such as Joyce (Tindal 1954) and Yeats (Hough 1984). To my knowledge, there are no accounts of any of these "alternative" groups reappearing on the Irish landscape until the late 50s and 60's, which is often attributed to the consolidation of the Irish Catholic State following the establishment of the Irish Republic in 1922. During this period, matters of church and state were formally intertwined and Ireland in its new found independence reverted to a highly protectionist state (Lee 1988). In the 1950's, there were again signs that the religious ecology was springing back to life, possibly in response to the more widespread social upheavals of the 50's and 60's. One can only assume that many of the religious groups present in pre-independence Ireland were still represented in some fashion, but I have not been able to uncover any archival reports on minority religions from that time. Mulholland's (forthcoming) research points to the emergence in the mid-fifties of an Irish branch of Diviners, reviving the ancient art of dousing, while formal Astrology also enjoyed a brief renaissance (Roberts 2009) at this time. Transcendental Meditation became established in Dublin in 1964 and the Baha'i movement showed some swelling of its congregations throughout the sixties (Mulholland forthcoming), while within the mainstream Catholic and Protestant churches, alternative practices such as faith healing became popular.

The 1960's and 1970’s could be seen as the true launching point for alternatives to the mainstream Catholic and Protestant religious affiliations in Ireland, as socially a sense
of the counter-culture movement prevalent elsewhere began to take effect. In a religious sense, this period was punctuated with examples of religious innovation and revitalisations of ancient beliefs such as the practices of Celtic past (Ledwith 1979, p.54). At this time there was also a turn towards more fundamentalist practices within the mainstream churches (Cosgrove et al. 2011, p.9), such as the expansion of the Legion of Mary (Kennedy 1997) and several Houses of Prayer (Mulholland 2011).

Cox and Griffin (2009) point to the manner in which many of these religious activities were introduced and encouraged by immigrants from Europe, the United Kingdom and United States and is thus emblematic of the influence of the wider social world on the religious ecology of Ireland. This influence would later expand and become branded as a consequence of the rapid globalisation experienced in Ireland during the latter half of the twentieth century, but the research above shows that its genesis in a much earlier date.

Therefore, the ease of international travel which characterised the 1970's would come to play a major role in the introduction of religious alternatives to Ireland, as is evidenced in Tierney's work (1985). While serving as a Catholic priest at Dublin Airport, he refers to an large number of "itinerant preachers" making their way to Ireland, among them the Greater European Mission, the Full Gospel's Businessmen's Fellowship, the Church of Christ and Youth with a Mission, many of which were variants of revivalist Christianity of American origin. Fr. Tierney would later emerge as a founder of the first Church supported anti-cult group in Ireland which I will discuss in greater detail below. Tierney (1985, p.5) also reports the presence of The Children of God, or The Family as they were originally known, in Ireland during this period. This group were one of the most controversial alternative religious groups.
(Beckford 1985; Barker 1986) in the seventies due to their use of sexual tactics to attract followers and there many news reports citing their influence in the setting up of religious enclaves called "Jesus Colonies" in the Irish press at this time (Mulholland 2010). However, no independent social research on these claims exists and therefore cannot be refuted or confirmed.

Alongside these groups, affiliations of various Hindu-based religions became more prominent, with the first Hare Krishna or International Society for Krishna Consciousness temple being opened in the mid-1970's (Rochford 2000). Other Hindu-derived groups such as Transcendental Meditation, devotees of Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh (Carter 1987) and the Divine Light Mission also became more visible in the Irish religious landscape (Cox 2010a). While exact figures are difficult to ascertain in relation to many of the smaller religions in Ireland at that time due to the lack of research carried out in the field, Mulholland (forthcoming) has attempted to piece together the religious ecology of Ireland's recent past from news reports of the time. His findings point to the presence at the very least in the 1970's of the Unification Church, Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints, Buddhists, the Christian Biblical group known as the Way International, along with various types of neo-Pagan and Wiccan based groups (see Butler 2011 for more).

This sense of a fragmented religious history has recently returned to the research agenda in Ireland and the relevance of historical trajectories in contemporary religion can be seen the work of Scharbrodt (2008; 2011), which attempts to piece together the history of the Irish Islamic community, as well as renewed research into Irish Buddhist groups (Cox and Griffin 2011). The persistence of ancient and pre-Catholic
religious traditions have also remerged as seen in Brownlee's (2011) examination of folk religion within the travelling community. This is also a strong thread in Butler's (2011) research on Irish Neo-paganism which explores how ancient traditions are being merged with current worldviews and identity, resulting in the re-emergence of Celtic Spiritualities as a religious choice in contemporary Ireland. Therefore, I agree with the analysis that the recent resurgence of other forms of religious affiliation and practice in Ireland is the "picking up of an older pattern" (Cox and Griffin 2011, p.8) inherent in Ireland's cultural history rather than a radical, seismic change produced solely by the fall from dominance of the Catholic Church and the influence of globalisation factors, as might be suggested from recent data.

Therefore, comprehensive data from objective sources on Ireland's religious past is scant and it is my position that this lack of research could have an effect on the levels of religious literacy in Ireland and on the public perceptions of minority religion in Ireland. In addition, these groups were quite small numerically, with what appears to be little access to power mechanisms in society, such as advocacy, input on social policy, political representations or fair and balanced media opportunities. This last point is important because as noted in chapter three, most of the participants felt their groups were viewed negatively by the Irish public and many connected this to a lack of understanding of other religions, the Catholic Church and the influence of the media. Therefore, in order to explore the process of religious "othering" and social reactions in contemporary Ireland, it is necessary to view how these religions have been portrayed, the connections to the contemporary Catholic environment in Ireland and ultimately to the discrimination and social stigmatisation described in this thesis.
Ireland and Anti-Cult Sentiments

As I have discussed above, the presence of small religious groups has been long intertwined with Ireland's history and despite their relative size, can provide an important lens through which to analyse wider social changes (Cox 2010; Woodhead 2010; Dawson 2006a). In this section, I utilised media reports in order to form some conceptualisation of the media framing of small religious groups in Ireland. While I acknowledge the often less than objective nature of such reports in this research, they have provided some vital clues as to the presence of certain small groups in Ireland. In addition, by analysing the tone and framing of those reports, it is also possible to trace the general public's attitudes towards small religious groups (Berinski 2006). This proved a useful tool in understanding the trajectory of anti-cult sentiments, which is how many of these groups felt they were perceived.

Following the counter-cultural atmosphere of the seventies and the growth of religious alternatives, there emerged as Cohen (2002) notes a general sense of "moral panic" in the 1980's, from which Ireland was not immune. A survey of the literature on approaches to minority religions from this time can be placed into two broad camps (Dawson 1998), namely the social construction of these groups as a social problem or alternatively as indicative of large scale societal changes. The portrayal of minority groups as problematic in society has a long and unfortunately, not so varied history. As many affiliations promote norms and values which are often in conflict with those enshrined in mainstream society, the degree of tension created can be proportionally connected to the degree of stigmatisation of the group (Stark and Bainbridge 1984).
In an Irish context, Coulter’s work entitled “Are Cults Dangerous?” (1984), is the only exploration of minority religions from that era, but its tone and content reflect the cult panic of the times. There was a general sense of unease in relation to these "new" religions, emanating in part from the response of the Catholic Church, which took a hostile stance against such groups, even those of Catholic origins (Cox 2011, p.13). Many clerics issued warnings regarding "cults" from the pulpit, while the press carried articles on issues such as deprogramming (McCloud 2007). Indeed, the use of the word "cult" was widespread in both clerical and press discussions of minority religious groups at this time as a pejorative term. In 1985, Tierney's book based on his experiences as Dublin Airport chaplain which I touched on previously, continued in this vein and declared that certain religious organisations were "bizarre" and "deceitful" (Tierney 1985, cited in Cosgrove et al. 2011, p.14). It was in this general atmosphere that the first of Ireland's anti-cult groups emerged, which received the support of the both Catholic and Protestant mainstream churches in Ireland in its initial phase (Mulholland forthcoming). Other types of religious or spiritual expression were also addressed by the Catholic Church; in particular the Irish Theological Commission's Report (1994) which was aimed at highlighting the "destructive" and "incompleteness" that characterised various New Age practices, and expressly pointed out the intention of New Age groups to eradicate the established Church (p.5-6).

As with cult panics elsewhere (Richardson 1996), mental manipulation methods or brainwashing were widely reported as methods used to recruit and maintain religious group members (Coulter 1984). While this theory has been widely refuted within the scientific community (Melton 2000; Dawson 1998; Paloutzian 1996), it has continued
to be cited as the *modus operandi* of many smaller religious groups, in particular by
the anti-cult movement (Barker 2006), the press and wider media. Media framing of
such stories have tended towards the sensationalist and therefore elements such as
these have remained in the popular perception of minority religions, tending to the
view of minority or alternative religions as "cults", deviant and a danger to society
(Cosgrove et al. 2011). In 2011, TV3, an independent Irish commercial television
station broadcast a programme entitled "Exposed; Ireland's Secret Cults", where there
were numerous references to the words "cult" and "brainwashing".

As noted above, the majority of information on such groups in Ireland came in the
form of the popular press rather than academic studies, and were often less than
objective in their analysis, as religious groups of a pacifist nature such as the Baha'i
and Buddhists were cited as cults of an "extremist" nature (Mulholland 2011). The
influence of the media is strongly evident in the coverage of the Atlantis Primal
Therapy Commune in Burtonport, Co. Donegal, or "The Screamers" as they were
commonly referred to, who were active from 1974 to the mid-eighties when the group
gradually broke up and left the island (see James 1980; Egan 1996, 2006). An article
on their practices led to the group becoming a local attraction for boat tours and to
many wildly speculative assumptions as to their practices and intent. As Egan (2006)
points out "questions were even asked about them in the Dail, and there was a wild
rumour that the Health Board was sending Donegal children to them when hostels
were full" and is a prime illustration of the climate of moral panic found in Ireland at
the time.
The idea of “moral panic” has been explored well within the sociology of deviance, examining the domains of social fears and anxieties. Some claim that we have reached a new zenith of moral panic with the emergence of the “risk society” (Beck 1992) as we grapple with new technologies, discoveries and their consequences and we can now grasp the “political potential of these catastrophes” (Beck 1992, p.24). Cohen’s (1972, p.9) classic definition of moral panic can be very useful when looking at the manner in which the understanding of a state of social anxiety and the emergence of the risk society could be seen to merge within Ireland and its reactions to small religious movements over the past thirty years as

...societies appear to be subject, every now and then, to periods of moral panic. A condition, episode, person or groups of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests; its nature is presented in a stylized and stereotypical fashion by the mass media; the moral barricades are manned by editors, bishops, politicians and other right-thinking people; socially accredited experts pronounce their diagnoses and solutions; ways of coping are evolved (or more often) resorted to; the condition then disappears, submerges or deteriorates and becomes more visible.

(Cohen 1972, p.9)

As discussed in the previous section, Ireland up until the 90’s was quite an insular nation and the apparent growth in new and apparently threatening religious activities would have been viewed as a moral threat to the nation. In the 1980’s, anti-cult activity became more organised in Ireland, with various groups set up to monitor and report cultic activity, with the largest being Dialogue Ireland (see http://dialogueireland.wordpress.com for more details) . Set up in the 1980’s by the Fr. Tierney who was referenced above, the organisation brought together different Christian Churches to provide information and provide “necessary pastoral care in relation to new religious movements”

(http://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/about/history-of-dialogue-ireland/). The organisation had the full backing of the Roman Catholic Church which appointed Fr. Tierney as chairperson. The organisation provides information on what it describes as
“cultic” religious groups which its website defines as any group which display “troubling levels of undue psychological influence”. Moreover, its mission statement is to provide information so that individuals can make informed decisions in relation to their religious choices (http://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/about/cultism/).

In 1992, the organisation moved to a more ecumenical perspective, but one which its own website describes “in conjunction with other mainline Christian churches” and also underlines that it is “now open to all creeds and none” (http://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/about/cultism/). In 2001, Dialogue Ireland became an independent trust and a registered charity which can now accept donations from the public, a move that the organisation points to as providing it with greater freedom “to carry out its mission” and links have been made to other anti-cultic groups in Europe which share the same “ministry” (http://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/donations-fees/). The language utilised could be argued to show the religious underpinnings of the organisation, despite its claim to just provide information.

In addition to information on religious groups, Dialogue Ireland also offers services such as Thought Reform Consultancy, which provides interventions and lifestyle options to those deemed to be involved in cultic groups and since 2001, the organisation has been growing its expertise in Islamic Consultancy, in response to what it refers to as the “cultic” aspects of Islamism and the impact which having Ireland as the headquarters of the Muslim Brotherhood could have (http://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/about/cultism/). So far, the orientation of this anti-cultic organisation towards small religious groups in Ireland is one which appears
to clearly set them out as a threat to Irish society. In relation to his thesis, however the
most worrying aspect of this group is their Schools Programme
(http://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/schools/). This programme has been provided
to various schools within the Vocational Education System, comprehensive and
community schools from both Catholic and Protestant faiths. These links between
Dialogue Ireland and schools have been increasingly strengthened since the
introduction of religion as a subject at both Junior and Leaving Certificate
examination level, as they claim to provide expertise on small religions in Ireland and
worldwide. A representative from Dialogue Ireland attends the school at the invitation
of the school or teacher and provides information on various religious groups, their
recruitment techniques and involves the students in role-playing situations where
cultic groups may prey on them. The service also provides what it refers to as a
Christian education section in its schools programme, which appears to encourage
students to re-embrace their religion, “as people generally only join something when
they are not involved with faith they grew up in”
(http://dialogueireland.wordpress.com/schools/). The website is very clear that it does
not call any groups a cult or cultic, but simply provides the information and allows the
students to draw their own conclusions. A great deal of emphasis is placed on
portraying cultic groups as waiting to prey on vulnerable teenagers as they leave
secondary school, with a strong emphasis on the vulnerability of children in rural
areas who would not have any experience of such groups. Due to the recent economic
downturn, such workshops or ongoing modules can be done via Skype sessions. Ref?
The website also contains references from school principals and teachers at various
schools in Ireland recommending the service which Dialogue Ireland provides as a
pivotal part of the schools’ religious programme and as a protector against the predatory nature of certain religious groups.

While the provision of information on all religious groups is a necessary and welcome development in Ireland as it continues to change, the objective nature of the information which Dialogue Ireland provides can be disputed. Much of the information the website provides is based on single incidents or anecdotal information, with very little empirical or balanced views of any of the religions featured. For example, under resources related to The Unification Church (Moonies) the following is available:

With their lack of success with the Irish community and the general collapse of religion here they are trying to work among Muslims and other new faith arrivals. They attempt to get Muslims or African Christians to participate in their marriage ceremonies. They even had to bring in people from different faiths from England to make up the numbers at the Gresham Hotel when Rev Moon spoke here.

(http://www.dialogueireland.org/dicontent/a2z/unification/index.html)

In a section in Islamism (which it sees as distinct from Islam due to its cultic tendencies), there is this passage on the issues within the state of Israel:

We will resist those who want the Jews to take a move west and jump into the sea. Also we support the right of Palestinians to find a place in the sun. We are opposed to Zionism as a “cultist” expression and Islamist and secular ideologies which have robbed their people of dignity.

(http://www.dialogueireland.org/dicontent/a2z/islamism/index.html)

This framing of small groups as problematic and predatory can have far-reaching consequences as has been shown in Beckford's (1994, p.106) exploration of the media and New Religious Movements which found that...sensational stories about NRM s require no knowledge of religion on the part of their audience. The focus on the non religious aspects of the movements means that there is no need to tackle issues of religious belief or experience.
Having conducted a content analysis of selected British newspapers from 1975 to 1985, his findings point to sensationalist approaches in the media as helping to "cement the public perception of cults as, at best, weird and, at worst, destructive" (Beckford 1994, p.109) (also see Beckford and Cole 1988). There were similar findings in an American context (van Driel and Richardson 1988a, 1988b). Public perceptions such as those perpetrated in the media, have led to the exclusion and marginalisation of minority religious members within society, which can range from polite avoidance and "casual" harassment to acts of physical violence and intimidation. Recently, there have been several orchestrated intimidation campaigns against certain religious groups as explained by one of my research participants, such as the international "Anonymous" campaign waged against the Church of Scientology (Wired 2009). The effects of widespread negative public perception on members of minority religions has been widely under-researched and one suspects that more serious attacks on members or "cult bashing" are also highly underreported (Barker 2006), and therefore our comprehension of it at individual level is limited. The reactions of some religious groups to such negative public perceptions is to become in essence a "closed shop" and attempt to retain privacy regarding their practices and membership, and as such become “world rejecting” (Beyer 1990). However, such a stance can also fuel public speculation regarding such groups, create additional social distance and make access to objective information for individuals, social commentators and policy makers all the more difficult (Barker 2001).

Therefore, there is evidence of negative social images of small religious groups in Ireland and research has shown the links between such framing and negative social reactions. I argue that the ongoing influence at a cultural level of Roman Catholicism,
along with a growth in systematic secularisation, secularism and religious pluralism has led to this perception of these groups as "other", and as such has a strong connection to the high incidents of religious stigmatisation and discrimination reported in this thesis. It is this process of "othering" or creating "out-groups" which theoretically underpins stigma and discrimination research and forms a crucial component of the qualitative exploration of discrimination in this study.

Hence, in order to explore the manner in which this social environment is experienced by members of minority religions, and to analyse the perceived dynamics of power, and stigmatisation in day-to-day interactions, I am supplementing the exploration of in-group/out-group dynamics with Goffman's strategies of stigmatised identity management. This will allow an examination of the impact and reactions of the individuals to stigmatisation, to unpack the complex issues surrounding the underlying motives for identity management and act as a prism through which to examine the reality of the Irish social reaction to small religious groups. This approach will also augment my survey results, but will also crucially humanise and personalise the results found, or in Bryman's words to put "meat on the bones of ‘dry’ quantitative findings" (2006, p.106).

**Goffman and Strategies of Identity Management**

In the preceding section, I explored how the ongoing power of the Catholic Church, the poor social inclusion of minority religions and their portrayal as cultic in character have placed such groups in the category of a negative social other. Based on my extended definition of religious discrimination and the results of my survey, my analysis points to such identities as inherently stigmatised within the social context. It is also my contention that to understand stigmatisation effectively and in a
sociologically holistic manner, one must understand the impact on the individuals involved. From the survey results, it appears that many of the groups in Ireland feel they are in a sense socially undesirable and are seen as "deviant" within Irish society. Therefore, to explore the reaction to this and what this can tell us about the Irish social environment, I will be using a Goffmanian approach which focuses on the management of a socially undesirable identity, which is strongly tied to the social environment within which it operates (Tajfel 1984; Goffman 1963; Becker 1963).

There has been some research on minority religions and social identity within the conceptual framework of deviance or labelling theory (Bainbridge 1989; Thumma 1991; Hogg 2006), which emanates primarily from the work of Goffman (1963) and Becker (1963). The sociological concept of deviance refers fundamentally to the non-conformity of individuals or groups to certain societal expectations or norms (Goffman 1963; Erikson 1961; Spreitzer 2004; Downes and Rock 2007), which can range from minor social infractions to the criminal in its manifestations.

The aim of research which utilises deviance as its conceptual framework is to explore the social actions, reactions and interactions that lead to the generation of such a label and is therefore appropriate in this exploration of religious stigmatisation and personal reactions to it. Such an approach also highlights the prevailing social attitudes, as no social choice or behaviour is fundamentally deviant in isolation, and for an action to be judged as deviant, it must be judged from the vantage point of certain social group norms as

...social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying these rules to particular people and labelling them as outsiders. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather the consequences of the application by others of rules and sanctions to the 'offender'

(Becker 1963, p.9).
Standards of acceptable behaviour vary across time, cultures and within societies, where practices which at one time were considered beyond the bounds of normative behaviour can become conformist over time. For example, the Roman Catholic Church which became one of the great world religions and a prime example of "normal" religious affiliation within western society, began as a small group of people believing in a religious alternative, which was very much at odds with the acceptable religious groups of the time (MacCaffrey 1915; Koch 1997; Bokenkotter 2005). Complete societal levels of agreement on normative behaviour are uncommon and within a society there tend to be various contested definitions of "conformist" and "deviant" practices (Ferrell et al. 2008; Saraga 1998). Yet, despite these various positions, the norms which tend to prevail are very often those which are approved by the powerful in society.

Deviance theory expressly explores these processes and views "labelling as the prerogative of groups with the social and political power necessary to impose their definition of deviance on groups with less power" (Schur 1983, p.5). Therefore, many minorities have been marked as "deviant" where they not adhere to the expected norms and behaviour of majority (Kallen 1989; Kaplan and Johnson 2001; Schur 1984; Soble 2008), as dominant society imposes the norms of what is expected of its members. In relation to religious affiliation, many religions are based on beliefs and practices which are quite beyond the "normal" expectations of what constitutes religion. Some groups, especially those which are members of UFO based religions (Richardson 1986; Palmer 2006) or ancient, pagan traditions (Starhawk 1997) and many Hindu-derived affiliations (Stark and Bainbridge 1998) are often viewed,
especially in western society as not conforming to the socially accepted notion of religious behaviour and can be cast as religious deviants.

Power is a crucial element in the designation of deviance and stigma (Link and Phelan 2001) as discussed throughout this thesis. The Roman Catholic Church in Ireland may not be as powerful as it once was, but I argue that the normative expectations of religious affiliation and behaviour in Ireland remains very shaped by a (at least nominally) Catholic majority. This power extends through Irish society as discussed earlier in this chapter, leading to an enduring Cultural Catholicism, coupled with some degree of secularisation at a systematic level which may be a factor in the stigma and discrimination reported in this thesis. Therefore, those who are outside of these norms are at risk of being labelled as "deviant" within Irish society.

Goffman cites several elements which one must be cognisant of while exploring a stigmatised identity. The social construction of normalcy and its transmission in society is an important factor in the analysis of difference creation as

\[\text{(Goffman 1963, p.7)}\]

Therefore, non-conformist individuals therefore tend to live in "divided worlds", which range in spectrum from places of safe disclosure to social spheres where revealing the stigmatised identity is forbidden by the prevailing rules of normalcy (Smart and Wegner 2000). Navigating through such worlds is a common source of social anxiety for individuals as

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...the person with a secret failing, then, must be alive to the social situation as a scanner of possibilities, and is therefore likely to be alienated from the simpler world in which those around them apparently dwell.

(Goffman 1963, p.11)

For those with some overt stigmatised traits such as physical disability, such navigation is not always a possibility. However, for others whose stigmas are not immediately evident, such as a non ethno-religious identity, Goffman (1963) predicts that such an individual can be met with two distinct social environments. First, in situations where the stigma has not been revealed, the stigmatised individual is aware of the possibility of discovery and of being then viewed as discreditable. The trait may be uncovered intentionally, under the individual's personal control and for various reasons, or unintentionally by elements beyond their control. On the other hand, it also might be successfully concealed which Goffman refers to as passing. Within this context, the social analysis of stigma is applied only to the behaviours adopted by the stigmatised individual in order to manage the offending identity through the revealing and concealing of pertinent information (Clair et al. 2005). The second social environment which Goffman refers to is following the revelation of the stigmatised characteristic where the individual is seen as discredited and thus, this revelation affects not only the individuals' behaviour but also the behaviour of others. The disclosure of the identity can have many consequences - exclusion, questions of professional competency, undermined relationships and damaged reputations, and is therefore strongly linked to the extended conceptualisation of stigma and discrimination which underpins this research.

Individuals with stigma must also anticipate the occurrence of unwanted or negative behaviour which occurs when making assumptions based on the individuals' identity (Goffman 1963) and prepare strategies in order to deal with it. This forms the basis of
identity management and it is this behaviour relating to the control of self-information which I wish to explore. When an individual chooses to be covert about their social difference, this necessitates the careful separation of certain social domains of their lives and the creation and activation of strategies in order to hide their difference. Such tactics often leads to fragmentation of the individual and feelings of social exclusion are common among many invisible social identities (Beatty and Kirby 2004; Frable et al. 1998).

There is a growing body of work on the management of invisible identities, including sexual orientation (Herek 1996; Woods 1994; Woods and Harbeck 1991), chronic illness (Beatty 2004; Charmaz 1991), mental illness (Corrigan 2004; Wahl 1999), and disability (Matthews & Harrington 2000). It is my argument that the social expectations of normalcy in relation to religious affiliation in Ireland has resulted in the creation of a stigmatised "invisible" religious identity for those in minority religious groups. The influence of the church, the framing of media coverage and public discourse and the survey evidence of high levels of religious concealment among the groups all point to the problematisation of other religious affiliations in Irish society. Therefore in this next section of this thesis, I will use Goffman's framework to explore the management of a minority religious identity, investigating how the control of self-information can illuminate the complexities of human interaction and the subsequent construction and maintenance of differences within the Irish social environment.

**Power and Knowledge in Irish Society**

Having looked at the various historical and contemporary elements which operate within the Irish religious sphere, what becomes clear is the role which power plays in
both creating and maintaining certain advantages and disadvantages within this context. An adoption of a Foucauldian approach to the understandings of power can assist in tying these seemingly disparate, yet related components together in a manner which will illuminate the remainder of this thesis. Foucault has been instrumental in altering the focus of power analysis from the structural to a more dispersed understanding where “power is everywhere” (Foucault 1991, p.63). Power is therefore dispersed and diffused, embodied in our societies as knowledge, discourse and declared as “regimes of truth” (Foucault 1991, p.63). It runs contrary to our traditional ideas of centralised or institutionalised power, where Foucault cites that

...(b)y power, I do not mean ‘Power’ as a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state. By power, I do not mean, either, a mode of subjugation which, in contrast to violence, has the form of the rule. Finally, I do not have in mind a general system of domination exerted by one group over another

(Foucault 1990, p.92).

Instead, power in Foucault’s thought is rather more nuanced and multi-layered and something that must be seen “in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization” (Foucault 1990, p. 92). These force relations refer to the various elements contesting the Irish religious space - the historical intertwining of nationalism and religious identity, growing societal differentiation, the rise of individualistic, culturally based Catholicism, along with growing religious pluralism. In a Foucauldian sense, there are varying levels of power and force located in each entity which are connected somewhat to the existing social order, but which are essentially disorderly and unstable in their existence, creating “a moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable” (Foucault 1990, p.93). In a
temporal sense, this power is not tangible or at the disposal of the individual or an institution, but “is produced from one moment to the next, at every point, or rather in every relation from one point to another” (Foucault 1990, p.93) resulting in a complex system of force relations in effect within a particular society at a particular point in time.

Underpinning this is discourse, which Foucault views as an essential component of power, as it is through discourse that the production and reinforcement of knowledge occurs. The role of discourse in this complex system cannot be underplayed as it has the ability to either reinforce or resist power or types of knowledge. Therefore, in exploring the Irish religious context we can see that in the contested religious space discourse “transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it” (Foucault 1990, p.101). It is through these various techniques of discourse that local centres of power-knowledge are established and become regimes of truth within a society, in this case the establishment of various types of religious bodies, both institutional and cultural have replaced the Institutional Church as the central power.

These local centres of power and knowledge become established through discourse, creating the foundation for the spread of knowledge and certain strategies of power. Foucault claims that “it is in discourse that power and knowledge are joined together” (Foucault 1990, p.100) and begins the establishment of power relations emanating from the local centres of power-knowledge to encapsulate entire fields of the social sphere. Where once, the institutional Roman Catholic Church controlled what became accepted knowledge and power within Irish society, there are now multiple voices in that field. These various actors have varying degrees of influence on public discourse
at temporal junctures and new avenues to power are explored. It is perhaps because of this that we find a cacophony of voices growing within this space, as they strive to influence wider society in a rapidly evolving context.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I explored the background to the current social context in Ireland, charting the rise to dominance of the Roman Catholic Church, its influence within many other social spheres and how this consolidated its power both as a religious institution and barometer of what was socially acceptable. I connected the influence of the church to the low visibility of other religious groups in both social discourse and academic research in Ireland until very recently, and how this lack of understanding and awareness of religious others can perpetuate myths and stereotypes of such groups, especially through the media. I argue that this social context creates an environment which labels small religious groups as deviant and consequently stigmatises such an identity within Irish society. I base this analysis on the results of my survey, coupled with my reading of the historical and contemporary religious environment in Ireland, and I contend that to truly understand the perceptions of those who live with stigmatised identity, a micro-orientated approach is required. This will uncover how such individuals feel they are treated on a daily basis in various social spheres, their reactions to such treatment and their perception of the power dynamics which underpin the stigmatisation process. I argue that a Goffmanian approach based on identity management strategies will provide the necessary framework for analysis, and is in keeping with my extended definition of discrimination and stigma; but will also crucially provide a prism through which to assess the wider social environment through the eyes of those who experience the phenomena. I will begin this exploration
next. The final section underscores the role which power in a Foucauldian sense plays in the reproduction of stigma and discrimination within the evolving Irish context.
Chapter Five
Qualitative Research Strategy

Introduction

The survey findings pointed to the experience of religious discrimination in Ireland among the groups surveyed as quite prevalent, with many participants opting to hide their religious identity due to negative social reactions, indicating a sense of a stigmatised identity among the participants. This element of religious identity as socially undesirable has had little coverage within sociological research and I chose to specifically explore this idea of minority religion as stigma in a micro-sociological way for three reasons. First, it is my aim to create greater links between the study of discrimination and the understanding of stigma, in order to present a holistic, sociological understanding of social reactions to minority religious identities in Ireland. Second, many stigma and discriminatory studies have been critiqued as presided over by researchers who are not stigmatised (Kleinman et al. 1995; Schneider 1988), and which privilege the researchers perspectives and theories on the subject rather that the articulations of the participants (Link and Phelan 2001). To circumvent this, I aim to present as accurately and comprehensively as possible the experiences of the individuals involved by using a qualitative research design which is inherently grounded in the words of the interviewees and which incorporates their feedback into the conclusions reached in this study. Finally, I argue that by looking at the minutiae of day-to-day interactions as shown in the interviews, connections can to be made to the wider social matrix where discrimination and stigma generation takes place, and can provide an understanding of how and why such actions take place.
In this chapter, I will present and defend the methodological elements of the qualitative section of this study. I chose to explore religious discrimination using a mixed methodological approach in order to explore both the scope and the intricacies of the issue within the eight groups chosen. As the survey element revealed high levels of perceived religious discrimination within a variety of settings, I wished to explore the issue in more detail, concentrating on the effects on the individuals involved and their reactions to both discrimination and the fear of discriminatory behaviour. I chose to concentrate on the personal experience and impact of religious discrimination, as well as the response to such social reactions, such as concealing one's religious identity in order to comprehend the lived experience of a stigmatised religious identity, the findings of which I present in chapter six. The qualitative approach consisted of semi-structured, problem-centred interviews within an interpretative, hermeneutic stance, with eight members of the religious groups which took part in the research, which were recorded, transcribed, and coded. Computer software was used to form research categories relating to the experience, effect and reaction to negative social reactions which form the basis of the research findings. The chapter will first discuss the rationale for my choice of a complementary qualitative research paradigm, the research methodology and research plan employed and my justifications for its selection. Second, I will address matters relating to research ethics and quality and finally, the chapter concludes with sampling procedures and how the methodology was employed.

Qualitative Research Paradigm
Methodological considerations within the sociology of religion have for the most part been of a conservative nature (Spickard 2007), reflecting the positivist foundations of
studies of religious change. However, a paradigm shift in the social sciences in the 1960’s saw a move away from the search for universally applicable societal laws and a turn towards producing a deeper understanding of social phenomena, in what Denzin and Lincoln (1994) refers to as a "methodological revolution" (p.ix). This change to a qualitative, micro-sociological approach has slowly opened up new avenues for exploring religion, and allowed researchers to examine social and religious life in a deeper manner, although it is only relatively recently that any substantial work on the sociology of religion has been produced. This turn toward a more in-depth examination of lived religious experience is instrumental in my choice of a complementary qualitative paradigm in this study. Therefore, a

...paradigm may be viewed as a set of basic beliefs (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimates or first principles. It represents a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the “world,” the individual’s place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts, as, for example, cosmologies and theologies do. The beliefs are basic in the sense that they must be accepted simply on faith (however well argued); there is no way to establish their ultimate truthfulness. If there were, the philosophical debates ... would have been resolved millennia ago.

(Denzin and Lincoln 1994, p. 107)

As such, a qualitative approach is based on the thesis of interpretivism, which essentially means that as researchers we “strive to understand (our) objects of interest” (Lindlof 1995, p. 9). In other words, the aim is to study social phenomena and subjects in their natural environment and to understand how others interpret the social field within the terms of meanings which people bring to them. Qualitative research often employs a variety of empirical materials; the case study, participant observation, various forms of interview historical, life narrative and visual texts are just some examples which can be utilised to examine the experience of people's lives (Maravasti 2004; Esterberg 2002; Lincoln and Denzin 1994; Flick 2006). Therefore in
designing my research, I felt that a qualitative approach which is predicated on a shared understanding or interpretation of social phenomena would be most effective in exploring the phenomena of discrimination at a micro-level. By reaching a level of comprehension of our participants' experience, qualitative research can produce *verstehen*, that is, an understanding of not just of how one's social reality is constructed, but also crucially why it is constructed *thus*. There have been many attempts to define what is meant by the paradigm, but in designing this research I based my foundation on the understanding that it is...an inquiry process of understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting

(Cresswell 1994, p.15).

Therefore, I argue that my research aims to present the subjective experience of religious discrimination would be best served by attempting to reach a deep level of comprehension of the management of a minority religious identity in an Irish context. Many of the participants were living in what Goffman refers to as a "divided world", based on social marginalisation, discrimination and crucially, *fear* of discrimination due to their stigmatised religious identity. Therefore, a qualitative approach provides particular understanding of such multiplicities when faced with what Flick (2000, p.11) calls the "pluralization of the lifeworlds" and I argue that the adoption an interpretative framework best allows access to the techniques and strategies that social beings adopt when faced negative social reactions. In exploring an element as complex as religious identity and its management, adopting a holistic and interpretative approach should allow the researcher to uncover the meaning that people bring to the action of their lifeworlds. A qualitative framework can provide the
depth and nuance required to explore the intricacies of the identity strategies employed and the level of insider information to accurately paint a picture of the experience of religious minorities in Ireland. The next section will explore the ontological and epistemological elements considered in the research design and justifies their inclusion.

**Ontological and Epistemological Elements of Qualitative Research Design**

The research design must be, I argue, closely related to both the constituent elements of the research process and the theoretical framework on which the research is based, as it

...is important to acknowledge at the outset that particular philosophical underpinnings or theoretical orientations and special purposes for qualitative inquiry will generate different criteria for judging quality and credibility (Patton 2002, p.543).

The related ontological and epistemological considerations must also be in keeping with the research aims, while bearing in mind the contextual and multi-dimensional variables that the research will produce.

**Ontological Considerations**

Firstly, ontological issues are based on the assumption of the existence of an external reality based on

claims and assumptions that are made about the nature of social reality, claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other. In short, ontological assumptions are concerned with what we believe constitutes social reality (Blaikie 2000, p. 8).
When starting out on a research journey, one must take a position on the nature of social reality. On one hand, we may assume the existence of an outside social reality, with forces and influences outside of ourselves and our research subjects. Alternatively, we may assume no external reality and therefore all we can rely on is our own personal interpretation of our social world and attempt to understand others, or interpretivism (Treise 1999). In essence, quantitative research can be viewed as predicated on the idea that reality is beyond the control of the researcher and that consequently research is a spectator activity. Conversely, qualitative research is broadly based on the ontological assumption that the researcher attempts to reconstruct the reality that is observed, as does each person involved in the inquiry, as either participant or subject. There is no external reality, only our perceptions of it.

Having explored the ontological options open to me in designing this research, I argue that an interpretivist approach is most appropriate in order to comprehensively explore religious discrimination and the management of religious identity in social interactions.

This decision to work within an interpretivist paradigm relates to my research goals. Having utilised a quantitative approach on previous work relating to religion (Cosgrove 2011), I found that the complexity of such a concept could not be unpacked in a sufficiently deep manner to adequately explore it. The survey which forms an integral part of this study provided valuable insight into the scope and frequency of discrimination across the groups, but cannot by its nature provide access to the multitude of individual and social actions, interactions and reactions which surround discrimination and stigma designation. I contest that the manner in which we, as social beings, control self-information is deeply embedded in the human condition.
and it is only through the incorporation of these elements into the research design that we can begin to explore it. It is my belief that to fully explore these elements, I need to take an insider's view on the process. Social reality is a shifting, nebulous concept and as researchers we are looking to uncover the “embodied knowing as a determinant of social reality with the recognition of multiple constructed realities” (Higgs 1998, p.146). This concept of multiple constructed realities acknowledged within the adoption of interpretivist ontology, allows various ways of viewing the same phenomena, and incorporates the individual, cultural and historical influences which affect interpretations of the lifeworld (Crotty 1998) and I argue this is fundamental to achieving an insight into the true effects of religious discrimination.

Having decided how to proceed ontologically and examined how justified that decision was in relation to my research aims, I next examined how I would weave this philosophy into my interview research design. I decided to take as my departure point the idea that all behaviour and conceptions are based on interpretation. Therefore, I argue that “the perspectives and experiences of those … (subjects)…must be grasped, interpreted and understood if solid, effective applied programmes are to be created” (Denzin 1989, p.12). An interpretativist approach is predicated on the assumption that only via subjective interpretation of, and consequent intervention in reality, can reality be fully understood. It is my contention that the study of social phenomena in their natural environment is the essence of an interpretivist philosophy, complicit in the knowledge that as researchers, we cannot prevent having an influence on the phenomena under study. In addition, there is an explicit acknowledgement that many interpretations of reality may be possible and I make the point that it is these various viewpoints that I wish to explore. Again, while the survey element confirmed my
beliefs that religious discrimination was more prevalent than previously thought, it did not allow any in-depth exploration of what occurs and how it is perceived. Therefore, the mixed methodology provides a balance between a macro and micro-approach to the same social phenomena.

I have argued my case for an interpretative approach based on a subjective approach to social reality. However, while this serves my research aims, I am also aware that by choosing to work within this ontology I am accepting

...that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors. It implies that social phenomena and categories are not only produced through social interaction, but that they are in a constant state of revision (Bryman 2001, pp. 16–17).

Therefore, as a researcher, I must acknowledge that my research is limited to particular individuals at a particular time and my findings are in essence a snapshot of that. I acknowledge that a temporal element in such research must be noted, but I contest that the data obtained is no less valuable in beginning to construct our understanding of the social phenomena in this case. Next, I will look at the epistemological underpinnings which I argue best serve this research design.

**The Epistemological Question**

The previous section centred on ontological considerations, which are essentially concerned with the nature of social reality. Having chosen to base part of this study on the premise of a socially constructed reality, emanating from within an individually contextualised situation, I need to be aware of the consequential effects on the epistemic foundation of my research. The epistemological question refers to the
problem of knowledge, or in other words what can be known and what is the
connection between those that know and those that wish to know (Blaikie 2000, p. 8).
There are two main schools of thought in sociological research on how this can be
approached. Firstly, positivism takes the position that social reality can be explored
using the same methods as the natural sciences and is largely aimed at the production
of deductive theory and universally applicable laws (Bryman 2004, p.11).
Alternatively, the interpretivist epistemology argues that social actors and the objects
of the natural sciences are not subject to the same methodologies and are in fact
fundamentally different (Bryman 2004, p.13) As such, an entirely different approach
is required which acknowledges the existence of individual subjective meaning which
can be seen through social action. This echoes strongly Weber's notion of Verstehen
referred to in the previous ontology section which describes a sociological approach
as "science which attempts the interpretative understanding of social action in order to
arrive at a causal explanation of its course and effects" (Weber 1947, p.88). This
causation is in reference to the understanding of social action rather than the
explanation of outside forces as in the positivist approach. Therefore, to best serve my
research aims within the interview section of this study, I chose to use an interpretivist
approach rather than a positivist one in order

... to interpret the world, particularly the social world, (and where) knowledge …comprises
(of) constructions arising from the minds and bodies of knowing, conscious and feeling
beings (and) generated through a search for meaning, beliefs, and values, and through
looking for wholes and relationships with other wholes

(Higgs 2001, p.49).

**Underlying Qualitative Philosophy**

The link to my research ontology is vital when considering these epistemological
questions, as Denzin and Lincoln discuss the "answer that can be given to this
question is constrained by the answer already given to the ontological question; that is, not just any relationship can now be postulated" (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, p. 108). In other words, the manner in which I have defined social reality within the context of research has a direct effect on how we come to have an understanding of this reality. Therefore, I argue that the knowledge that I seek is based in the participant’s interpretation of their social world and the manner in which they manoeuvre and assign meaning to their identity strategies, hence I will be taking a phenomenological approach to interpretivism.

The school of phenomenology is based on the question of how social actors make sense of the world around them. In essence,

...the phenomenologist views human behaviour...as a product of how people interpret the world...in order to grasp the meanings of a person's behaviour, the phenomenologist attempts to see things from that person's point of view

(Bogdan and Taylor 1975, pp.13-14).

In its most simple terms, phenomenology is based on how we make sense of the world around us, forming a link between the world and the individuals' personal immediate experience, harking back to the work of Kant and Hegel. However, it is the work of Husserl that laid the foundations for much of the work on phenomenology in the twentieth century (Vandenberg 1997, p. 11). Husserl's (1913a, 1913b) thesis centres on the notion that one cannot assume that external objects in the world exist independently and consequently, that the knowledge which we bear about such objects is reliable. Hence, the only aspect of which we can only be certain is about how such things appear or are represented in our human consciousness (Eagleton 1983; Fouche 1993). Husserl termed phenomenology as “the science of pure
‘phenomena’ (Eagleton 1983, p.55) and argued it is the only means by which a phenomenon can "show itself from itself in the very way in which it shows itself from itself" (Heidegger 1927 (1962), p.50). In order to find a degree of certainty, all things outside of immediate experience must be ignored, and it is in this manner that externality is predicted to the contents of personal consciousness. "Realities" are therefore to be viewed from the perspective of pure phenomena and it is only from this point that absolute data can be obtained.

Pure Husserlian phenomenology is based on bracketing out the preconceptions that one may hold about the world to explore the "pure" social phenomena and to avoid its influence in shaping data collection and subsequent discussion and analysis (Crotty 1998). However, with the increased use of phenomenology in social enquiry, this element became problematic as "(w)e are caught up in the world and we do not succeed in extricating ourselves from it in order to achieve consciousness of it" (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 5). Therefore, the practicality of total removal of all preconceptions is called into question. A modified interpretative approach began to develop known as hermeneutic-phenomenology (Flick 2005, p.15) which still centred on how social beings make sense of their worlds, but which explicitly acknowledged the understandings and prejudices that the researcher brings to the research environment. Laverty sums this up succinctly;

Like phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology is concerned with the life world or human experience as it is lived. The focus is toward illuminating details and seemingly trivial aspects within experience that may be taken for granted in our lives, with a goal of creating meaning and achieving a sense of understanding (Laverty 2003, p.4).
My decision to use a hermeneutic interview technique is based primarily on its foundations as the science of interpretation, in that it aims to grasp people’s understandings of their own lives by communication (Spickard 2007). As social beings, we make sense of our human experience and feelings and transform them into shared concepts and symbols "by which we achieve our understanding of the world and ourselves, our social artefacts, products of historically and culturally situated interchanges between people" (Gergen 1994, p. 49). We cannot know in an absolute sense how "true" the symbols or labels that we attach to our social narratives are, but von Glaserfeld (1995) points to an assessment of narrative viability that judges how well the subjects' conceptual narrative functions in the social world. This is not, as Gergen (1994) argues dependent on the objective validity of the account but on the "vicissitudes of social processes"(p.51). I believe that within an interpretative stance, a phenomenological approach fits in with my chosen research aims and the ontological position I have drawn on. It is within such social processes, viewed in behaviour and noted in language that we may gain knowledge of others (Flick 2006, p.80) and explore their relation to the social world.

Consequently, this meaning of being is concealed in the temporality of human existence and is illuminated through language. Therefore, to reach understanding one must recognise that language articulates being, and acknowledge its operation within a relational whole, with an influential temporal component (Heidegger 1962, p.45). In other words, it is language that presents the phenomena, as well as the view of the researcher interpreting the text and the contextualisation of the research process. This reciprocity between the text, researcher and context is part of what Heidegger called the hermeneutic circle, and aims to triangulate the three horizons in the presentation
of the results and analysis. Therefore, in this study I will present as accurately as possible the articulated experience of religious discrimination as put forth by the participants in semi-structured interviews. The interviews were then transcribed to text, and I spent a great deal of time deeply emerged in the text in a gradual process of thematic reduction. Finally, I would bring my interpretation to their experience throughout the process, and recheck this for accuracy at interval member checks which I will elaborate on later in this chapter.

It is my contention that an interpretative stance with a phenomenological – hermeneutic approach is appropriate in relation to my research aims as it is expressly concerned with the subjective interpretation of consciousness in relation to phenomena and is also in keeping with my ontological and epistemic research foundations.

**The Use of an Interpretative Approach in the Sociology of Religion**

In addition to choosing coherent philosophical underpinnings, effective research design also incorporates an understanding of how a hermeneutic phenomenological stance has been previously utilised within the sociology of religion. This is an important element in the research process, as in order to produce trustworthy and credible research, one must be cognisant of the manner in which it has been used in social research which allows us to learn from the experience of other researchers in building our research design.

Following the expansion of sociology's methodological and theoretical repertoire in the 1960's, there is now a multitude of approaches used to explore religion and its
place in our social world (Davie 2007). The development of interpretivism and hermeneutics grew in tandem with this methodological renaissance, and its utility in exploring various aspects of religion became apparent. Yamane (2000) makes the point that as researchers we may not be able to tap into the experience directly, but by allowing our participants to put the phenomena into words we can have the articulation of experience, and may thus arrive at a clearer communication of their experience. It is this interest in communicating with others, inherent in a hermeneutic approach which I argue allows us to enter into another's inner world and reach an understanding of how others see themselves. Many studies have used hermeneutic interviewing and the hermeneutic circle based on Heidegger's work which I discussed above. This approach is based on explorations of the phenomena through interview, which allows the findings to be understood and agreed on by the researcher and the participants (Heidegger 1962). This ensures that the concept is unpacked sufficiently to allow a thorough understanding from the participant's point of view and to this end has proved fruitful in the sociology of religion.

Clark Roofs' (1993,1999) interviews with religious seekers took a hermeneutic approach which allowed access to the participant's spiritual journeys and allowed the researcher to highlight common traits among an otherwise very diverse sample. While the interview technique is widely used as a solo methodology, hermeneutics can be employed to great effect in a mixed methodology design. For example, Denton and Smith (2005) explored the religious life of American teenagers using survey methods for initial findings and using subsequent hermeneutic interviews to provide a deeper, richer understanding of their lives. Others have used hermeneutic methods to ensure the veracity of their findings (Wuthnow 2000), or have extended the notion of the
interview into a phenomenological life history, such as can be seen in "Mama Lola" (Brown 2001) which follows the life of a Haitian vodou priestess in Brooklyn, New York and provides an incredible view of "a life from within" as it unfolds.

Hermeneutic research therefore allows the researcher access to the minutiae that make up social phenomena in life. In Davidman's (1991) study of female converts to Orthodox Judaism, she gave particular attention to one group of middle class, urban, educated women who chose to convert to orthodoxy. Feminist theory at the time would have predicted that these women would reject a religion which has an inherent gender bias, but Davidman uncovered the deep dissatisfaction expressed by her participants with their lives. By using hermeneutics, she was able to get inside this seemingly irrational decision to discover that the participants craved community, tradition, purpose and the security of clearly defined roles, which they found in Orthodox Judaism. I argue that by using the participant's self-descriptions, Davidman was able to accurately represent the participants' experience and highlight the differences and commonalities between the women. Its utility can also be seen in Warner's (1988) hermeneutic exploration of Presbyterian Church which led to the conceptualisation of "elective parochials", or the specific adoption of small town values among members of the congregation. By choosing this approach, he was able to get to the heart of this complex mix of tradition and selection, and accurately displays this process as understood by the members of the church. Therefore, I argue that while the subject matter on religious research may be diverse, the studies discussed above show how a hermeneutic methodology empowers the researcher to accurately reproduce the participants own self-description in presenting the phenomena as they understand it.
All of these studies point to the effectiveness of a hermeneutic approach in producing research based on self-description and thus is in keeping with my research aims.

It is clear, therefore, that such an interpretative approach has proved effective in social research on religion, but there are also some issues in relation to its use which I must address. Of most concern is the problem of interpretative superiority which I will deal with here. As I discussed in the previous section in phenomenology, pure hermeneutics from a Husserlian perspective is predicated on representing, as accurately as possible, the participants' lived experience of the phenomena as they have presented themselves to the researcher. In contrast, non–hermeneutic interviewing has a greater emphasis on uncovering a patterns or making interpretations on what has been presented to the researcher. There has been a tendency to blur the line between these two approaches when employing an interpretative/phenomenological approach (Spickard 2007; Flick 2006) and this can be problematic in relation to research findings and conclusions. By trying to uncover patterns that are not wholly concurrent with the interviewees' experience, such research is subject to critiques on the influence of the researcher's knowledge and expectations, leading to questions regarding the accuracy of the participants' lived experience (Tripp-Reimer and Cohen 1987).

This issue has been noted in some studies of religious phenomena where the interpretations of the researcher have taken precedent over those expressed by the participants. In her study of a women’s bible group, Davie (1994) uncovered a vast contrast between how the participants reported their religious experience in the group setting of the bible study and on a one-to-one basis, and appears to place her own
interpretation of the study to the forefront, although this is expressly noted by Davie. Brasher's (1998) hermeneutic exploration of religious agency among women in Evangelical Churches centred on the dynamics of power within a religion that advocates the lesser position of women. In her conclusion, Brasher states that “power within congregational life is at times in conflict with the movement’s dominant teaching on sex roles” (p.87) and claims that the women were empowered by their role in the church. These findings become problematic in a hermeneutic sense, as the word “power” was never part of reported subjectivity of the participants, but was used in the reconstruction of their accounts. Therefore, the findings were in part influenced by the researcher’s interpretations of power dynamics and not from the subjective perspective as is advocated in hermeneutic studies.

Ingersoll (2002, 2003) has underscored the danger of bias while interpreting underlying patterns or concepts in her critique of Brasher, which questions how the researcher can claim empowerment for the women in her study, when they themselves declare that they are disempowered. This issue becomes problematic when conclusions are based predominantly on the researcher's analysis, rather than what is expressed by the participants and the influence of such analysis is not explicitly presented in the research conclusions. Therefore, in order to avoid this issue of interpretative superiority, I argue that by adhering to the text produced by the participants in my discussion, findings and analysis, I can ensure that my conclusions accurately reflect those of my participants. As Koch (1995, p. 835) points out, such an approach...

... invites participants into an ongoing conversation, but does not provide a set methodology. Understanding occurs through a fusion of horizons, which is dialectic between the preunderstandings of the research process, the interpretive framework and the sources of information.”
**Research Criteria and Sampling**

This section will examine the criteria I selected for inclusion in the research process. In this instance, I wished to look at participants who were members of religious groups outside of the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of Ireland, and other Protestant mainstream groups such as the Presbyterian Church and the Methodist Church. This was based on the findings of MacGreil's interval surveys on attitudes and prejudices towards religious groups in Ireland (1978, 1989, 2011) which indicates the in-group status of these Protestant groups across that timescale, whereas this study wishes to explore the experience of those designated as "other" in the Irish context.

These groups were approached by letter (see appendix A) which outlined the research aims and objectives. This was followed up with a telephone call usually with the group leader or secretary, or with a designated contact person. In many cases, the contact was willing to allow me to come and speak to the members, or to leave details of the research project and contact details at the centre or meeting place. Interested parties were then informed about the research process, what it would entail and to answer any questions regarding their participation. Those who were interested in participating were contacted again with suitable times and venues for meeting and all matters in relation to ethical issues and consent were addressed. There were very little stipulations for participation except that they were over eighteen years of age and were or had been a member of a minority religion in Ireland, in order to reach as diverse a sample as possible. Only eight individuals were willing to partake in the interviews, despite repeated attempts to access more interviewees. There was at one time another member of the Jehovah's Witnesses who was taking part, but chose to
withdraw from the process after two years, for personal reasons unrelated to the project.

Most of those approached explained how they did not wish to "have to think through all that stuff"; or were "afraid of what it might lead to" or felt "what good would it do". This left me quite concerned about the utility of the study based on such small numbers. There is very little guidance on such matters in the existing qualitative literature (see Baker and Edwards 2012 for a full discussion), but some research centred on my chosen hermeneutic phenomenological approach and subject matter provided some guidelines and justifies the inclusion of such a small research sample.

As Adler and Adler (2012, p.9) note

...a small number of cases, or subjects, may be extremely valuable and represent adequate numbers for a research project. This is especially true for studying hidden or hard to access populations such as deviants or elites. Here, a relatively few people, such as between six and a dozen, may offer us insights into such things as the stratification hierarchy of a drug-producing subculture (i.e., methamphetamine), an outlaw motorcycle gang, or a corporate boardroom. It may simply be that is as many people to which one can gain access among these types of groups.

Taking an overview of the field they also state that "the number of people required to make an adequate sample for a qualitative research project can vary from one to a hundred or more" (Adler and Adler 2012, p.11), which indicates the manner in which the chosen research orientation can affect the numbers required to reach what Glaser and Strauss (1967) calls saturation. This concept of saturation refers to the manner in which the researcher continues to explore relevant cases until there are no new theoretical insights emerging from the data. In light of the small sample size in the qualitative section of this thesis and my failure to recruit more participants, I completed over seven hours of interviews with each participants, resulting in over just under sixty hours of interview time. When I felt that the relevant research areas were
adequately covered and that no further relevant insights were emerging, I deemed that I had reached research saturation.

My choice of research orientation also has often been used successfully with small samples as research shows

...a study based on Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis is likely to entail a much smaller sample size because of the fine-grained analysis that is often involved. It is simply not necessary to generate a large corpus of data for such research (Bryman 2012, p.18).

Therefore, I argue that the findings of my qualitative interviews can provide some valuable insight into the shared experiences of living as a religious minority in Ireland. When placed in conjunction with the survey element of this study, I believe that this study will provide results which are of social significance in relation to the existence of religious based stigma and discrimination in Ireland.

All of the interviewees were residents of the Republic of Ireland, but not all were born here. Two had been born in England. Four of the group had converted to the religious group of their choice and the others had been born in to the religion, and some described themselves as very devout and others as not very religiously active. In age, the interviewees ranged from 22 to 60; two were in their twenties, three in their thirties, two in their forties, one in their fifties and one in their sixties. Four were female and four were male. The vast majority of the participants self-identified as being from middle-class backgrounds, based on their occupational status, with two specifically referring to themselves as lower middle class. All of the participants were employed in a full-time capacity, except for the participant in their sixties who had retired.
All of the participants in the interview section were white, and none of them had a manner of self-presentation such as hairstyle, clothing, etc. which would be outside the norms of acceptable presentation in contemporary Ireland. I refer to these points as I expressly wished to explore their own reference to being cast as "socially different" based as much as possible on their religious identity and not an amalgamation of reaction to their chosen appearance or ethnic background. The relationship between ethnicity and religious identity is one which has engendered much debate as discussed in chapter two. There has been a tendency to use religion as a marker or social identifier (Mitchell 2006) which may be of little actual religious content to the individual, while ethnicity is viewed a culturally collective mechanism, predicated on a shared history, symbols and practices (Horowitz 1985; Smith 1986; Connor 1994; Hastings 1997). This points to the difficulty of exploring the relationship between ethnicity and religion and the directionality of the influence between the two is also in question as various groups differ in the degree of emphasis placed on the collective religious identity as opposed to the ethnic identities (Yang and Baugh 2001). To date, research on the specifics of a religious identity as a stigmatised identity has been given little coverage in the literature.

Formulation of Primary Research Questions

Having designed the theoretical approach of the qualitative methodology, the next step was to lay out the key questions that the research will address. Paterson and Higgs (2004) refer to this step as the foundations for the hermeneutical bridge between the researcher’s horizon and the horizons of the participants. The interviews were primarily problem-centred interviews (Witzel 2000; Flick 2006) with a short interview guide based on the primary research areas relating to the experience of and
reactions to religious-based discrimination. Problem-centred interviewing is a particular type of semi-structured interviewing, based on an interview guide containing questions and interview stimuli in order to elicit information on a certain problem (Flick 2006, p.161). This style of interviewing provides support to the narrative thread, additional probing prompts in order to gain in-depth understanding and also helps prevent stagnation over the course of the interviews (Witzel 2000). The interviews with the research participants were based on a conversational model, with a mostly open-ended questions emanating from a written interview guide - such as "tell me about your experience as a member of your group in Ireland?" which led to an extended research conversation (Rubin and Rubin 2005; Mayall 2000). This form of research conversation allowed the participants to take more of an active role in the interview process, and elicited a greater sense of rapport as

...(m)eaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning, or simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter

(Holstein and Gubrium 2004, p. 14).

The use of such open-ended questions encouraged introspection and provided opportunities for thick description, and participants were asked to use example of their own experiences and to give as much description as they were comfortable with. Miniceliello et al.'s (1999) interview technique of funneling from the general to the particular, as a means of probing for deeper understandings of information and encouraging storytelling was employed. This worked well and the interviewees illustrated their replies with many anecdotes and examples that highlighted their points. All of the interviews were recorded and were transcribed in full by myself. Additionally, I kept a fieldwork journal and a research log during the process. The fieldwork journal recorded my thoughts and reflections on interactions and the
research log was keep track of any newly emerging themes or concepts. The journal allowed me to make critical assessments of what had occurred during the interview which is an essential part of the researcher role (Atkinson and Silverman 1997) and proved a valuable record of my research journey, as well as contextual pointers for later reference. The fieldwork took place over a three-year period and involved on average seven hours of interviews with each participant. I proposed that any follow-up interviews could be conducted by phone or internet for the participants' convenience. However, all of the participants wished to meet face to face for follow-up interviews which led to an average interview time of 6.50 hours each which produced sizable transcripts.

**Deep Immersion in the Texts**

As Paterson and Higgs (2005) recommend on completing the interviews, I began reading the transcripts repeatedly, without interpretation or attributing meaning to achieve deep emersion in the text. In this case, I read the text of all interviews at least three times before beginning any analysis. Throughout the duration of this thesis, I reread them several more times. This is an important step as lack of familiarity with what has actually been said can lead to the decontextualisation of interpretations from the original text and this can be problematic when trying to justify findings and conclusions from the research process. Hermeneutic phenomenology tries to address this by remaining close to the original text, underscoring all aspects of analysis with evidence from the text and uncovering inherent biases for the scrutiny of others (Tripp-Reimer and Cohen 1987).
The next step involved exploring patterns and concepts which emerged from the text, which I supplemented by making comparisons notes from my research log and by repeatedly returning to the research questions. By completely immersing myself in the interview transcripts, I was able to explore the concepts and themes emerging on how a stigmatised religious identity is managed. The analysis using n-Vivo software was performed in three stages aimed at reducing the material down to the relevant data to answer the research question. First, the material is paraphrased and irrelevant material was skipped. Second, paraphrased data with similarities were placed in categories and again paraphrased. The final stage involved refining the categories and searching for links at higher levels of abstraction, resulting in the distillation of the raw interview data into relevant, interconnected social concepts. I then began to piece together the various identity management strategies that had emerged from the participant's interviews.

Next, I thoroughly investigated the various categories and the common themes in managing religious identities which emerged and examined the level of supportive evidence from interview quotations in relation to them. At this stage, there was a fusion of all viewpoints and a return to the overall research objective. In this final phase, it is important to evaluate and critically assess the findings which emerged. Patterson and Higgs (2005) recommend having a reference group or peer adviser to provide feedback, as this allows one to see if the conclusions have resonance and to produce a refined and polished model. As the option of a specific reference group was not available to me, I employed reviews from my thesis supervisor at regular junctures and an annual panel review to explore the overall direction of my research process and findings. I also used conference feedback to inform my evaluation of the
research analysis and found that all three modes of feedback facilitated the production of a more coherent and refined work.

There is also an explicit acknowledgement of the temporality of the views within the interpretative perspective which I employed, therefore my findings reflect the understanding that the experience of the participants may change with time. This study is therefore in essence a snapshot of the way in which members of minority religions negotiate this identity throughout their day-to-day interactions and my selection of a hermeneutic methodology is based on my wish to accurately represent the experiences of my participants. In the next section I will explore the issues of quality relating to my research design.

**Issues of Quality in Qualitative Research**

The question of how to ensure the validity or reliability of qualitative research is a perennial problem and there is little consensus on how best to ensure and assess issues of quality. Much of the debate centres on "(w)hether there are criteria by which qualitative research can be judged, and if so what character these should have, are issues about which there has been much debate but little agreement" (Hammersley 2007, p. 288). As qualitative methods began to infiltrate the social sciences in the 1960's, attempts were made to shoehorn the checks and balances of quantitative methods onto qualitative research in order to ensure that research was of a satisfactory standard, often resulting in "hybrid" criteria. Many practitioners have questioned the validity of such an application (Lincoln 1995; Guba and Lincoln 1994; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Roulston 2010) claiming the philosophical incompatibility of qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Smith 1989; Schwandt 1996), which they argue
could lead to discrepancies and lack of procedural transparency. Therefore alternative, more appropriate criteria have been sought in ensuring the validity of qualitative research.

In a more extreme approach to this problem, some make the case that the concept of quality criteria, as is commonly understood, has no place in qualitative research. Smith, for example makes the point that "there can be no criteria to reconcile discourse (to sort out the trustworthy from the untrustworthy results)" (1984, p. 384) and that the only possible option is to conduct research on the basis that it is impossible to judge what is valid, reflecting what Denzin and Lincoln (2000) call the "crisis of representation and legitimacy" (p.38). I argue that this stance has some legitimacy, but does little to further the case for qualitative approach as a trustworthy methodological choice in social research. Qualitative investigations and the interpretative tradition in particular have often been accused of being "soft" science, characterised by ad-hoc methodologies and unclear analysis and conclusions (Chapple and Rogers 1998; Pollock 1991; Clarke 1998).

Therefore, to avoid such accusations and present trustworthy and credible findings, I argue that some level of quality criteria is essential. To this end, I began a survey of the literature with the aim of reaching my stated research aims, while allowing a level of quality to be both internally maintained and externally transparent. This is especially important in relation to hermeneutics as it

...is a philosophy and not a methodology, and the researcher is required to read and extract the principles of this and apply them to the study. This leaves the researcher open to criticism that the process of translating philosophy into practice involves the researcher’s interpretation. In seeking to make the decision trail clear to others, the researcher must distil the philosophical principles which are necessarily subjective and set these out in a way that is accessible and open to scrutiny

By criteria, what one looks for is something indicative of validity and it is my contention that effective research should be built on a foundation that includes reflexivity and awareness of praxis. Therefore, I selected as my core criteria that developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) which places emphasis on establishing trustworthiness through credibility, dependability and transferability within research. I will examine each of these elements and how they were incorporated in my research process in detail, as I argue transparency in the decision-making process, or what Lisa Whitehead (2004) calls the "decision trail", is essential in displaying the inherent trustworthiness of the data and justifying any conclusions drawn.

**Research Quality Criteria**

**Credibility**
Credibility is based on the quantitative concept of internal validity, which attempts to establish confidence in the ‘truth’ of the research findings. In the qualitative tradition, this emphasis is on the degree to which the findings presented make sense. Credibility examines the value and believability of the findings, or in other words, "how congruent are the findings with reality?" (Merriam 2009, p.213). There are several proposals that have been put forward as enhancing research credibility, such as prolonged engagement, triangulation, member checks, peer debriefing or the inclusion of negative cases.

In this research design I selected to use prolonged engagement, member checks and peer-debriefing to augment the credibility of my findings. Prolonged engagement refers primarily to the researcher spending adequate time in the field to order to justify their research findings, but it also calls for the researcher to be cognisant of other
works in the field at both methodological and theoretical levels (Flick 2007). This ensures that informed decisions underpin the research design and should aid the production of trustworthy findings. Therefore, throughout this process I attempted to be cognisant of developments in the relevant research fields in my review of the literature and to utilise the time spent with my participants to ensure the growth of trust, knowledge and understanding between the research participants and the researcher.

The use of triangulation normally involves the use of different data collection methods or investigators. In relation to this thesis, time and monetary constraints prohibited the use of other investigators or alternative modes of qualitative data collection, but I sought other ways of approaching triangulation. Dervin’s (1983) idea of “circling reality”, which she sees as “the necessity of obtaining a variety of perspectives in order to get a better, more stable view of ‘reality’ based on a wide spectrum of observations” reflected my research aims at understanding different perspectives on the same phenomena and allows some level of triangulation within a small project. I therefore selected participants from different and quite varied religious groups, ranging in spectrum from quite conservative "churched" religions, such as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints to the more controversial, non-traditional religions such Scientology and Paganism, in order to gauge the levels of negative social interaction to the public presentation of this identity. This wider scope should also allow a better understanding of such social interactions between such minorities and wider Irish society.
In addition to prolonged engagement and triangulation, throughout the research project all of my participants were involved in the process of member checking. This involves the participants reading the transcript and my initial draft reports in relation to themselves and highlighting any points where they agreed or disagreed with the researcher's representations. I was initially apprehensive in relation to this procedure, as it is possible that on reading, the participant doesn’t like what they have said and may alter their comments or withdraw from the project. This did not occur and proved most useful in clarifying issues. As already discussed, by employing hermeneutic research techniques, one always runs the risk of interpretative superiority in the analysis phase which places the researcher’s interpretation of the case above what is being portrayed by the participants. I argue that the use of member checks ensured that this did not occur and I will refer to its utility during my discussion and analysis section of this thesis.

The added credibility criteria of peer debriefing through conferences, workshops and academic feedback also allowed the authenticity of my findings to be scrutinised, at what Paterson and Higgs (2005) calls “checkpoints” and I used this feedback to improve the clarity of my research process and findings.

2. Transferability
Transferability is based on the concept of external validity which has at its foundation the generalisability of research findings to other settings. In a quantitative sense, this is based on the conception of probability and sampling theorems. However, within qualitative research, this is not possible and the researcher must give as much information as possible on the research setting, participants, methods employed and
its findings in order for an external assessment of its applicability to other settings. The concept of generalisability is not been widely used in qualitative research to date, due to the contextual dependency of micro-sociological approaches (Flick 2007). However, I argue that a comprehensive record of a research design can be a useful guide to other ways in which the models and methodologies of this research can be used within the field and be replicable in other circumstances.

3. Dependability
Following on from credibility and generalisability, dependability is based on the quantitative concept of reliability which in a qualitative sense refers to whether the findings are supported by the data and the inferences are logical and supported (Huberman and Miles 1998, p.202). This level of dependability can be promoted by the use of a research audit trail incorporating the documentation of data, methods and decisions about the research which can be laid open to external scrutiny (Schwandt and Halpern 1988). My choice to explore the experience of and reactions to religious based discrimination within an interpretative hermeneutic process ensures that each step of my process is recorded and that all of my analyses are rooted in the text as produced by the participants. This therefore enhances the dependability of my research findings.

There are also specific quality issues which relate to the use of a hermeneutic approach that I will address here. The hermeneutic phenomenological approach which I have chosen is "highly suited to answering ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions about human issues and concerns" (Whitehead 2004, p.514), but its complex nature can lead to questions over the veracity of the findings produced. In other words, how do we ensure that the findings we reproduce are accurate and not influenced by the research
objectives or bias. There are two ways in which I will specifically address this. First, I will describe and critically assess the research in detail, in order to show that all findings and conclusions are based on evidence elicited by appropriate and effective methodology. I argue this is best achieved through the method of procedural auditing referred to above, which in essence maps the justification for each decision made from inception to completion. Therefore within each section of this thesis, the rationale for all decisions, their implementation and results are noted and explained. I found the most effective manner to ensure the quality of the project and to allow methodological transparency was to employ an audit trail as described by Flick (2007), by which I refer to a record of all my key decisions and ensure that they were incorporated throughout my thesis. This includes data collection, all additional notes taking, how the concepts were broken down and the manner in which I reconstructed the data in order to arrive at my research findings, which should inform the quality of my conclusions. This auditing process augments the transparency that is inherent in a interpretative hermeneutical approach which is predicated on laying bare the machinations of analysis, and therefore allows one "to follow the decision trail relating to theoretical, methodological and analytic choices (which) is an important indicator of trustworthiness" (Whitehead 2004, p. 288).

Secondly, in addition to the use of an audit trail, the liberal use of participant quotations in relation to the research findings means that conclusions are grounded in the text. As the job of interpreting the data is down to the researcher, there are many who question the influence that the researcher's agenda has on the data produced (Ingersoll 2002). Flick (2007) raises the issue of selective plausibilization which occurs when research only highlighting the parts which show or support the
phenomena under investigation, while ignoring that which is contradictory. By having a transparent research process, clearly based in the text produced "adds credibility, by showing the analyst’s authentic search for what makes most sense, rather than marshalling all the data toward a single conclusion" (Patton 2002, p.555). Therefore, I argue that rigour is an inbuilt quality in hermeneutic research as it depends so fundamentally on the relation to the text and the continuous explorations of the horizons of the researcher and the participants.

**Ethical Considerations**

The previous section explored the criteria employed in this research design to ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the process and subsequent findings. This section will examine the ethical aspects of the research design. As Jenkins and Northway points out ethical considerations entail that "all aspects of the research process from deciding upon the topic through to identifying a sample, conducting the research and disseminating findings have ethical implications" (2002, p.3). In my overview of my research design, I touched on some of the ethical problems posed by employing such an interpretative hermeneutic methodology, such as interpretative superiority, which is one of the many considerations that one must bear in mind when designing research that is both ethical and effective. The question of ethics has come to the fore in research due to scandals involving the misuse of data and participants (Flick 2007, pp. 44-5). Hence, there are now numerous codes of ethical guidelines to assist researchers in protecting all of those involved in the research process.

Most codes are based on the four principles of ethical theory, such as those put forward by Murphy and Dingwall (2001), where refer to non-malfeasance,
beneficence, autonomy and justice. Non-malfeasance refers to the doctrine of "do no harm" and calls on the researcher to limit the exposure of those taking part in research to harm and to alert participants to any possible negative outcomes at the outset of the project. This pertains not just to outward social risks, such as reputational damage, but one must also be cognisant of personal, inward risk such as the production of an internal crisis caused by the subject matter (Flick 2006, p.50). Beneficence highlights the benefits that participants and wider society may gain by taking part in the research and underscores that research is not simply undertaken as an end in itself (Murphy and Dingwall 2001, p.339). The principle of autonomy ensures that the decisions and values of each participant are respected by the researcher, such as the decision to withdraw from the process. Finally, the principle of justice ensures that all people in the research process are treated equally and with fairness.

I believe research should take place on the basis of the fullest possible information about the process in order to ensure the dignity and rights of the participants. Therefore, my research proposal, including full details of methodologies involved was presented to and approved by the University of Limerick Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics prior to the commencement of fieldwork. This research was designed with the four guiding principles in mind and underpinned by the Sociological Association of Ireland’s (SAI’s) Ethical Guidelines. Firstly, I ensured that all participants were able to give informed consent to take part and that consent was voluntary. The project, its aims, objectives and possible outcomes in relation to harm and benefits were fully explained to all those who took part – in written form which the participants kept for their own information, and also orally at the outset of the project, before the first and all subsequent interviews. This information included
issues on data storage, how and where the data would be subsequently dispersed, which allows the participants to have the most comprehensive information in relation to what they are involved in. All subjects were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the project, at anytime without penalty. Following this, all participants were spoken to about issues of confidentiality. When working with members of social minorities, it is important to understand that not all members are socially open about their affiliation and that to make this public knowledge could be very harmful. All of the interviewees were happy to be assigned pseudonyms and to have their age range, gender, nationality and religious affiliation appear in the research.

All interviewees were also informed of their right to not have the sessions recorded, that they may stop the recording at anytime, and also how only I would listen and transcribe the interviews personally. All recordings were subsequently destroyed. During the course of the interviews, over a two year period, only one person declined to have the session recorded and one other participant agreed to stopping the recording due to becoming emotional. Streubert and Carpenter (1999) point to the researcher's obligation to pre-empt all possible outcomes of the interview process, but stress that in spite of all preparation, qualitative research methods can throw up some surprises both during and after fieldwork. In my case, the participant became very upset as she related part of their religious lifestory and as the researcher, I was faced with an ethical predicament. Should I carry on with the interview and perhaps gain some valuable insight about the strain experienced as a marginalised minority or should I stop the interview, even if she did not ask to? I did in this case stop the interview as I felt that I was capitalising on the interviewee's emotional suffering and noted as such in my research journal. In fact, I felt I had compromised my ethical
position as a researcher and explained that I fully understood if she wished to withdraw from the project at our next meeting. However, she agreed to continue. She felt it was imperative that she continued to tell her story, as she felt there was no other outlet for her. At the outset of the project, I had set out the possible benefits to the participants, which I hoped would allow others to share in the lived experience of my participants and further our understanding of the discrimination experienced, and she felt that her emotional response was an important part of that journey.

In a final word, as the hermeneutics which underpins this research design is concerned with what Habermas calls the "ah, you understand me!" moment, I chose to discuss my progress and findings with the participants on several occasions. This allowed the project to stay true to its original aim and that the participant's meanings were accurately reflected. This was invaluable in clarifying elements and avoiding issues over interpretation as noted above and ensured that justice was done to the participants through their representation in my work.

**Conclusion**

This chapter defended the research methodology employed in this thesis. Firstly, the choice of a supplementary qualitative research paradigm was chosen and explained, followed by the ontological and epistemological foundations of my approach. I chose to work within an interpretative stance, using hermeneutic phenomenology for several reasons related to my research aims. Such an approach would allow me to accurately represent the experiences of religious stigmatisation and discrimination as related by my research participants, while providing the in-depth exploration required for such a complex phenomena. My sampling strategy was based on purposive sampling and resulted in eight research participants, one from each group which took part in the
survey. While the sample is small, there are research precedents, especially in relation to hard to reach groups and phenomenology, which have successfully utilised small sample and have produced socially significant results. The final section set out and justified the decisions in relation to matters of quality and ethics within my research design.

By choosing to complement my survey with qualitative interviews, I am keeping with my research aims which are to explore religious-based stigma and discrimination among the eight non ethno-religious groups in a sociologically holistic manner. By linking the elements which create a stigmatised identity to the various experiences of discrimination, it is my aim to uncover the connections between the manner in which the participants manage what they perceive as a stigmatised identity and the social environment in which it operates, in order to better understand the casting of these groups as "other" in contemporary Irish society.
Chapter Six
Assumptions, Stereotypes and Strategies
Research Findings

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored the methodological and ethical considerations which underpin the qualitative section of this study into the experience of religious discrimination and stigmatisation among eight groups in Ireland. In this chapter, I will discuss and analysis the preliminary findings drawn from interviews with the participants and begin to compare their experience to the multi-faceted definition of stigma and discrimination which underpins this study. In the first section, I will introduce the research participants through a short vignette. Following this, I will explore the social assumptions which the participants held in relation to their religious identity, which became the prime motivations for their strategic actions, and examine how these are related to labelling and stereotypes about minority religious groups.

In the second section, I will analyse the types of stereotypes put forward by the participants, in order to understand the manner in which they interact with the environment and how the interviewee feel that these elements of stigma are produced and maintained. In the final section, I will examine the various identity management techniques identified from the data and provide an overview of the findings. The chapter ends by joining my central research question to my research aims and
underscores how identity management can highlight the intersections between the individual and society, and the interplay between our understanding of power, stigma and discrimination.

The Interview Participants

Eight participants took part in the interview portion of this research and consisted of individuals who were members of the religious groups which took part in the survey discussed in chapter three.

**Michael** is a white, male Irish citizen who is aged between 30-40 years of age. He is a lifelong member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons). He is employed and self-identified as middle-class and religiously devout. Michael conceals his religious identity from everyone in his social circle except for close family and two friends. He also does not discuss his concealment with other members of his faith.

**Betty** is a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses and was born into the faith in England. She is now aged in her fifties and is a full and active, devout member of the faith. She is employed in a full-time capacity and described herself as middle class. Betty is not open about her religion with her work colleagues or casual acquaintances. She also does not discuss her concealment with other members of her faith.

**John** is in his twenties and is a member of Scientology. He converted to the faith in his early twenties from a Roman Catholic family background and is a devout and committed member of his group. John holds a full-time job and identifies himself as middle class. At the time of the research, he concealed his religious identity from all those in his social circle, except for one close family member and a friend.

**Susan** is a member of the Baha'i faith to which she converted from Roman Catholicism. She is an active and long standing member of the church who is aged in her sixties and has recently retired from her job. Susan identifies herself as lower
middle class and is not open about her religious affiliation except for her close family and two lifelong friends.

**Paul** is a member of an Evangelical Christian group which he did not wished to be expressly identified due to intimidation experienced in the past. He is aged in his late twenties and converted to his religion in his early twenties and is an active member of his religious group. He was brought up in England and was a non devout member of the Church of England. He is employed and self-identified as middle class. He is only open with his immediate family about his faith at present.

**Sarah** is a member of the Elim Pentecostal group and is aged in her forties. She is employed and views herself as "very average" middle class. She elects not to share her religious affiliation with those she works with or with those in her local community at present. She also does not discuss her religious concealment with other members of her faith.

**Jacob** is a member of a Druid group which he did not wish to be named in this thesis. He has been a member of this religious group in Ireland for nearly 15 years, converting from Roman Catholicism. He is employed and is aged in his forties, with a young family. He sees himself as middle class and is open with other members of his group about his concealment of his religious identity.

**Ava** is a member of a Born Again Christian group to which she converted from Roman Catholicism. She is aged in her thirties, employed and self-identifies as lower middle class. She conceals her religious identity from those she works with and also from her neighbours and casual acquaintances. Ava is a devout and active member of her faith.

All of the eight participants took part in several interviews which lasted on average 6.50 hours. All of the participants were interviewed on several occasions, in addition to one extra meeting which was in order to clarify matters and to employ member checks. As I discussed in my methodological chapter, this dimension of member
checking, where the participants actively partake in the construction of an accurate portrayal of their interpretations, is fundamental to my aim of ensuring that my research is valid and justifies their experiences.

Assumptions of Negative Social Reaction

I begin my exploration of the management of a stigmatised identity by examining how the participants perceive they are viewed by others. This is a crucial element in understanding the motivations for the strategies selected and the manner in which they comprehend the social environment. Over the course of the interview process, all of the interview participants revealed that they held two basic assumptions based on experiences relating to their religious identity. First, many expressed the belief that the revelation of their religious affiliation would elicit a negative response from others in Irish society; and second, that their religious affiliation was negatively stereotyped, which affected the response to any revelation of their religious identity. I will explore each one of these assumptions in turn and their role in the participants' strategies in response to actual or feared discrimination. These will be connected to the process of labelling and negative stereotypes, how the participants perceived their connection to the social environment and the manner in which they are sensitised by the working definition of stigmatisation and discrimination, which is:

...the convergence of labelling and its links to undesirable characteristics, creating a rationale for devaluing, rejecting, and excluding the individual who consequentially experience status loss and discrimination which is felt or perceived as 'unfair treatment' manifested through the reported experience of;

religious prejudice; religious hatred; religious disadvantage; direct religious discrimination; indirect religious discrimination; and 'institutional religionism’, and linked to perceived actions of disfavour in relation to employment, or services and displays of social attitudes including ridicule, exclusion, religious distortion or trivialisation.
Personal Experience of Negative Social Reactions

While describing their experiences as members of small religious group in Ireland, all of the eight participants believed that the general public would react to their religious identity in a negative manner, if their identity was revealed. Of the eight participants, five of the individuals based that assumption on their own personal experience, while two based it on the experience of others in similar situations. The final participant used the reactions of others in their social sphere to other religious groups to inform their conclusions.

The participants who cited personal experience of negative social reactions had a variety of experiences to share from their everyday encounters in Ireland. Some had revealed their religious affiliation in the past:

*I was close to one of the women I worked with in a factory – a few years ago. We just to have coffee, natter about kids and soaps and all that. Then I don’t even know how it came up but I mentioned one day that I was a member of the Baha’i. She said she didn’t know what that was. But from that day, she was off with me. Never mentioned it again, but she distanced herself from me. We hardly speak now and I know that’s what it was. (Susan, Baha’i)*

*I told everyone! Just like that! I suppose I was excited about finding what I did (religion) and wanted to share it with everyone. That wasn’t a good idea... it took me a while but I soon realised no one was calling or anything. One of them let me know that they thought I was only interested in religion now. (Paul, Evangelical Christian)*

For others, the revelation was instigated by others, but the reactions were the same. John, who is a Scientologist, explains how he was seen by others doing some work for his group and was also noted in the vicinity of the meeting place of the religious group. He speaks about how he converted from "normal, Irish Catholicism" to his scientology in his early twenties and that
I just knew that I should just keep it to myself. I mean there's nothing wrong in that, is there? I should have known that someone would see me there and next thing, the people are treating me differently. Change slammed down in the shop, being politely ignored to start with and then, stuff put through my letter box and kids shouting at me. (John, Scientology)

The three participants above were converts to their various faiths, but for others who were born into their religions, there were similar reports of negative reactions based on their religious affiliation:

When I go out to work for the mission, I am so proud to be doing God's work. I was doing it with my parents when I was old enough and still do when I can. Then I don't tell anyone at work, I don't tell the ones at the gym classes I go to, 'cos I know that they won't look at me the same. (Betty, Jehovah's Witness)

Michael, a life-long member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, experienced first-hand the extremes which reactions can take. He spoke of how his family, who are all members of this religious group, were effectively shunned in Irish society:

I can remember back to the 70's, and people would just avoid us. Cross the street. Not return the salute. Not let us play with other kids. They thought we were going to turn them all. I was very confused as a kid about it. It's not so bad now. I live in a big city now and just keep myself to myself. (Michael, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)

For others in the research group, their assumptions of negativity in social reactions were based on the experience of others in similar situations. Betty, a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses spoke about the issue of door to door missionary work and discussed at length the fears which grew out of the negative encounters which other have had:
Others have been manhandled off properties, had dogs set on them, stuff thrown at them. Threats to call the police. Although they didn’t tell me to scare me, but to share what we face when you go on missionary work. (Betty, Jehovah’s Witness)

I wanted to know if this was specifically related to the practice of door-to-door missionary work, which other groups also use to various degrees:

Yeah a lot of it is when you go to the doors. But I know a lot of other members who have been singled out in (town name), and get treated badly. Like they were put out of a job, not straight out, but we all know it’s due to what religion he was. It makes me wary of being very open about it. (Betty, Jehovah’s Witness)

Jacob, a member of a Pagan based religious group also spoke of how he would

...never let anyone know at work. It would be career suicide. Being upfront about it can make it very hard. I have chatted on forums about how people don’t get work, or lose promotions when they let them know they might have been Pagan. I don’t want that to happen to me. (Jacob, Pagan)

The final participant, Ava told how the informal remarks about other religious groups at work and in her wider social circle informed her assumptions:

Ah you know a lot of time to them it’s just banter. Stuff about Tom Cruise and Scientology and the way that Muslims get more rights at work to pray and all. One I hear quite often is "God Botherer" which I find deeply upsetting. They just think that anyone different to them is fair game. You can't win. So I just keep God close to me – just for me. (Ava, Born Again Christian)

All of the participants therefore, had various concerns which resulted from negative social interactions based on their religious identity. Those who were not born into the religion, had informed most of their immediate family of their conversion and some close friends, but were not overt about their religious affiliation with most co-workers, friends and acquaintances. Those who were life-long religious members also tended not to be publically open about their affiliation outside of their own families and
others of the religious groups. These assumptions of negativity were underpinned by the fear of social sanctions, such as in their professional life, where the fear of job loss was also coupled with the fear of being viewed as incompetent, if their religious identity was uncovered:

You could be in a job for years and be good at it. And then they find out that you are part of a group like ours and it’s like that’s all they see, you can’t do the job anymore! I got told that things were slow, so I had to go! I felt that in their eyes I was ok one minute and the next I was some simple religious freak. All my knowledge didn’t matter all. (Jacob, Pagan)

This echoes previous research in the field exploring the impact of a stigmatised identity on social status and the discreet manner in which one can be portrayed as "lesser" as discussed in chapter two. Others echoed this sentiment, with Susan referring to how following her revelation to a work colleague made her sense that they no longer trusted her work within the factory:

They used to double check everything. We got docked if there were mistakes and after they found out, they just assumed that I was doing it wrong. You know I wish I had asked them why?? (Susan, Baha’i)

I found this fear was also present in relation to their families and especially parenting skills:

If I am honest, I am afraid of how they would judge me and my kids. I just know that they would think I am some weirdo and that my kids were being brought up with weird stuff. My kids know about it… but I worry that others would see being a Pagan as not being a fit parent, which couldn’t be further from the truth! (Jacob, Pagan)

The importance of their family also became evident in my discussion with the participants. Most who had converted where aware of the imposition that this placed
on their families and led to fears of social isolation and discrimination due to the parents' religious choice:

_I love my kids and I don’t want them to be called names or not be allowed to have friends because of what I am called to. It wouldn’t be fair and I guess that is the main reason, that I keep it under wraps for the main part._ (Paul, Evangelical Christian)

In addition to the fear of social sanctions against themselves or their families, the participants also experienced a type of cognitive dissonance as they tried to reconcile the manner in which they performed socially and the importance which they placed on their religious identity. For six of the eight people who were interviewed for this study, they described their religion as “hugely important” in their lives and integrally related to their sense of self. Therefore, they carried in addition to the fears of negative social sanctions, a sense of shame in relation to the denigration of their religious identity in their wider social lives:

_I feel that I am letting the Lord down, you know by the way that I keep it to myself most of the time. For me, My God my religion is such a huge part of everything in my world, yet I still keep quiet about it at work and with my children’s friends’ parents. This makes me feel bad now, ’cos I am sure that God wouldn’t take the easy way like me._ (Ava, Born Again Christian)

Others also expressed this idea of shame in relation to their actions. John, described how he was sure that his choice of religion was right for him, yet says he

_...feels torn about being true to myself and not letting the fear of what others think makes me put on this disguise. But to be honest, I am afraid._ (John, Scientology).

As the only Druid present in the research group, I wondered if this sense of fragmentation and shame was also an issue for Jacob. He spoke at length of his fear of
discovery both at work and in relation to his children, and how this fear and the possible consequences overrode his personal ideas about religious expression:

*It’s not worth it, for me. There is no shame in making decisions on how best to balance things so that life is easier for everyone and I can still practice.* (Jacob, Druid)

For those who were without children and significant others not in the same religious group, this sense of shame-related fear was also present in some degree. Susan described how she wanted to be more open about being Baha’i:

*It’s been so great – such a joy in my life. Given me the opportunity to feel part of something that makes a difference and I wanted to share it. I mean it should be shared, shouldn’t it. But you know, it’s just I know it won’t be understood like that. And I am wary, wary of how it could change everything. I want to just make it easy I suppose.* (Susan, Baha’i)

Therefore the assumptions of negative social consequences informed a great deal of the manner in which the participants presented themselves publically, and was also the source of much anxiety in relation to the balance between the importance of their religion and their choice of control of self-presentation.

In connection with these assumptions of negative social reactions, all of the participants held very strong beliefs relating to religious stereotypes which populate Irish society. Overall, the stereotypes which they perceived as negative and could be distilled into two broad categories; first, members as prone to gullibility; and second as actively seeking converts to their religious group. These stereotypes are linked to motivations which underpin the strategies of self-presentation, and allow us to explore the power which they can wield in the individual’s lives. I will also link these images to the wider social context and the power dynamics which perpetuate them next.
Religious Minority Groups as "Gullible"

All eight of the research participants interviewed agreed that the most prevalent perception of them was as gullible and taken in by the promises of the group. This concept of gullibility was referred to in several different senses. John described to me how others have referred to members of his group as

...saddos, sort of stupid so that they get duped by the higher up members. So many people have referred to the money that they think we give the organisation and "how could anyone be so stupid not to see through it, of course it's a scam." I know it's not true; we have really highly educated intelligent people in our group. But that's what stays with people and that's what you see in their eyes. (John, Scientology)

Being a more unconventional type of religion, as a Druid, Jacob expressed his view that

...for many people, I suppose they just know what they see on TV. That the way they see it as that the only knowledge they have about Druids or Pagans and usually its seen as negative-like the Druids are the bad ones in a drama, either that or Druids are seen as like overgrown "Nerd" (air quotes) boy, who have not grown up and are playing dress up. That’s all they know. (Jacob, Druid)

This perception of minority religious members as idealistic and gullible has been highlighted in other social research on cult stereotypes (Dawson 2011, 1998; Barker 1984) as being highly prevalent. Therefore, this belief that members of small religious groups are either "gullible people duped by cunning cult recruiters" or "maladjusted and marginal losers" (Dawson 1998, p.117), is a popular misconception, despite having been countered and refuted on many fronts. For example, research into the educational profiles of many small religious groups found that with few exceptions, members of minority religious groups were educated to a higher standard than the general public (Wallis 1977; Wilson and Dobbelare 1994; Jones 1994; Latkin et al.1987; Rochford 1985; Gussner and Berkowitz 1988) yet still resonates in contemporary society. All of the participants spoke of how they felt that others'
judgment on their levels of credibility, trustworthiness, intelligence and competency were influenced negatively by these stereotypes, echoing the fears which many of them alluded to in previous section:

*People seem to think we join and then we just blindly follow and agree to everything with no mind of our own. They don’t understand that before joining most of us struggled with issues and then made a decision that my life could be lived through Gods rules. It’s like they think being religious damages your brain.* (Sarah, Elim Pentecostal)

Most felt that this stereotype negatively affected perceptions of their professional capacities, educational attainment and also their ability to perform rationally:

*People have said to me "how can you let God just decide everything for you, what about your own mind". But its God that guides my choices not lays down dictates. I know that there are those in the public who think we are all nut jobs and best kept out of important things.* (Ava, Born Again Christian)

*In my group, we are at one with the spirit and are encouraged to be free and follow his lead in our worship. I have overheard outsiders saying, like those we hire the venue off, that we are all just high on stuff, crazy people. Deranged.* (Paul, Evangelical Christian)

Susan, who had also worked in the education sector for many years, had a very negative experience when colleagues discovered that she was part of the Baha’i:

*I don’t know how they uncovered it. I mean it was a while ago before you could Google someone! But it got out and around the school, and grew horns and tails so the story grew that I was leading a cult in "Town". I had parents complain to the school that I was not competent to teach their children, that I was not capable of it ‘cos of my religion.* (Susan, Baha’i)

Both John and Jacob drew the on almost the same analogy in explaining minority religion and the dynamics of power and trust in Irish society. Both believed that should a doctor, a teacher or social leader to be revealed as a Pagan or Druid, there
would a sharp decrease in their level of credibility in the eyes of the general public, regardless of their job performance. All of the participants discussed how this stereotype influenced the manner in which they conducted themselves within social encounters. The fear of the sanctions which emanate from perceptions of this stereotype, were viewed as potentially harmful both to themselves as individuals and to their families, due in large part to the ready public acceptance of the gullible/incompetent image of minority group members. Therefore, issues of credibility and loss of social status would feature quite prominently in their identity management strategies, which I will cover in detail in chapter seven.

What became evident in this discussion was the manner in which various elements of stigmatisation as conceptualised by Link and Phelan (2001) and incorporated into my extended research definition were emerging from the data. The participants referred to how they feel "labelled" or "branded" in some way, and linked to negative images, resulting in a loss of social status and discrimination. The stereotypes identified by the participants seem to be particularly powerful within the designation of a stigmatised religious identity, and I explore the perceptions, consequences and the manner in which they viewed as transmitted next. This will help to draw together the elements of stigmatisation and the experience of discrimination, as well as exploring the perceived source of these stereotypes.

**Members as Actively Seeking Converts Stereotype**

This stereotype, which pertains to the members as seeking out new members for the group was present in the descriptions of how the participants thought others would see them if their religious identity was revealed:
They would just think that all you think about is getting them to join. When some people found out about it in my past job, they would make slipppy remarks about turning them. I know it was a joke to them, but to me there was something behind it.  
(Paul, Evangelical Christian)

Betty who is a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses, spoke of how she felt that most Irish people interactions with this group was based solely on their missionary work and felt that this one-dimensional experience had this coloured their view of all members:

I do get the sense that they feel I am just waiting to just slip some things about the bible into conversation. That it's like I am surveilling them for some weakness that will make them vulnerable I have been doing the mission for so long now – but when I meet people who know I am part of the Jehovah's Witnesses, there is an almost visible stiffening of them- like I am going to pounce on them. (Betty, Jehovah's Witness)

As I discussed in chapter five, by choosing a phenomenological hermeneutic framework, the participants were encouraged to utilise narratives, anecdotes and metaphors in order to make their points and illustrate their examples. This thematic concept of "Hunting for converts" in the perceptions of others was noted in several different guises over the course of the interviews. In all, I counted 47 separate references that spoke of "hunting"; "prey"; "pouncing"; "luring"; "trapping"; "stalking" and "reeling in" in specific relation to the manner in which all of the participants felt they were seen by others. This highlights the benefit of deep immersion in the text that the hermeneutic technique advocates, as I had failed to see the significance of this theme during the first set of interviews. I wanted to explore this theme deeper, as its prevalence in their discussions indicated that this predatory stereotype had a significant impact on the interviewees. Therefore, I re-probed the topic in the specific manner in which each interviewee had first mentioned it at a later date, in order to attain a great understanding of how they built these perceptions.
There were no discernible correlation between the participants' assumptions of the public's perception of them and the missionary/recruitment methods used by the participants various religions. In other words, all of the participants held the assumption that this "hunting for coverts" was the manner in which they were perceived by the wider public sphere, regardless of whether their respected groups actively recruited members or not:

It's hard to explain. It's a little like people just become a little jumpy and hyper aware of what you are saying after they find out what you are– like there's something hidden in it. You could be chatting about – I don't know the weather or your trip home and yet you get this sense- that they are seeing a sinister motive in what you do. (Sarah, Elim Pentecostal)

As a practicing Pagan, Jacob explains how his specific group are open to enquiries from members of the public, through existing members or through the internet, but never make any unsolicited approaches to outsiders. However, this did not change his construction of the perceptions of others:

We only let others join who want to and for the right reasons, like they have a deep interest in the philosophy we have. But for the few people outside my family that know about my religion, I think in my own head that they see themselves as some sort of quarry to them. For Druids especially, there's a lot of stuff in movies about sacrifices and the like. I guess that what I think they think, deep down. (Jacob, Druid)

Among the groups who took part, only three actively evangelise to the public – Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, who mainly engage in street-level interactions; Jehovah's Witnesses, who provide literature and information by calling to homes, and Scientology, who most often have street information kiosks under various umbrellas of their organisation. However, all members of the research group felt all minority religious groups were viewed in this manner. I asked those who took
part in public evangelising if the wider Irish public might be justified to discriminate
against such a threat to their own religion:

*I see your point... but we never push it. I mean we are just trying to get people to honestly
think what they want out of life and how the church has helped others. People just don’t like to
think about it, all they know is the Osmonds. (Michael, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day
Saints)*

*I have been doing it for years, on the mission and I firmly believe in people's right to say no to
us. But at least it can be an informed no. (Betty, Jehovah's Witness)*

*I know that there's a lot out there about Scientology does this and that, and it's about luring
people in. But that not the reality. I mean loads of people come in once, or read the
communications book, and find its good and they leave it at that. Others might come and do
some courses, others are there for life. There's no strange hold over anyone. Just for some
people it fits and for others it doesn’t. But that is never reported. Just the bad stuff. (John,
Scientology)*

By exploring these two prominent images, it is clear from the discussion above the
manner in which the processes of labelling and stereotypes are connected to various
elements of the working definition of discrimination; namely religious prejudice,
ridicule or trivialisation and indirect discrimination. This prejudice is evident in the
oversimplification of outsiders' understanding of these groups, reducing both the
validity of their religious groups and its members to lay conceptualisations and
stereotypes, leaving them open to trivialisation and ridicule.

None of the participants interviewed felt there were any positive images of groups
such as theirs in the Irish community, echoing the results of the group survey where
over 80% felt that the public perception of minority religions was negative. The
participants trace the source and perpetuation of these public images to various
elements in the Irish social environment, such as media portrayals and the influence of anti-cult movements, where I will explore the stereotypes in more detail.

**Influence of the Media and Anti-Cult Movements in Religious Stereotypes**

All of the interviewees explored the link between media representations of small religious groups in the creation of religious based stereotypes. Evangelical group member Paul spoke at length about his groups' openness to new members and how the initial approach is always made by the outsider. However, there was very strong evidence in his discussions that he felt others perceived him as recruiting for the group. In fact, his exploration of his imagined public perception was the most strongly littered with this "hunting for converts" metaphor using "netting"; "luring"; "bait" and "prey" on many occasions to describe it to me. I wanted to know why he thought that people built this image of him and his religious group and he identified two main sources. First, the popular media:

*For me, its telly and movies. And the papers or the internet now I suppose that I think makes up people’s minds about other religions. So all Muslims are seen as terrorists, all Wiccans are sexual predators. You see it in movies, but YouTube is also full of it. Telling you everything is a cult without any real knowledge. You just see them (religious groups) as out to harm others, to use them for their own ends. (Paul, Evangelical Christian)*

This idea of the perpetuation of cult myths through the media was held by all eight of the participants, citing the negative portrayal of small religious groups on television and newspapers as "deviants" (Susan); "evil" (John); "out to do harm"(Michael); "preying on the weak" (Ava). This echoes the findings of Beckford (1985), Beckford & Cole (1988) and (van Driel and Richardson 1988a, 1988b) in their separate explorations on the influence of media reports of minority religions, as discussed in
chapter four. The prevalence of these stereotypes has a long history. A longitudinal study by Neal (2011) traced the portrayals of minority religions and associated stereotypes on television in the United States for 1958-2008, and found that the level of negativity in such portrayals had altered little in the fifty years she examined. Typically, media images included "stereotypical cult elements… (such as) fraud and violence, as well as contrasts in clothing, setting and lifestyle to differentiate conventional religion from the dangers and delusion of cults" (Neal 2011, p.81).

Therefore, there is a precedent in previous research of the power of the media in the public perception of religious groups and their characteristics. Beckford (1994) and Neal (2011) point to the "power and implications of the cult stereotypes… (as) a force in defining and policing the boundaries of religious legitimacy" (Neal 2011, p.81) which touches again on the issues of power and access to social mechanisms, as discussed in chapter four.

In addition to the influence of the media, the participants identified the Irish anti-cult organisations as giving a sense of legitimacy to the myths and stereotypes seen in the media, and as an influential element in their self-construction in the judgements of others. I had expected the popular media stereotype to feature in participants' discussions, but I had not anticipated the reach of anti-cult organisations in Ireland, nor the manner in which they figured within the participants' assumptions of negative stereotypes. Those who chose to take part in this research came from all four provinces of Ireland; some lived in large cities, others lived in small rural communities, but of the eight interviewees that took part, six described how they had contact either directly or indirectly, with various Irish based anti-cult organisations at various junctures.
Four members of the research group had come into personal contact with such groups. On the request of the participants, I will not name either group which they encountered, as they feared antagonising the situation. In deference to the Code of Ethics that underpins this research design (Sociological Association of Ireland 2011), I also checked on several occasions with those who discussed the following experiences that they were happy to have it included in this thesis. The participants were involved in member checks at various points during the production of this work and were satisfied as to the level of confidentiality afforded to them. Therefore, I felt that the inclusion of the following section was both important in exploring the motivations behind their choice of identity management, and also justified from an ethical research perspective.

The presence and influence of these anti-cult movements has been the subject of much discussion within the sociology of religion (Barker 1993, 2011; Dawson 1998, 2006; Beckford 1985; Shupe and Bromley 1994; Lewis 2011), but there has not been, to my knowledge, any empirical studies regarding the views of minority religious members on such anti-cult groups. One can imagine that they would not be favourable, but in this instance, I focussed on how the research participants felt these groups contributed to the stereotypical images of minority religious members in Irish society, as this was identified as a major motivation in their control of self-information and their perception as "stigmatised" in certain social circumstances.

Those interviewees who had direct contact with members of these groups described it as like experiencing...

...something from olden times – you know when they would run you out of town with fire and forks (Betty, Jehovah’s Witness.)
As a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses who conduct door-to-door missionary work, Betty spoke of how she encountered one of these groups at two different geographical locations and times. The anti-cult group explained to her how they had been approached by the local people to ask them to stay away:

_He said we were here so often, that people were afraid for their children. That’s not true – we keep track of when we go to places. I said that we were doing God’s work and we were charged to continue. I could see the curtain twitchers looking out. It made me sad, for them - none in the Jehovah’s Witnesses would aim to harm._ (Betty, Jehovah’s Witness)

John described how he has encountered one of the members of these groups at the entrance to the main meeting place for his group, on more than one occasion:

_They were waiting for us when we came out and I was so shocked that I hardly remember the first time and what they said. I mean you kind of expect a weird reaction from the public to “Scientology” but it’s not the same as having some kind of vigilantes lying in wait for you. They were also there on several other occasions, but I just blank them now. They still put this stuff out on the web and in schools though, so it hard, you know._ (John, Scientology).

I asked the participants who had come into direct contact with such a group to explain how it made them feel and while there was no set pattern of response, there was a general thread of both disbelief that such behaviour is seen as acceptable, and a sense of resignation to the fact this is how it is in Ireland. Michael, a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, noted that

_...we have seen how other groups in history have been persecuted for having different beliefs and in general we are in public against that. But we still allow and condone such behaviour, based on no facts; these cult bashers just print inflammatory stuff. But there is not much you can do – that’s how it is._ (Michael, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)
Those that did not come into direct contact with anti-cult groups also felt their influence in the information disseminated by various groups through websites, information meetings and YouTube:

"It's very easy to get information out now and they know how to make sure it gets seen. So even if people went looking for some proper information, it would be what they (the anti-cult groups) would want you to see." (Paul, Evangelical Christian)

I also explored in-depth the ways in which the interviewees felt that the existence of such groups influenced the continuation of negative stereotypes and there were some overlaps with the discussion on the role of the media. The overall theme that emerged was that it conferred a type of legitimacy to their discrimination. Most made reference to the fact that anti-cult organisations in Ireland have official office space, websites making claims of expertise; on the internet they are among the first to appear in relation to minority religious web searches and are endorsed officially or unofficially by various state institutions, such as being given access to schools. These were elements which the participants felt gave anti-cult groups credibility in the eyes of the public and therefore legitimised to their approach to portray all minority religions as "cults" and a danger to society.

In particular, the manner in which such groups are given prominence in other Irish public spheres was brought up by many of the participants. This included their appearances in the guise of expert in both the print media and on television programmes that explore Ireland smaller religious groups, which the participants referred to as being "not balanced"; "negative"; with minority religious groups being framed as "a problem in Irish society" or "a danger we must be alert to". This correlation between expertise and public endorsement by newspapers or production
companies was viewed by the research group as interacting to confer legitimacy on the anti-cult view in Irish society, in that it is passively accepted as "truth":

*They put this up in the paper – even some quality ones. Here is such and such, leading researcher on cults in Ireland and he says they are all bad, dangerous and want your children. And most articles don’t balance or question this. I mean it’s outrageous! If it was said about Travellers or Chinese people, this one-sidedness wouldn’t be allowed. But if its religion its ok? And if the paper has this view, then it’s not surprising that many Irish people do as well. (John, Scientology)*

All of the participants also referred to how this endorsement or legitimisation of anti-cult organisation views was further expounded by the manner in which these groups speak in the guise of expert speaker to various organisations, such as schools, church groups of Catholic affiliation and youth groups. While these experts are invited to such groups, the participants felt strongly about the manner in which this often leads to the promotion of "cultic" stereotypes to their audiences, particularly the youth of Ireland. Four of the eight participants spoke of being present at various gatherings where these anti-cult members had presented, while two had reports of such a presentation from others who were present. All of them felt the anti-cult group only highlighted the negative aspects, such as those found in media representations of minority religions, which did not surprise them. This almost exclusive emphasis on the negative by anti-cult and other cult-watching types of organisations has been noted by Barker (2006), and reiterates the participants concern at the lack of balanced discourse in Ireland. However, it was the manner in which organisations such as schools under the Roman Catholic control sanctioned these speakers without question or balance, which most of the participants saw as further legitimising discrimination and making acceptable the stereotypes based on religious affiliation.
The research links between the pattern of stigma and the acts of discrimination, as well as the intersections between the micro and the macro levels of social action are very much in evidence here. For example, the stereotype of "actively seeking converts" was experienced by the participants very much at the micro-level, through social reactions in their day-to-day encounters. The second stereotype of gullibility/incompetence also related to face-to-face social interactions and assumptions of negative reaction, but operated at the meso-level, concerning the world of work and credibility and the wider organisations and communities. This greatly highlights the fact that the participants did not experience or fear direct discrimination, such as in relation to employment or remuneration, but feared the discreet, insidious manner in which they could be socially excluded, labelled as strange or incompetent; and the knock-on effect that would have on their job, authority or social standing.

This effect was intensified by the structural elements which they believed influenced the construction and perpetuation of such stereotypes, such as the mass media and other social institutions, in particular their overt or oblique endorsement of anti-cult views. This breaking down of stereotypes into various societal levels, shows the multi-faceted, insidious nature of stereotype perpetuation and the participants sense of powerlessness to counter these public images at any level. The power of personal shunning at the micro-level, possible loss of work or credibility at the meso-level and the institutional validation of this view at macro-societal level, left the participants of the view that it was pointless to try to counteract both negativity and stereotypes at any level:
There's no one to complain to. There's no one who cares because those that are charged with these posts are in fact just part of the establishment. And until it changes- well, there's not much point in fighting for nothing is there? (Betty, Jehovah's Witness)

How can you tell some young people in the street that are shouting at you, that we have something called religious freedom? They know and I know it's in name only – lip service so the world doesn’t think we are backwards. But really you have the freedom to be like everyone else, or just keep away. (John, Scientology)

This exploration of the participants' assumption of negative labelling, and its links to the social environment form the foundation to my investigation into stigma and discrimination, and the sense of social power (or lack thereof) which underscores the interactions. As these assumptions were strongly linked to their perceptions, I felt it was important to fully explore the manifestations and genesis of such assumptions. As Link and Phelan (2001) state, stigma "is entirely dependent on social, economic, and political power- it takes power to stigmatize"(p.375), and to explore how the machinations of that social power is felt.

From the participants' own admission, the manner in which they controlled their self-information in relation to their religious affiliation was underpinned by these assumptions. From the participants' perspectives, these assumptions of negative social interactions and consequences were a constant source of anxiety in their everyday lives, and hence greatly informed the basis of their identity management and performance in most encounters. By exploring these in detail, my understanding of the types of strategies employed by the participants in reaction to discrimination, or fear of discrimination, was very much enhanced:

*It's hard in today's world to not be aware of the ideas that people have about people like us. On the surface, it might be all political correctness, but scratch the surface and it's like we are just expected to put up and shut up. It makes me feel so powerless sometimes. (Jacob, Pagan)*
Overview of Identity Management Techniques

Having explored the assumptions and stereotypes which populate the participants' perceptions of how others view them as members of minority religions in the previous section, I will now provide an overview of the general identity management techniques which emerged from the data. By focussing on the participants' reactions in certain situations, the prism of identity management will provide an insight into the experience of stigmatisation and discrimination; but will also crucially shed some light on the reactions of others to a minority religious identity and the social spheres in Irish society are problematic. This will provide a starting point from which to assess how this issue can be tackled in Irish society and show the deep impact the lack of openness can have on individuals.

To some degree, all of the participants made reference to the fact that they were not fully open about their religious identity in their everyday lives. Many of them spoke about trying to a balance total dedication and belief in their religion, with the need to also manage their religious identity in certain situations. As I touched on above, behaving in such a manner often became a source of shame and anxiety, despite declaring they have nothing to be ashamed of:

*I feel very bad about it. Hiding what my religion is in general. For a while, I wouldn't even tell others in the group how I was behaving in the real world. I should have been out and shouting it from the roofs, but I wasn't. I might have pretended I did to others but it was the opposite. I was hiding and I shouldn't have been, but that what I felt I had to do. I did talk to a few other people and they felt the same, I feel that I should be more, but it's not easy.*

*(Sarah, Elim Pentecostal)*

All eight participants freely admitted there were several day-to-day situations in which they felt compelled to conceal their religious identity. There were of course some variations in the mode and justification of this concealment, but all of them
referred to these actions as being accompanied by a sense of shame, anger and frustration. Some of the participants used the word "chose" in order to describe their identity management; others spoke of being "forced" into their strategy by the reactions of wider society. When I examined and "unpacked" these words in relation to their behaviour in certain situations, many of the participants revealed that on reflection they "chose to be forced" into the tactics which they employ, which further adds to the sense of dishonesty, fragmentation and frustration, and highlights the perceived social power discrepancy which underpins their social realities. For the interview participants who were presently employed, none of them were open in the workplace about their religion. The research member who had retired also admitted to concealing her identity in the workplace and all of the interviewees referred to this site as

...probably the worst place to be open about your religion. Unless you are a Catholic. (Susan, Baha'i)

Yet, most of the issues stemmed not from management or company ethos, but from their work colleagues, in a casual, indirect manner. This underlines the benefit of supplementing survey research with qualitative interviews, which in this study indicated that the most common site of discrimination was the workplace, but which the interviews reveal was not in the manner that was expected. Outside of their professional lives, there were also high levels of concealment. Almost all of the participants would not have revealed or spoken about their religious affiliation to casual acquaintances or in social groups. Two of the interviewees, Betty (Jehovah's Witness) and Sarah (Elim Pentecostal), felt that they were quite open about their religious identity with acquaintances, but on further reflection both of them spoke about not hiding it, but not be overt about it either. This revision was made at one of
the member checks of the research progress and was brought up by the participants and not instigated by myself. One other crucial site where the participants felt uncomfortable about being open about their religion was in their direct locality, in groups such as parents associations or local action or sports groups, as well as with family members who were of other religious affiliation. The other five at various stages of their life had suppressed their religious identity in deference to possible consequences for family members:

_I used to be quite defiant about it, but I felt I was punishing my family for my choices, so I draw back now. I feel forced to, but it’s better for everyone if I just go along._

_(Ava, Born Again Christian)_

Two of the participants spoke of how they had completely concealed their religion from any individuals who were in contact with their children, such as friends and their parents, but also in relation to their school, doctors and childminders. Jacob as a Druid and John as a Scientologist both felt that their choices should not affect their children, and that

...most people in Ireland I think don’t even see it as a religion, so they think you are some weirdo who will believe anything and therefore not to be trusted. I can take it myself but I won't make my children or family suffer for others ignorance.

_(John, Scientology)_

I was interested to see if being a parent has an effect on the level of concealment among the group. Five of the participants were parents; some with grown-up children, others with small children and all of these admitted to being more wary of the effect of negative responses to their religious affiliation on their children. The others had no children at present, but referred in the same terms to strategies of protection toward other family members, such as parents. Therefore, there was an understanding among
the participants that society often tarnishes those close to the stigmatised, and thus the participant's justified their identity suppression in deference to these principles.

In the group, some were lifelong members having been born into the religious affiliation, others were coverts. Of the participants who converted, two of them had done so in the last seven years, while the rest were members for over fifteen years. Yet, there were very little discernible differences in the manner which any of the participants approached managing their religious identity in day-to-day interactions. I expressly explored the various influences within the participants' personal attributes and circumstances which may have had an effect on their identity management strategies and found that in this research group neither age, gender, length of religious membership or religious affiliation appeared to have much impact on the strategies chosen, or the motivations underlying them. I was initially concerned at the outset that this research group was too diverse in nature and that such a range of ages, religious groups and other social factors might impede the research findings. What I found however, as the research progressed that this diverse nature of participants added socio-metric depth to my findings, and illuminated that stigmatisation and discrimination of religious groups in Ireland can be experienced by various affiliations in very similar ways. In fact, I argue that the very diverse nature of these groups actually strengthens my argument relating to the stigmatisation of small religious groups in Ireland, and the commonality of their experience underscores the lack of religious understanding and social inclusion of such groups.

From the data there emerged a range of activities, based on various assumptions and contexts, in which the participants' control of self-information and behaviour can be
categorised. During the analysis phase, I could see that the participants' behaviour could be placed on a spectrum, similar to Woods and Harbeck's Concealment/Disclosure continuum (1993, p.149) which has at one end total concealment of one's stigmatised identity and total disclosure of this identity at the other end. In relation to this group, none of them either self-identified as overt regarding their religious identity in all elements of their social life, or as being totally covert either. The vast majority, however were far closer to the concealment end of the spectrum and this was reflected in their discussions with me on various topics and also by their own admission.

These behaviours were found to fit into two broad categories. First, tactics which were utilised in order to conceal one's religious identity and second, strategies which led to possible disclosure, often referred to in identity studies as "risk-taking behaviour" (Woods and Harbeck 1993). As there were no set patterns among the participants in terms of how they would react in various social circumstances, with many factors influencing the type of behaviour they chose, I recommend that the positioning of individuals on this spectrum is best viewed as fluid, and that in similar circumstances, the same response may not be elicited. For example, a member might enter into discussion with those who shout abusive terms at them in one instance, yet ignore it or actively retreat from it at other times. Therefore, their sense of concealment or disclosure is changeable, and this is reflected in my discussion and analysis of the sub-categories which make up these categories in the next chapter.
Conclusion

This chapter focused on exploring the assumptions made by the participants in their day-to-day interactions with others, concerning the perceived judgements of others. From the research data, two main assumptions became clear. First, all of the participants anticipated negative responses from others in relation to their religious identity. These assumptions were based on first-hand interactions, reports of the experiences of others and also the reaction of others in general discussions about other minority religious groups. Second, the interviewees all referred to their assumption that those they came into contact with held negative stereotypes related to minority religious groups and their members.

Two main sources perpetuating these negative stereotypes were identified as the media, in all its terrestrial and online guises, and the anti-cult organisations operating in Ireland. Both of these were seen as the legitimising force for minority religion discrimination, as they were very much aligned with the dominant institutions of Ireland, such as the State and the educational system. The participants expressed feelings of both frustration and resignation, caused by the impotence they felt in these situations and that there was little that could be done, beyond simply at a superficial level. The experience of labelling and its links to negative stereotyping appeared to be very strongly linked to what the participants had experienced, but also crucially what they perceived as the Irish social attitudes towards those who were outside of the norm. These two elements of this study's definition of stigma were also strongly connected to acts of discrimination by the participants, such as polite social exclusion, religious prejudice and trivialisation. Most crucially, these processes were seen by the participants as the bases for a discriminatory behaviour and the rationalisation of such
within Irish society. Strongly underpinning these discussions was the participants' sense of powerlessness in the face of such discreet and seemingly justified actions. These are important indicators as they highlight the manner in which the processes of stigma are related to the experience of discrimination, and are ultimately linked by the participants to the power disparities felt by such groups in Ireland.

My exploration of these perceptions in this chapter serves to illuminate the motivations and environmental factors which are behind the identity management strategies adopted by the individuals, which I will explore in detail in the next two chapters.
Introduction

In the previous chapter I introduced the eight members of small religious groups in Ireland who took part in the interview section of this thesis. I explored the motivations and assumptions which they described as instrumental in their choice of identity management, in order to give a deeper understanding of how their tactics are closely connected to the wider social context. The data revealed two categories of identity management techniques – concealing one's religious identity within certain social spheres; and revealing this identity to others, in a variety of contexts. The analysis of these actions not only informs us about the individual's lived experience at a micro-level, but also crucially allows these tactics to be viewed relative to the societal structure. Based on Goffman's (1963) conceptualisation of how to manage a spoiled identity, I will use this prism of religious identity management to explore how the individuals interact with the prevailing social environment, what this can tell us about the reactions to such religious identities and the manner in which discrimination and stigma operates at a structural level, but is perceived as at an individual level.

This chapter discusses and analyses the first of the two emerging strategies, used by the interviewees in order to conceal their perceived stigmatised religious identity in various situations. This category of concealment is broken down into three further
subsections which allows an in-depth exploration of the intricate nature of identity concealment, and how these reactions are linked by the participants to the present social context. I will analyse and provide an overview of how the findings of this study link the elements of stigma, discrimination and power dynamics to various societal issues such as lack of religious literacy, poor access to social mechanisms, and the propagation of negative stereotypes. In turn these are further linked to discrepancies in social power, ongoing institutional religiousism and the contemporary Irish climate which juxtaposes implicitly secularism with the embedded normalcy of Roman Catholicism.

Concealing Religious Identity: Tactics and Strategies

All of those who made up the interview research group utilised tactics to conceal their religious identity to varying degrees, with members of the general public, casual acquaintances and work colleagues. In addition, there were also two members who had converted who used these concealment strategies with close members of their own families. John, a Scientologist, had totally concealed his religious conversion from his living parent and close family for over two years. He discussed how the death of his mother allowed him to be a little more open about his conversion with some of his family, in certain circumstances. Paul, who also converted to Druidism, is still currently concealing his new religious affiliation from his parents, but stated that he doesn’t find it as difficult as they now live abroad and they have very little contact. Therefore, these tactics I describe here are in relation to the general public, acquaintances and work colleagues, unless specifically indicated, as revealed through the participants' own descriptions.
The survey aspect of this study revealed that overall 68% of the 989 individuals who responded, had at one time concealed their religious identity, as was the case with the eight interviewees, and close analysis of the interview data showed this concealment could be broken down into four further subcategories. First, the technique of passing oneself off as "Irish" Roman Catholic, either directly or indirectly; second, self-removal from others, and finally, self-removal from discussion or issues pertaining to religion of any denomination outside of their own safe social sphere. I will discuss and analyse each of these subsections in turn, making links to the working definitions of stigma and discrimination as they emerge and how these appear related to the structural environment.

**Passing as "Irish" Roman Catholic**

During the data analysis of these categories, I discussed my findings with the participants to ensure accurate portrayals of their experiences in this thesis. While exploring the various subcategories within each category, all of the participants agreed that they had at some stage passed themselves off as Roman Catholic, but the majority of them insisted that to do this successfully, one had to be Roman Catholic in the "Irish" sense, which is reflected in the title of this section. I was curious as to what that entailed and Susan sums it up succinctly:

> You have to be of this religion, but not too religious. You can go to mass, but not too often. But most of all you keep religion away from everyday life in any serious sense. It ok to talk about communions and weddings, but not about the religious aspect of it. Like just casual, but in a Catholic sense! (Susan, Baha’i)
Most of the participants referred to a social expectation of this type of religious attitude in Ireland, with some also highlighting the notion that being a highly devout Roman Catholic and being overtly religious in social interactions could also be problematic, reflecting the notion of implicit secularism within Irish society:

*I would assume that if you were very open about being a devout Catholic, that it could be seen as a little strange in today's Ireland. But not to the same extent as being devout and being Mormon or a Hare Krishna would be seen as strange. Not so long ago that would have been the thing to be in Ireland, but it's different now. Religion, I mean unquestioned religious belief is seen just as sort of silly in today's world.*

*(Michael, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)*

There is reflective of the secular attitude which has come to prevail in Irish views of religion, there still appears to be however, the parallel expectation of Roman Catholic affiliation as the social norm:

*Today you keep religion in its place so to speak, I mean you can talk about certain things, but not the actual religious bits of it. That would single you out a bit, 'cos for lots of people it's about proof and evidence, not just believing. But to be a Born Again Christian and open about it with just ordinary Irish people they would think you a total freak!*  

*(Ava, Born Again Christian)*

*I mean there are older people who are Catholic and fairly religious. But that okay I think with most Irish people. There really is this assumption that if you are white and Irish that you are Catholic, or lapsed Catholic now (laughs). That would probably be more acceptable.*  

*(Jacob, Druid)*

*Ireland has changed a lot. You would never believe the way the church was up on a pedestal here before. But now you would be seen as silly to defend the church and just accept what they say all the time. But in my experience, if you were Catholic and devout it would be not nearly as difficult for you as if you were a Mormon and openly devout. That would make your life very difficult indeed.*  

*(Susan, Baha'i)*

Therefore, the participants explained how in passing as "Irish" Roman Catholic, one does not just present oneself of as a Catholic, but one must also adopt the implicitly
secular and compartmentalised attitude to religion and religious issues which the participants perceived as the norm in Irish society. This approach has strong resonances with Bouma's (2011, 1998) research on religious attitudes in Australia, which I discussed in chapter two, which finds that Australian society appears to operate under the presumptions "that religious commitment will be at a low temperature" and that religion is...most tolerated when it is not obvious, not worn, not demonstrable, does not interfere with ordinary life by dietary or feast/fast days, or special clothing; so long as it is private and unnoticeable

(Bouma 1999, p.8).

This "low temperature" attitude to religion was viewed by this study's participants as the norm and the expected stance which one must take in Ireland, closely echoing the closed or implicit secularism found within discrimination studies in Australia and Canada (Seljack 2010, 2011); and featured in their strategies utilised to pass as such. Implicit secularism is predicated on the idea that religious worship is inherently non-modern and followers are unenlightened, tribal and irrational and should therefore be kept away from the important spheres of society. This attitude appears to co-exist in the Irish context with an ongoing expectation of Roman Catholicism, but displayed in the correct, compartmentalised manner. These issues underscore the discussions with the participants in relation to different passing strategies within this category; direct strategies of passing and indirect passing which I will discuss next.

A. Indirect Strategies of Passing
In circumstances where the members of the research group wished to conceal their religious identity, they often utilised tactics which deliberately mislead others into either assuming or believing that they were "Irish" Roman Catholic. Within this
process, there were several, casual ways the participants discussed allowing others to assume you were just like them. All of the participants discussed how not attending the local Roman Catholic Church for services did not hinder their passing as "Irish" Roman Catholic. In fact, some of them stated that this could have actually helped them in some ways:

_No one ever questioned why I was never seen at mass. I mean it’s a small town so... but how would they know. I mean none of them go except for Christmas and weddings and the like. So if I had made pretence at attending even occasionally, they would have been none the wiser!_ (Jacob, Druid)

_I have never been to a Catholic service, but none of the people I work with or friends of my kids and their parents would ever sit around and discuss it in any detail. In fact, they usually spoke about other stuff that happened there, like whose kids ran up to the altar, or how cold it was in there. It's easy then to throw in a remark about what they are talking about and they just assume you know about that._ (Sarah, Elim Pentecostal)

In addition to making causal remarks to promote assumptions of religious affiliation, some of the research group often referred to a child of a friend or family member who had attended Catholic religious rites such as confirmation or communion. In certain circumstances, such as meeting other parents or at breaks at work, they would discuss these events with others:

_I would just say 'Oh, my nephew made his confirmation last week and it was great that the sun was out for it'. The conversation would just go from there – about how its great if you have boys because for girls it’s so expensive etc. I might not have even have been there, but by just talking about it, I know they just assume that I am one of them._ (Ava, Born Again Christian)

Others would drop in some knowledge into casual conversation to reinforce public assumptions:

_A lot of the people I know casually are getting married and as you know people who are getting married like to talk about it – a lot! So I sometimes make remarks about stuff that I have picked up from other places like 'Such a church is beautiful inside, it will look great for pictures' its just a few words, but it just makes me not stand out, I think._ (Susan, Baha’i)
I discussed with the participants the findings of my survey among the groups and I particularly wished to explore the high reported levels of concealment and discrimination in the workplace and in relation to education. What emerged from the many hours of interviews with the participants was that for the most part, these experiences were not explicitly related to the employment organisation or to the educational facility, but to informal, social interactions with work colleagues, students and other parents:

"You don’t get fired or passed over at work for being a Scientologist – not straight up anyway. But if they (management and colleagues) found out, they would make sure that other things were said to be holding you back, like your skills or attitude. (John, Scientologist)"

"When I was at college, there was no way I was upfront about my religion, the other students would have pissed themselves. But the college at least to my face were ok about it. They have to be seen as PC (politically correct) don’t they, but I am sure that privately some of the lecturers thought I was misguided to say the least! (Betty, Jehovah’s Witness)."

"The school my kids go to is very liberal and open to all it says, so the school itself is fine. It’s the other parents that I have the problems with. They just sort of expect this mould that you fit into, and if you don’t both you and your kids are seen as outsiders. That’s really true when it comes to religion in Ireland, I think. The only way is Catholic, isn’t it?? S, sometimes it’s easier just to let them think that’s what you are. (Sarah, Elim Pentecostal)"

This indirect form of discrimination was linked implicitly by the participants to their position and status within work, education and in relation to education for their children and features prominently throughout all of the interviews, and formed the motivation for allowing themselves to be thought of as Roman Catholic in many social interactions.
B. Deliberate Strategies of Passing

While this indirect manner of passing was used by all the participants, several of them had, on occasion, used deliberate tactics of false information in order to convince others about themselves and their activities. Paul, in attempting to conceal his identity from his family had often spoken about attending Catholic services, and learned the full names of the churches in the places where he lived, which was at times by his own admission overdoing it:

*I would tell my Dad that I was out on Saturday evening when he called as I was at evening mass. He would never ask anymore but it kept him happy. I moved around a lot for work, so I made sure to go and learn the names of the churches and the mass time so I could slip it into talks with my family. I dunno why... I think I was paranoid that they would check what time early mass was in Finglas! I would then say stuff like I was at "Mary of the Blessed Martyrs Church" and they would look... I knew then I was overacting it. No Irish person would name the church.* (Paul, Evangelical Christian)

Those who had converted from the Roman Catholic Church were more likely to draw on their prior knowledge in creating false reports, than those participants who were lifelong members of their religion. They spoke of how there were filling the role which they were expected to play in their circumstances, and in these circumstances referred to having taken part in Catholic activities such as prayer groups, mass attendance or Solemn Novenas in order to sure up their credibility in the role. The participants who had been lifelong members of their own religion were less likely to deliberately falsify information often in order to pass, due to their unfamiliarity with the inner workings of the religion. However, two of the lifelong members did admit to explicitly pretending to attend mass on at least one occasion in their conversations with others.
Again for those with school going children, the close proximity of their children to the Catholic Church, particularly within the education system, made them perceive their need to create certain elements of their background as greater than those without children:

*I am always, always aware when I am at anything at the school that I not be caught out. The fear of what it might do to my kid's lives makes me sick, so I make sure I say all the right things. I have even said at parent/teacher evenings stuff about going to mass and the like – just to reinforce it.* (Jacob, Druid)

I was curious to know if these instances of falsification were premeditated, or an improvised reaction to certain circumstances. There were mixed responses to this question among the research group, even among the same individual in different contexts. For many, the first time they recalled providing falsified information in order to pass as "Irish" Roman Catholic, it was a spontaneous reaction to circumstances. When this proved to be successful, there were later instances where falsified information was employed in a pre-mediated fashion:

*When I joined this new company, someone was talking about did they remember what they wore for their communion. So they all talked about the dress or whatever and then it came to me and I just blurted out 'it was a white puffy kind of thing and my mother had the veil on so tight that I can still feel the pins in my head'. I was a little shocked at myself to be honest, but it made me one of them. You know. Only now I have to keep it up.* (Ava, Born Again Christian)

*I would talk about the weekend when they asked on Mondays. I would say you know that I went to watch a game, did some shopping, went to Mass. Just drop it in – casual like. Not all the time mind – 'cos that would probably set the alarms off in Ireland. Just enough.* (John, Scientology)

I also wanted to explore what motivated this need to provide information that was not true, especially in light of how many of their religious groups would strongly advocate the importance of personal veracity in all matters. For all of the participants, the fear of negative responses and accompanying social sanctions were the factors which motivated its deployment:
I know I shouldn’t. I mean even outside of religion we (society) tell everyone lying is bad. But I know what can happen if I let this get out – to me, my job, my family, my acceptance in the community. It would change everything and I balance it out in my own head as something I have to do to protect the greater good – if that makes sense. (Paul, Evangelical Christian)

I just don’t want that tag you know of being some freak. It’s not anything huge that I am making stuff up about so it’s a small thing to have to do to prevent it. I wish I didn’t have to, but there is the way it is. (Jacob, Druid)

There is evidence that the participants were very much aware of the manner in which their groups were labelled and stereotyped by Irish society, as discussed in the working definition of stigma which underpins this study. The participants also clearly link these negative stereotypes to the production of negative responses from others and their subsequent effect on desirable social distance in Irish society, not simply in relation to themselves, but also to their families. Faced with the fear of being negatively stereotyped and thus subject to negative social reactions, the participants discussed how this strategy of passing as "Irish" Roman Catholic, either obliquely or in a more overt fashion, was an unsavoury, but necessary aspect of modern Irish life. All of the interviewees explained their sense of discomfort at having to behave in such a manner, and directed much of their anger towards the structure of Irish society, which promoted and protected the normalcy of "Irish" Roman Catholicism:

I find it’s hard, yes. But it hard to blame individuals for the way they behave when it's been the message that Irish society has been giving them since they were born. You are Irish and you are Catholic. (Ava, Born Again Christian)

Even now, when we are all so trendy and worldly, Irish people know nothing about other types of religion. Actually, I take that back – a lot of them don’t know anything about even their own religion. Which makes them not even want to understand anybody else's. It's in the culture I think. (Michael, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)
Michael's point about the lack of religious literacy in Ireland is reiterated in various guises by the other seven interviewees. All of the participants felt strongly that social reactions to their religious identities were strongly tied to a lack of understanding as to what their religion actually entailed, creating a form of religious prejudice which was difficult to counteract and which fuelled the promotion of negative stereotypes:

*They (Irish people) think we dance around in sheets, sacrificing virgins and the like. No matter what you tell them, that’s what they think druids are. (Jacob, Druid)*

*Don’t think I didn’t try to explain stuff about my religion to people, but they think what they know is more on the money than someone in the actual religion – which is funny, sort of! It’s far easier to just keep it to yourself and pass unnoticed than get into all that. (Paul, Pentecostal Christian)*

Creating passing strategies in order to adhere to the perceived norm in Irish society was also seen as a constant source of anxiety and stress by the participants. For those that used more oblique tactics to passively suggest their religious affiliation, the level of stress was lower, but still significant while maintaining the strategy:

*I do sort of worry about it. It’s like a little niggle that you can never just relax completely. You just have to try and keep stuff as close to your real life as possible and then it doesn’t get too complicated. (Susan, Baha’i)*

By ensuring that they didn’t go into too much detail, these participants felt less anxiety in relation to the possible discovery of their religious identity, and that any slip-ups were easy to cover:

*I am sure I have covered myself ok. I just don’t say too much. If someone asks about what I did last night, I will tell them I was with friends. I might have been at a prayer group or bible study, but I was with friends, so it’s easy to cover it that way. (Sarah, Elim Pentecostal)*
Those that used passing strategies which involved overt false information in order to be seen as Catholic faced a much more difficult task. In addition to retaining any information that they might have discussed previously, there was also a far greater risk of having their "true" religious identity uncovered. This was a source of much social anxiety for the participants:

*I often worry about saying I was at a Mass or something when I wasn’t. I am always afraid if I said I went on Saturday night, that someone else was there and didn’t see me. That you could pass off easily enough I suppose, but I am terrified that something else happened there –like someone had a heart attack or something major. That if you were there you would mention. If someone else was there in reality, they would catch you out. I worry about that.*

*(Paul, Evangelical Christian)*

*I hate lying in general, so it makes me anxious that I do it and I don’t like it in myself. I feel like, that I can’t keep it up all the time. You have to be so careful not to let things slip accidentally, so you are always on guard.*

*(Ava, Born Again Christian)*

There were a number of ways in which the interviewees rationalised their behaviour in relation to passing. For some participants, they justified the requirements of passing by looking at it as part of a game. This form of behaviour rationalisation is often noted in relation to other socially stigmatised identities (Woods and Harbeck 1999; Biggs 1997) as a related coping mechanism. In this case, six of the group admitted that they had used this rationalisation at some stage in their lives to deal with their social circumstances, while four of this six discussed using the framing of their identity concealment as a game quite frequently. This pattern became clear while I was conducting the initial analysis of first set of interviews and therefore, I broached the subject again in later meetings, in order to get a clearer understanding of its significance. Susan, a member of the Baha'i, spoke of how framing her behaviour thus made it less impactful on her sense of integrity:
I might just tweak things a little – like what I did on a weekend away. I was really at a Baha'i event; I just say I was at a work thing in London. No one wants to know about work stuff really – just if you went shopping and what you did. So, it's like a little bit of hide and seek (sic) the truth is there but it's just hidden a little. To me, that makes it just south of lying.
(Susan, Baha'i)

Jacob also spoke of how he had, in a sense, trivialised the process of passing into a game for himself. In dealing with some of the falsified information he used in his strategies, he discussed awarding himself some "bonus points" if he felt he had successfully passed in certain circumstances:

Like at the school, if I get through talking to some other parents and no one appears to twig anything, I feel like I have done good. Or if there is some question about some Catholic thing I can answer, like when is Easter this year, I think 'Well done, that should convince them'.
(Jacob, Druid)

I wanted to explore this in more detail by examining the effect it had on their sense of themselves, as reverting to this falsification, contrary to their personal and religious beliefs seemed highly indicative of societal influence on their behaviour. This issue caused some measure of discomfort among some of the participants while discussing it and from my research diary, I noted that many of them seemed distressed when confronting aspects of their behaviour, particularly in relation to falsifying information and the rationalisation they applied to this behaviour. Social research of a sensitive nature such as this can be distressing to participants, in particular when faced with discussing in-depth, certain personal behaviour which they may not have previously analysed. When interviewees were in obvious discomfort, I repeated that they did not have to continue in this vein and could cease the interview at any time. All of the participants opted to continue and during subsequent interviews, I asked if they would like to explore their reactions in our discussion. I had expected at least
some to refuse, but surprisingly the entire research group wanted to revisit these issues.

Since some time has elapsed since the first discussion, the participants had a chance to reflect on their various tactics and felt better placed to describe it in a less emotive manner. The majority of the participants explained how they were frustrated with themselves for choosing to behave in such a way, but that felt there were good reasons why they felt compelled to do this. Many had not actively examined their behaviour and discussing it in this research process had made them look at some aspects of themselves which they did not like:

*"I look at what I do and I think 'You are a bad person'. You should stand up for what you believe in, not be hiding.* (Paul, Evangelical)

*I don’t like it. I don’t condone it, but to live in any kind of peace, I have to do it.*

(John, Scientology)

*I hate it – the hiding and lying but it’s better than the alternative. Cos you are not just Jacob anymore, you are Jacob that Druid guy and that label sticks, sticks hard.* (Jacob, Druid)

Overall, the participants acknowledged a strong sense of powerlessness in regard to their behaviour, and many felt resigned to this lack of agency as the price that they had to pay for their religious affiliation:

*I didn’t want to think about it, I think, but now that I have, I can see that I am forced to choose to behave this way.* (Ava, Born Again Christian)

Ava's comments about being *"forced to choose"* this mode of behaviour is indicative of the view of the interview group, which felt that Irish society presents only two options in relation to religious identity and behaviour; to conform and be accepted, or
deviate and be excluded. As Ava says is "no choice at all really, so I don’t really have an option, do I?", and this lack of agency in the face of social expectations and the perceived sanctions of deviation, such as loss of social status, exclusion and discrimination was a constant theme throughout the participants discussions.

The objective of such passing behaviour was to mislead others from the truth about their religious identity. While all of the participants partook in the discussed behaviour to some extent, there were other concealment strategies, such as distancing themselves from others which they also employed, which I will discuss next.

2. Self – Removal from Others
The participants discussed ways in which they also controlled aspects of their self-information by deliberately distancing themselves from others in the workplace, community and wider social circles. In particular, the participants expressed fear of situations where highly personal information might be required or expected in the social exchange, and that in order to control that fear, self-removal from the possibility of these circumstances was required. While the strategy of passing as "Irish" Roman Catholic was based primarily on techniques of communication with others, this tactic was utilised to circumvent communication, thus avoiding any unwanted discussion which could lead to disclosure of their religious identity, and highlights how the dimension of social distance within discrimination and stigmatisation can be imposed by others or self-imposed by the stigmatised individual.

This strategy was therefore used in an almost pre-emptive manner, to form a barrier between themselves and other possible negative reactions. This tactic has been
highlighted in many studies exploring stigmatised identities (see Woods and Harbeck 1991 for discussion), such as homosexuality, or those with criminal pasts. The participants all referred to utilising this self-distancing at various stages of their lives and in various contexts. For many, it was the workplace situation which was identified as the main social site where they kept a distance from others, due to fear of the consequences of discovery:

*I think I am pleasant to the people I work with, but I don’t want them to get to ‘buddy buddy’ with me. So I try to just keep them at arm’s length. Sometimes with women it can be hard because I think we are more likely to share things, but once you start with those barriers, people sort of respect them and don’t delve to deep into your life.* (Ava, Born Again Christian)

*It’s just much easier to keep work, just work. And your life outside, outside. Then everyone knows where they stand. If they don’t know, they can’t think it (religious affiliation) can’t affect my work, can they?* (Jacob, Druid).

Again, there is evidence of indirect, informal stigmatisation in the workplace, which the participants link to more direct forms of discrimination such as being viewed as incompetent, thus lowering their status within the work environment. The strategy of self-distancing is therefore used as a means of avoiding these perceived consequences. Outside of the workplace, the local community was also discussed as a context where keeping your distance from others could be beneficial. John explained how he wished he could take a more active role in the locality where he lives, yet sees this as not possible:

*I would love to do something for the youth. Like soccer or something like that in our area. But I just know, that if my religious background got out, that it would put an end to it. And I just know it would really, really upset me. So, I chose not to put myself in that kind of situation.* (John, Scientology)
For others, it was the forsaking of social groups, such as weight management classes or book clubs, where they felt there would be a high risk of discovery:

I have been going to loads of those weight loss groups – like Unislim and Weightwatchers for years. Not just for my weight, but for the friendship side too. You become very close to people there. I mean you might never, ever meet them outside of that meeting room, but when you are there, you really share very personal details with them. I mean they know exactly how much you weight, what you put in your body – it’s a very special kind of bond. And I think that since I converted, I don’t think I could have that closeness with some who didn’t know about my choice. (Ava, Born Again Christian)

It’s a choice I make not to go to things that I might like to do. Because I get anxious about keeping up the pretence. At work or your kids’ school, you have to go there, but you can keep it low-key and professional. At social things, it different – you chose to become close to these people, and it makes it different and I think more difficult. (Betty, Jehovah’s Witness)

Seven of the participants spoke of how they used distancing as a way of avoiding passing behaviour as discussed in the previous section in certain instances, as the deceptive nature caused them discomfort and anxiety which they wished to avoid:

I don’t like tell untruths or half-truths, even when I have to. So if I can see a way of avoiding it, I will. For the most part, that means putting up this protective shell and keeping people at arms length. I am more comfortable with that so I do that if I can. (Michael, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)

The older participants were more likely to employ this strategy than the younger group members, based for the most part on their experience. Those that had been in the possession of a stigmatised identity for many years felt they knew when to deploy certain tactics in various contexts, in order to limit the not only the threat of exposure, but also the discomfort of deliberate falsehood:

I have been part of this religion for over 45 years and for all of them we have been seen as outsiders or religious freaks. So I know now, that you chose the people you let close to you very carefully. So you don’t get too close or be too open with everyone. Sometimes even the one’s that seems so nice and…liberated about everything are the ones that turn the worst on you. I prefer to keep it like that rather than having to make them think I am Catholic. I feel that it’s not honest to them or to myself. (Betty, Jehovah’s Witness)
While this tactic was preferred, in some circumstances passing was seen as necessary to ensure smooth social interactions:

*I still let on I am like them. I think they think I am a lapsed Catholic. I tried to keep my distance but sometimes you can’t. So I let them think what they want.* (Paul, Evangelical)

While the circumstances where self-distancing took place varied among the research group, there were some similarities in the manner in which they achieved this social distance. For many, there was the adoption of a certain persona which they activated in the appropriate circumstances. While there were slight differences in the way they described this distancing persona, there were many overlapping traits which emerged from the data. "Humourless", "Aloof"; "Snooty"; "Stern"; "Forthright"; "Robot-like" and "Direct" were some of the ways in which the participants described their adopted persona. In executing this character, they chose social actions which reflected these traits:

*When I am talking to someone, I just keep to the point – yeah? No small talk, just this is what I want, thanks, done.* (Jacob, Druid)

*When I am at the school gates or something like that, I don’t smile too much, don’t make eye contact with the other mums. I sort of take on this kind of haughty stance, so that people stay away. I just get polite “hellos” now, so it works I suppose.* (Sarah, Elim Pentecostal)

*At work, I keep to the work. I don’t get involved in jokes in the office or any banter. Even if I think it’s funny, I stay this way. So they see me as very humourless and boring, so they just let me alone.* (Paul, Evangelical)

For many of the participants, this was far removed from their own persona and therefore, they found this stern character difficult to maintain at times. Despite these difficulties, the participants deemed it was a useful way of avoiding personal
conversation, where confidences may be given and sought and their demeanour was viewed a giving a clear, defensive signal in their everyday interactions:

Even though they don’t know it, people can read other folks all the time. Even when you don’t say anything, you can give clear 'Back off' signals. And most people can read it clearly. It just avoids any problems, because it's hard to hide parts of yourself. Like your religion. I mean you spend more time at work then you do with your family, so for me it easier to hide all of you rather than just one part.

(Michael, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)

Other also referred to being "very cautious" about giving out too much information in case they inadvertently exposed themselves:

I used to be a very open person. But I learned to my cost that it's not the best way to approach some situations. Now I try to stay below the radar so to speak, but if I have to talk about something I feel is private I just fudge it a bit. So they get as little as possible. (Susan, Baha'i)

While many of the participants preferred, if given a choice, to behave in this fashion rather than passing, self-distancing exacted a heavy toil. Within the social contexts where they engaged in this behaviour, the participants described feelings of marginalisation, loneliness and of being misinterpreted in their actions:

I know I chose to act this way and I know why. But I am not happy about it. I feel like I had to cut myself off from anyone outside because I felt paralysed by this fear of anyone finding out. I can't really change it now so they just leave me to it. (Jacob, Druid)

In my local area, I wish I felt more part of the place, it would be nice. I feel I dunno disconnected from so many parts of my life, and it's hard. But the other options (of religious identity revelation) aren't really on either. (Ava, Born Again Christian)
All of the research group members were acutely sensitive to the fact that they were distancing themselves from others, who in other circumstances they would like to spend time with:

There are a lot of nice people in (town name removed) and I could see myself being friends with a good few of them. But I know that if I told them I was a Druid, they would see me in a whole other light. I can't change what I am and I can't change what they think. So I just leave it. (Paul, Druid)

In addition to suffering from self-imposed social distance, others discussed the impact on their social and workplace status by feeling compelled to turn down repeated invitations and possibilities of career development; perceiving that to accept these would be to breech the protective persona they had developed and leave themselves vulnerable to discovery and consequential sanctions:

I was asked to go on a work team-building week away. And the bosses as much as told me that it would really help get a leg up the ladder in here (company where she works). But I thought about it and looked into it and I saw there were lots of group sessions on emotional intelligence and trust. I knew I couldn’t go. That would have been impossible to keep up. I could have lost my job. I never got that promotion. (Ava, Born Again Christian)

In many ways, this imposed self-distancing was an attempt to preserve their social status against the possibility of discovery as the "person is connected to undesirable characteristics that reduce his or her status in the eyes of the stigmatizer" (Link and Phelan 2001, p.371). When an individual is seen as having a status which is devalued in the wider social context, research has shown that this can produce substantial forms of disadvantage within small group interactions (Cohen and Zhou 1991; Driskell and Mullen 1990). Crucially, this type of reduced status discrimination is often not overly explicit, instead using the external group status a type of intra-group shorthand that
lead to complex discriminatory behaviour. Link and Phelan cite a prime example of this type of discreet disadvantage:

Instead group members use external statuses (like race and gender) to create performance expectations that then lead to a labyrinth of details that involve taking the floor, keeping the floor, referring to the contributions of others, head nodding, interrupting, and the like. This is important to research on stigma because it shows that substantial differences in outcome can occur even when it is difficult for participants to specify a single event that produced the unequal outcome.

(Link and Phelan 2001, p.371)

This echoes the participants' fear of being treated as "different" and "lesser", however subtlety, should their religious affiliation be made known. It is this implicit, yet comprehensive action which is so devastating and frustrating for the participants:

They would just make sure you got cut outta things, nobody would listen to what your opinion was – 'cos you don’t matter do you?? (Jacob, Druid)

Have real experience of that. It’s a very sneaky way of making sure you don’t have much say. Either in work or in things you get involved in. I found it particularly bad in relation to other parents at school. If they find out you are different, they automatically think you have a hidden agenda, so they quietly work together to make sure your ideas don’t get done. (Sarah, Elim Pentecostal)

For me, I think that idea that I become boiled down to a cult member you know. That's all people in society see – nothing else. You get no input, no respect, just this sign that says "religious weirdo" to everyone. That's why I do these things to keep it under wraps, no matter how much it messes with my head really. (Susan, Baha'i)

From the participant's perspectives, such sacrifices were justified in spite of the manner in which such actions affected them. As such, they described how they had been called to their religious choice or had been born into as chosen people; and the consequences of adhering to their religious affiliation were something that came with that calling:
It never gets any easier, but I know that I am not at fault or the odd one out here (in Ireland). There are many religions I would not be part of myself but I personally support the freedom to practice what you wish. That will never happen here – so you keep head down, mouth shut and you get on. (Paul, Evangelical Christian)

While the previous section on passing as an "Irish" Roman Catholic caused distress in many of the participants, our discussions on self-removal elicited two separate, but related responses. First, there was an overwhelming sense of despair and sadness in the way the participants shared their experiences of this with me. I recorded in my research diary how I had felt particularly moved by the sense of impotent inertia that the participants shared with me. This prompted further discussion of these points at a later date, to explore if my perception of this impotence was correct. While all of the interviewees spoke about being powerless in many social situations, many of them felt that this was just the way things were in Ireland, and it had to be accepted as such. Second, the interviewees also expressed feelings of frustration and anger at the way dominant Irish society privileged the embedded normalcy of Roman Catholicism, therefore by definition placing other religions into the category of "different" and very often also the category of lesser, thus enforcing however insidiously, the legitimacy of negative social attitudes and discrimination.

For many of the group, instead of seeking to change the perceptions of Irish society, they sought ways to make more comfortable social contact with others in a number of ways. Some of the group had made, or were in the process of considering, a retreat from society, into their own religious community. For Paul, he was considering a co-ordinator post within his own church, which would remove him from his current professional situation where his identity was totally concealed. Susan, who is
currently retired, has taken up a part-time job working for her group, which lessens her outside contacts:

> It’s great for me. I know I can go to work and be my whole self, not worry that I have to keep up the pretence, or keep under the radar. It’s like … like taking off a heavy weight.
> (Susan, Baha’i)

While this retreat was not possible for all the group members, they did make strategic retreats in other ways to their religious communities. Many of them spoke of associating more frequently with others of the same religious affiliation outside of official religious activities. Ava discussed why she saw this happening:

> I think that the reason I spend my free time now with other church members is because we can relax with each other. I have spoken about this research you are doing with them and they also told me that for the most part, they tend to spend time with others in the group. You need to have some comfortable place don’t you? You can’t be ducking and diving all the time. (Ava, Born Again Christian)

A few of the participants also discussed spending time with like-minded others across the internet. This enabled them to interact with other worldwide members of the religion on web forums, where they could discuss not just religious matters but other, everyday topics. There were also sites where one-to-one video chats could take place, which for some was a growing aspect of their social lives:

> My religious group is small and scattered through Ireland so it’s hard to make time to meet up. So I use the internet. There is a specific site I use a lot. The same people go on it most of the time, so you get to know them. We are a little community! (John, Scientologist)
> I spend a good deal of my spare time, talking to folks on “website name removed”. I like seeing them on the Skype (face to face device for communication). Only people who are in the same boat can truly understand what it’s like, so I enjoy having virtual friends, as it is hard to have real ones. I feel not so isolated, and not like I am put up a front all the time – if you get me. That makes me tired. (Jacob, Druid)

There are strong echoes of the notion of "Imagined Communities" (Anderson 2006) in the participant’s discussions of their retreat into either their religious sphere or the
virtual world in order to counter the lack of comfortable social contact in their lives.

This sense of "imagined community" within minority religious groups has been explored by Warburg (2006, 2008) who looked at how those in small, and often marginalised religious groups form transnational imagined communities/groups (Warburg 2006, pp.93-94). Thus, such a group is made up of members who are "residents of many different countries, but they have a feeling of commonness of sharing a history and a destiny with other members worldwide" (Warburg 2008, p.50). In the case of these research participants, the move into an imagined community was used as a counter to the self-removal strategy that they felt compelled to use frequently in their lives, and provided a place of safety where total disclosure of their religious identity was not fraught with fear of negative reaction and sanctions. They were however also aware that this retreat did little to further religious inclusion in Irish society, but rationalised that their efforts towards change would be ultimately futile:

*Trying to change things would be pointless. It’s like it’s soaked into the people and the places this Catholic thing and we are different. I really doubt that this will change anytime soon. (Jacob, Druid)*

*I’m hiding more and more I suppose, but Ireland is a small place and ya know, religion is such a huge part of being Irish, that it like people like us are always going to be outside, even if we are Irish ourselves. (Sarah, Elim Pentecostal)*

Again, there is a strong sense of secularism which appears to prevail in contemporary Irish society, but with the social expectation of a Roman Catholic affiliation, which the participants found difficult to penetrate. Therefore, removal from this environment was deemed the easier option, where they escaped the sense of stigma and the fear of discriminatory actions.
3. Self-Removal from the topic of Religious Discussion

The section above revealed the extent by which the participants distanced themselves physically from others in their social environment in order to protect their religious identity. In this section, I will discuss the manner in which the interviewees opted for the strategy of self-removal from religious discussion with those outside of their religious counterparts. This included not just discussions within a conversational context with acquaintances, but also matters of abuse and religious bigotry, where the participants chose not to involve themselves or respond to various discourses on religious issues, in order not to draw attention to their own religious identity. While this sub-category does not include causal remarks made in relation to church matters used to facilitate passing, it does include other discussions on the Catholic Church, especially in relation to the scandals exposed in the nineties. Many of the research group admitted that they distanced themselves from discussions of religious matters, based on the belief that their actions could be misinterpreted, and their efforts to conceal their identity could be in jeopardy.

In the context of work interactions, all of the participants admitted to deploying various tactics in order to extrapolate themselves from taking part in such interactions. These types of discussions took two main forms - direct and indirect discussions, which elicited different techniques in response. Direct discussions were those conversations which directly involved the participant as an active member of the conversation, and the participants disclosed a surprising amount of times in which this type of discourse turned to religious matters:

_It's come up many times at work. A lot of the time it's sort of general stuff about religion – that organised religion is bad, how it can persuade people to do terrible things. A lot of people talked about those Atheist books like Dawkins, and how people how they just have blind faith against what science says are just idiots. I just sort of mumbled that I really didn’t know too much about it and let the others carry on._ (Ava, Born Again Christian)
Sometimes I think that for a nation that only does religion in church, we don’t half like talking about it. It’s usually not good though. The general sense that I got is that it is ok to talk about religion if you aren’t too supportive of it and don’t take any of it on face value A bit like reading your stars in the paper – ok if you don’t take it seriously.. But everyone just sort of assumes that we are all on the same page. Oh yeah and that religion means Catholic. (Jacob, Druid)

Again, we can see reference to the Roman Catholic expected norm juxtaposed with an implicit secular approach to religion. This theme appears repeatedly and is most often accompanied by remarks about the low levels of religious literacy in Ireland, especially in relation to minority religions. Some of the references were off the cuff remarks such as:

The guys at work one day talking about the new guy and they were speculating on whether he was Muslim. He was from an Asian country so I suppose they assume. He was Hindu. Even when everyone knew that, they were still talking about terrorism and prayer mats in a very demeaning way. Made me wary to be honest. (Susan, Baha’i)

At a work meeting once, some of the people there were talking about "Oh, they are a cult you know. They scam you for money. I was actually sweating 'cos I thought "They are talking about me!" But I was too afraid I suppose to ask who they were referring to. I did find out later it was some health food fitness guy. (John, Scientologist)

To remove themselves from direct discourse, most of the participants chose to ignore the remarks made, and allow the conversation to carry on, therefore not implicating themselves in any manner. If they were asked to comment, one way to deal with it was to pretend that they hadn’t been listening to the preceding conversation:

Nothing makes someone less value what you have to say on something then pretending that you weren’t listening to them! (Sarah, Elim Pentecostal)

Alternatively, other participants explained how they just remarked that they really didn’t know anything on the subject in order to end their contribution in the conversation. In both cases, the interviewees sought to physically remove themselves
from the situation as quickly as possible, in order to avoid any further possibilities of religious discussion:

*I try not to just jump up and leave, ’cos that might be a bit suspicious. But I pretend that I have remembered something really important to do, or that I have to visit the bathroom, so I can get out but it’s not too obvious why. (Betty, Jehovah’s Witness)*

Matters of indirect discussion of religious issues covered those which the participant was not a direct party to the conversation, such as public instance of religious based abuse. For some, this was abuse was directed at others, while for others they were the subject of the abuse. However, the strategies they used to deal with both were quite similar in approach. For many, ignoring it was their first reaction to such situations:

*When faced with the abuse of others, many of the groups admitted to ignoring it; We were at a Solstice celebration, and I was parking up. There were teenagers in the place, jeering at some of the people going there. I didn’t know them, but the kids were shouting “perverts” and “wacky jobs” at them. I just didn’t do anything – just ignored it and kept walking. (Jacob, Druid)*

*You get a lot of people outside our office sometimes and they roar random stuff at people going in and out. Quite a lot of the time at postmen and delivery people. But they do call members who come here awful things, but I just ignore it. It won’t do any good anyway. (John, Scientology)*

This display of casual prejudice and discrimination towards other minority groups was articulated by all eight interviewees, with the participants reporting references being made to "cults", "god freaks", "brainwashers", "weirdoes", "child molesters" and "bible thumpers" within everyday conversations. The participants expressed how they felt their religions had become connected to these labels and stereotypes, and that these public perceptions were directly linked to being treated in a less favourable manner in Irish society:
Makes it easier for them (Irish people) to just lump us all in together. All flakes and weird people. That’s why it seem ok to treat us as different, ’cos they just believe any crap they see on telly about religion and never learn anything about the truth of it.

(Betty, Jehovah’s Witness)

When the research participants were the subject of the abuse, most also chose to ignore it in many circumstances:

I do get called some stuff when I go to peoples doors. Sometimes from the people who live there, but more often from other people just hanging around the area. In both cases, I just ignore it and move on. (Betty, Jehovah’s Witness)

Michael, who also used to do missionary work for his church, also experienced taunts based on his religious choice:

We were dressed the way all missionaries are dressed – neat, dark suits, ties, well presented. So I suppose maybe it makes us easy targets for those who wish to behave this way. We get called “Moonie” quite a bit, and “Jesus Freaks”. I just say a little prayer to the Lord in my head and block it out. (Michael, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)

The theme of poor religious literacy within Irish society appears again in this discussion, as many of the groups discuss how they are often incorrectly identified as other religious groups and are subjected to abuse directed at these groups. Jacob has often been accused of being involved in witchcraft and Susan discussed how people she worked with assumed that the Baha’i were a sexually based, yoga derived religious group. As well as experiencing frustration at the prevalence of religious generalisation within Irish society, the participants disclosed how their choice to ignore abusive situations, not only in relation to themselves, but especially in the case of others, was very troubling and made some of them feel deeply ashamed:

It makes me feel like a bit of a fraud to be honest. I have dedicated my life to doing good work and I don’t intervene when others are being harassed. I think that I should, but maybe it’s better to take the high ground and not give them a reaction. I still feel ashamed about it though. (Michael, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)
I wish it would make a difference, to be brave. But I really, really don’t think so. I bet it will end up all over YouTube and it will be another religious nutter video. Which just makes things worse. (Jacob, Druid)

All of the participants discussed how at various junctures in their lives they had felt that they failed their beliefs and their religious colleagues by failing to engage in these negative religious discussions. They wished to be proud of their religion, but felt denied the freedom to practice religion without fear of sanctions. Interestingly, those who were involved in direct discourses with others admitted to feeling more shame about their chosen behaviour in that context, then being accosted in the street:

When someone is chanting stuff at you in the street, I think they could attack me or am I just giving them what they want by reacting to it. But in normal conversation, I could make more of a stand you know. It would be much easier to say that something like we can’t tar all priest with the same brush, or that the way they understand some religions in not right. But I chose not to. I am afraid that if I do they might twig it. So I suppose I am putting myself first, which I feel I shouldn’t. (John, Scientology)

Both John and Jacob as members of religious groups that are frequently targeted in the media as cultic examples, explained the sense of disappointment in their own inability to counter negative stereotypes in everyday discussions:

I think that if people knew more about what really went on they would be less prejudiced. But I don’t help that do I. I am not standing up to be counted and say that’s just media crap you are spouting. I wouldn’t stand for it if people were speaking about Black people or Homosexuals in such a way. But I will let them bash religions. Do you know why? It ‘cos it’s what we expect people who are “normal” to do in Irish society and I do nothing to stop it, not to stick out. (Jacob, Druid)

Afterwards, when I have said nothing, I feel this sort of shame in myself. I want Ireland to be a more open place, but I feel like my hands are tied. It’s like I am ashamed of my religion, but I am not. I don’t think anyone should be. Behaving like this makes it seem like I have something to be ashamed of, doesn’t it? So they kind of get what they want don’t they? Bastards…(John, Scientology)
There was a strong sense of how this behaviour reinforced their sense of diminished social status as an individual and as a collective within Irish society. All of the participants were also aware how they were themselves perpetuating the lack of normalcy of their religious choices by removing themselves from religious discussions, in order to safeguard their religious identity. The sense of guilt which accompanied their choices further increased their discomfort at being placed in situations where they had to finely balance their concealment, with addressing wider issues of religious discrimination. The covert nature of their religious identity in most social situations also made many of the research group question the possibility of challenging the prevalence of religious hegemony in Ireland, but there was an overwhelming sense that it would be quite futile and would exact huge costs at a personal level.

**Conclusion**

The three strategies used by the research group in order to ensure the concealment of their religious identity, highlighted the various negative situations encounter in their everyday lives. The processes of concealment either through passing, self-distancing from others or from religious discussion causes much anxiety, stress and feelings of dishonesty and self-denigration at personal level, and social dissonance at a wider societal level. In essence, their discussion of concealment echoed what Goffman referred to as living in a "divided world" (Goffman 1963, p.109), where in many aspects of their lives, they felt compelled to hide a fundamental part of their person – namely their religion. The three sections highlighted the manner in which certain behaviour is expected and enforced within Irish society – by displaying a casual, compartmentalised approach to religion; that "religion" refers to Roman Catholicism and that deviation was met by the imposition of sanctions, for both the individuals and
their family. Interestingly, the greatest sense of this pressure to conform comes within informal contexts, such as with work colleagues and acquaintances. So while the survey research indicated high levels of discrimination and concealment within the workplace and other social groups, the interviewees revealed that much of this took place within informal workplace discussions and events, rather than within the workplace structure. This appeared to also be the case in relation to education. It would appear that steps over the past ten years to counteract formal discrimination within workplaces, public service and other public outlets are having a positive effect, yet this study indicated the prevalence of informal discrimination within these settings. The strong links between the elements of stigmatisation – namely labelling, negative stereotyping, increased social distance, loss of social status and the various dimensions of discrimination which underpin this thesis appear from the participants discussions to justify the manner in which Irish society treats these minority religious groups.

At an individual level, this exploration shows the power and prevalence of religious stereotypes within informal settings, where discreet or indirect discrimination is linked to the process of negative othering, resulting in being viewed as other, leading to the justification of certain prejudicial attitudes or discriminatory acts. Going beyond the micro-level, the analysis reveals how these individual experiences are strongly connected to embedded Roman Catholicism within areas such as education, but also informally, within what is viewed as the expected social norm. This is also inherently linked to the lack of objective information on small religious groups in Ireland, and the lack of access which these groups have to counter falsehoods or incorrect claims. The result of this lack of access to social mechanisms of power has
seen several members retreat into their own religious communities, and was a common strategy among those who I spoke to informally regarding this research. The members were very much aware that this type of social retreat would most likely result in creating greater social distance between their groups and wider Irish society. Yet, they felt that it was futile to try and counter the prevalence of negative stereotypes, the power of contemporary secularism and the on-going influence of the Roman Catholic social expectation in Ireland. I argue that this retreat should be of concern, as in order to deal with adequately with changes in structural pluralism, there is a need for open, inclusive dialogue between religious groups, the state and policy makers (Barker 1996). Such dialogue would allow for issues relating to controversial practises or allegedly fraudulent/illegal activities to be explored and addressed, and would be a significant step towards greater social inclusion and the promotion of factual, objective information in Irish society, while also providing increased access to social mechanisms.

Having explored concealment and the manner in which it dominated the participants' lives, I will next explore instances where the interviewees challenged negative instances, and where their behaviours carried the possible risk of revelation, which are known as risk-taking behaviours (Woods and Harbeck, p.155). I will discuss these strategies in the next chapter and explore what further light this shines on the participant's interactions with the Irish social environment.
Chapter Eight
Revealing: Strategies of Risk-Taking

Introduction

Having explored the various methods of concealment used by the participants and their connections to the experience of discrimination and stigmatisation within the Irish social environment, in this chapter I will layout the strategies of risk-taking which the interviewees discussed in relation to their minority religious identity. These are broken down into three separate sections, which I will discuss in detail. This will allow a deeper exploration of the effects of living with a stigmatised identity has on the individuals and will further illuminate the perceived hostility of the Irish social environment within which they live their day-to-day lives. I aim to make these links explicit in order to show the impact on those who are stigmatised and how it is linked to discrimination at a structural level. By examining how the machinations of stigma designation are seen to operate, we can begin to explore how it can be changed.

As I discussed in the previous chapter there were no firm, consistent patterns of behaviour which the participants displayed. For example, those that employed self-removal techniques to avoid religious discussions did on occasion behave in the opposite way, for many reasons. Therefore, I wish to reiterate at this point the fluid manner in which these strategies were utilised by the research group. At different times in their lives and in certain circumstances, they have all used these various strategies at least once and discussed using them again in the future, should the need
arise. For all eight participants, their behaviours were firmly entrenched in the concealment end of the spectrum, as fear of the consequences of discovery influenced much of their public social behaviour. There were instances however, when the participants chose to deploy behaviours that threatened their religious identity concealment and moved toward the revelation part of the spectrum. These types of strategies emerged from the data into three categories. First, some took risks by promoting indirect intersections between their concealed religious identity and wider public life; second, behaviours which confront negative religious discourse are discussed; and finally, explicit intersections between their concealed religious identity and wider public arena. I will explore the participants' experiences and perceptions of each in turn, allowing an exploration of how the participants challenged the prevailing social environment, the responses it engendered and its impact on the individuals. This will also provide a different angle on the perceptions of stigma, discrimination and social power dynamics which underscores reactions to these minority religions in Ireland.

**Indirect Intersections between Concealed Religious Identity and Wider Public Life**

The first strategy to emerge saw the participants discreetly interweave indications regarding their religious identity in their social interactions with others. While this might have been almost imperceptible to others, to the participants it signalled a significant revelation in their social worlds. This type of behaviour was viewed as very low risk in relation to exposure and was based on volunteering some personal information about either their religion, or their religious sympathies to others who did not know of their religious affiliation. This disclosure is given freely and unprompted
by the participant and tended to be ambiguous in nature, with no firm confirmation or
denial of religious affiliation given, yet were an honest reflection of the participants' lives:

*When I get to know someone sorta well, I might tell them some things about what I do outside of work. Sometimes I mention about going to "place name removed" where we hold a lot of meetings. But I will say I went with friends, or just talk about how nice and peaceful it is there.*

(Paul, Evangelical)

*I have told people stuff about my life, sure. I mean if I feel that they might not pry too much, I will say to then "I can't go on Tuesday I have group that night". It's a bible study group, so I do have group. But I don’t make it clear exactly what it is and no one asks.*

(Michael, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)

All of the participants had used this indirect risk-taking behaviour and felt quite secure that it wouldn't impact on their ability to conceal their religious affiliation.

Both men and women appeared to employ this tactic in equal measure, and age did not appear to be a factor in the frequency of its deployment. What emerged from the data was the participants' tendency to use this tactic with people they liked, respected and felt more comfortable with than others:

*There are a few people. There is a girl at work, she's pretty cool about things and I have never heard her bad mouth anyone just because they are Roma, or gay so she seems open-minded. I let her come to my house a few times and I have stuff in the kitchen that’s religious – books and the like. But she has never mentioned anything about it. She just seems to like me as a person, so I can trust her with some stuff.*

(Ava, Born Again Christian)

Paul also discussed the way in which he often mentioned to one of his work colleagues that he was busy every Sunday:

*I told him that Sundays are out for me to do other things. Cos it's my day of rest and reflection for the Lord, but I just say I am busy. You know in fact, I remember saying to him once that "Sunday's are sacred for me" to him and he just laughed and said 'me too, morning for golf, lunch, then football all the way'. Maybe he thought it was the same.*

(Paul, Evangelical)
The deliberately vague manner in which they volunteered information allowed them to feel a degree of social openness, yet provided assurance that if any difficult or direct questions arose out of the disclosure, that there was enough ambiguity to manoeuvre themselves out of it:

*I don’t think anyone will cop it really. I mean it’s just saying I am going here at such a time, I can fill in other details if needs be. But, people just take what you say at face value for the most part.* (Jacob, Druid)

*I think it is a risk – if you like. But not too much really. I think that by giving just some info when I want to, and then sort of keeping to myself for the most part, that people don’t probe so much into what you do tell them. I would just sort of fudge the details a bit if anyone was direct about it.* (Susan, Baha’i)

Here we see the way in which a concealment strategy can be used in conjunction with a disclosure tactic, in that the physical and social distance engendered by using the process of self-removal from others, assists in use of indirect risk-taking. By establishing one's self as socially distant and aloof, the disclosure of information is therefore treated with respectful distance by others, who tend not to interrogate the statements further in the participants' experience. Other participants also referred to the use of a self-removal technique in order to screen those whom they thought would react to the disclosure in a positive fashion. Jacob spoke of how he selected

...a guy I knew in the estate where I live. His kids know mine and stuff so we are often hanging around in the same places keeping an eye on them. I was really standoffish at first. He really good – polite, doesn’t gossip about people in the estate and just sort of respects boundaries. He would just talk about general stuff and never queried anything too much. So after a good while, I trusted him with some things, nothing in depth but just, that I had groups I went to stuff like that, and he never asked more then I was willing to give. (Jacob, Druid)

Betty also referred to the way in which she

...trusted those more who had sorta respected your privacy in the past

*(Betty, Jehovah's Witness)*
Therefore, the process and deployment of this strategy was mostly of a premeditated nature, based on previous encounters where the participants felt their boundaries were respected. The discreet and almost inconsequential nature of this strategy could make one question its inclusion in this study, yet it is in fact most telling in exploring the reaction from the social environment. It would appear that among the interviewees, the fear of being stigmatised and treated differently as a consequence was so significant, that a simple, mostly honest, exchange on how you spend your Sundays was seen a major step forward, and had an impact on their own well-being and on their attitude towards the community.

The disclosure of information to a select acquaintance was not the only manner in which the participants indirectly signalled their religious status. Some also felt that by deliberately associating with a work colleague/ acquaintance also of a minority religion, that they were signalling their religious sympathies to others. Susan became friends with a Born Again Christian she worked with, but did not reveal her own religious identity:

_He was very open about his religion. Too open, I think. He wasn’t too popular with the other people who worked there. But I liked him, and I liked to talk about things with him. Some people used to say how can you stand him, but to me he was brave, and I stood up for him. I suppose I thought that I would like it if someone stood up for me, if I was brave._

(Susan, Baha’i)

I asked Susan if she ever felt tempted to reveal her religious identity to him, but she said that while

...I might trust him to be ok about it; I might not trust him to keep it to himself.
So I never let on. (Susan, Baha’i)
She also discussed her assessment of the risk of discovery by choosing to associate herself with him as

...quite low in reality. I mean no one would really suspect that one of the reasons I was drawn to him was that he was on the outside like me, but I kept being outside hidden. So I found him an inspiration, in a way and that I was rebelling against the way the others looked at him, in my own way. (Susan, Baha'i)

This sense of rebellion by befriending other "open" minority religious members was also strongly evident in Paul's discussion of his friendship with a member of an American-based, Christian fundamentalist group:

We might have some very different views but I would have little chats with him, he did most of the talking. My friends thought I was crazy to encourage him, but it was my own way of going against the grain. He was me just open to all about his religion. So being friends with him, made me a little braver to face the world. It was without being rude about it like sticking two fingers up to the world. (Paul, Evangelical)

In tandem with a sense of closet rebellion, all of the participants discussed how even these small disclosures to acquaintances made a difference in their own lives, and became the motivation behind their risk-taking. As there was a degree of agency and honesty in when and what they elected to disclose, the research members describing feeling better about themselves and more positive about their relationships with others. A lot of the participants described feeling how great it was to be able to reveal a part of their true self, even if it was a very small part. This strategy therefore, provided a more holistic sense of self for the participants, where their various identity facets were less fragmented through their social interactions. While fears of negative reactions and stereotyping still prevailed as the master motivator in the control of self-information, the participants reported feeling less dishonest and guilty in their relationships with people, then when utilising concealment strategies.
Behaviours Challenging Negative Religious Discourse

While the above strategy was deemed low-risk by the participants, the strategies used in actively challenging any type of negative religious discourse brought a much higher risk of discovery. By openly challenging others who were using derogatory or stereotypical language in relation to any religious activities or denomination, those who chose this behaviour were very much aware what the consequences might be:

*I know that by standing up to any religious bigotry, I am drawing attention to myself. So, there's a chance that someone could twig it. Then I suppose I would be fair game in their eyes.*

*(Sarah, Elim Pentecostal)*

Not all of the participants had chosen to employ this strategy in dealing with negative discourse, with two of the group revealing that they chose to remove themselves from situations involving negative discourse instead. The others had at some stage actively challenged someone who was engaged in this behaviour either directed at themselves or others, or in general conversation. As I remarked in the last section, there was no set pattern of behaviour in relation to negative religious remarks reported by the participants. In some situations, they would chose to ignore such remarks and at other times they spoke about confronting the negative behaviour, and why this occurred was based on a number of factors, such as time and place. I will explore these elements in more depth as I discuss the participants' experiences.

Of the six participants who described their experience of confronting discriminating language, they reported a variety of contexts and situation in which they occurred. The older and younger participants reported using this tactic on more occasions than those who were in the middle-age range, which they put down to having to protect the social status of their children and their job. Some of the younger members of the
group discussed their tendency to use it more among their peers, while the older
members were more inclined to challenge those younger than them. There was also
variation in the contexts within which they decided to exercise this strategy. For the
many of the participants, it's occurred most frequently on a one-to-one basis:

*I have spoke up a few times about stuff, usually with someone I am talking with by myself. That way I feel that I can get my point across and it seems more like a conversation than a confrontation.* (John, Scientology)

*In my experience, I think I am more comfortable in small social groups, so picking someone up on saying something about how all cults brainwash people is easier. There is less chance of the mob thing, and that people will listen to what you have to say rather than others.* (Betty, Jehovah's Witness)

I wanted to know what type of conversation or remark had prompted this
confrontation, so I asked the participants to describe the situations to me:

*We were just talking about some stuff on TV, when she started saying that her watching of Coronation Street had been interrupted by Jehovah's Witnesses with leaflets. Then she started to call them some things and how they are terrible people shoving religion at people. I just said, firmly, that I don't think that was what their aim was; they are trying to save you. They don't have to bother, you know. She just mumbled a bit and that was it. I'm not one myself you know, but I feel that most small religions in Ireland get a raw deal, so I stuck my oar in.* (Jacob, Druid)

Most incidences tended to be with work colleagues who were discussing religion in a
general sense and were addressed during the conversation in a firm, but not
confrontational manner. The triggers for such challenges were usually caused by
remarks lacking actual knowledge of the religion and were most often rooted in the
stereotypes I discussed in chapter six:

*You would hear the most stupid things about religions, all kinds of things about what we do, and believe. And it's these things that seep into people's heads and the way they talk about them. Even the most bizarre things are taken as truth, like how drinking goat's blood and the*
like. That's what makes them think we should be treated as half-wits. So yes, sometimes I speak up. (Sarah, Elim Pentecostal)

Its ignorance you know. It makes me mad. They think all other religions are weirdoes. So all scientologists are brainwashed and leaping about like Tom Cruise. All the fundamentalist Christians are out to remove all civil liberties and Islam just breeds terrorists. I have to step in when it gets to that. I usually say the things about Islam and terrorists used to be said about Catholics and the IRA once, and how much truth was there in that? That usually stops it. (Jacob, Druid)

When people are tarring everyone with the same brush as the few bad cases it angers me. I mean I have even stood up for the Catholic Church at times, 'cause all the priests can't be bad. I think if I allow that generalisation in that sense, I can't fight it when it comes to my own can I? (Sarah, Elim Pentecostal)

While occurring most often in the workplace or with social group acquaintances which they knew on a casual basis, there were incidences where the participants challenged close friends on negative religious discourse. This occurred again most often in one-to-one situations and with those who did not know their religious orientation:

There was one friend that used to say all sorts of out there things. She used the N word to talk about people and I called her on that. Then she called people in an African Pentecostal Church as a sort of devil worship. I told her straight when we were alone that that was just ignorant – they did not worship the devil and if she wanted to remain friends she was to learn about stuff before just spouting ignorant remarks. We are not that close anymore, but she never brought anything like that up again. (Susan, Baha'i)

Active challenges to negative remarks were far less likely to occur in group situations, either at work or with friends. The majority of the participants felt far more threatened by the risk of both negative reactions to what they said, and the increased chance of exposure in group situations. There were some instances where this did occur:

I have told some of my mates that I knew from school to knock it off when they are slagging of religious people. They say stuff like the "Jesus, Beard and sandals brigade" and taunt some of the people you see preaching in the street in "city name removed". I say just leave them alone
it’s a free country. They think that I am all PC now since I went back to college. I don’t think that they think I am religious, just a liberal maybe!! (Paul, Evangelical)

Betty revealed how she told a group of people discussing a certain religion on a social outing that:

You don’t know what you are talking about and that everyone was allowed to believe what they believed. This started a heated debate between the others. I had started it, but I back off, ’cos there was so many of them against what I said. I left them to it。(Betty, Jehovah’s Witness)

Therefore, while the discussion of stereotypes was almost always the trigger for breaking cover and challenging the source of the discourse within groups, many retreated when met with a negative reaction. I asked if those who had confronted negative religious discourse with work colleagues and friends had felt liberated by the risk they has taken, and if this influenced how they responded to future situations. For most of them, in the immediate aftermath the risk of getting their point across was worth the risk of getting caught at the time. However, on later reflection, they admitted selecting this behaviour too often would greatly increase the risk of discovery:

I felt really great the first time I sort of stood up for myself and my religion, and that I was doing the right thing. Afterwards, it dawned on me that I had to pick my battles if I was to keep my practice to myself at work especially. So now, it has to be real bad, or I just ignore it for the most part. (Jacob, Druid)

I couldn’t chance it too often though. They will think I am some sort of crusader and that will raise some questions. (Susan, Baha’i)
John also explained that he had often been the subject of taunts and name calling in the street and at various public places on several occasions:

As a Scientologist, I am an easy target I suppose. Not just at the time but people might recognise you in town later on. That’s when I got most of the name calling and had stuff thrown at me. It might be just a juice box, but it’s the principle. If it was at anyone else it would be abuse. It’s gotten worse for sure. In the last year (2010) I could count at least ten separate times when I gotten abuse shouted at me. (John, Scientology)

Jacob's experience was a little more antagonist in nature:

There was this young lad at one of the celebrations we had just hanging around, and making "Woo" sounds and calling us "Klansmen" for some reason. It’s a public place, so there is not too much you can do. I waited until most of the others had started to pack up and I spoke to him. I asked him straight out what his problem? He goes ‘you are a bunch of hippy weirdoes’ and get fairly aggressive with me, started to push me back. I went kind of mad and I said he a Nazi which I shouldn’t have done. That was all he wanted a reaction. So I just walked away (Jacob, Druid)

This fear of perpetuating any negative religious stereotypes was cited by most of the participants as the reason for not responding to negative discourse from strangers, and as equal in importance to the fear of physical alteration should the situation escalate.

All members of the interview group admitted should a similar situation arise, they would not respond and would use removal techniques instead. There was universal agreement as to the level of risk which this strategy entailed in relation to religious discovery, and those who challenged strangers had already had their identity revealed.

Therefore, it tended to be utilised on a very irregular basis and only in circumstances which were deemed worthy of such intervention. These circumstances were usually confined to what the participants perceived as highly discriminatory remarks or stereotyping, and were more often about another religious group than their own.
I was interested in knowing if they had ever instigated a discussion with others about the treatment of minority religions. All of the participants reacted in a very surprised and somewhat incredulous manner to this question. This question was put to most of the participants at the second interview and their reaction was almost unanimous. As I explored further, John told me that

...it really goes to show that you have to be an outsider to really understand what you do when you are an outsider. You can't ever understand. (John, Scientology)

There were similar responses from others, which I recorded at the time as upsetting me, as I felt I had a rapport with my participants. On reflection, I knew that their remarks weren’t aimed at my perceived misreading of their circumstances, but were directed at the assumptions I made from my position as a "lapsed" Roman Catholic. In other words, in the interviewee's perception, I was just the same as those who created and maintained this sense of stigma and discrimination which they experienced as religious minorities:

For you, it's different. You say you are not religious, but you are part of the whole set up that makes people like me hide away. Not you personally mind, but it’s just you will probably never know what it’s like, to feel that you have to hide. So to answer, no I could never start a random conversation on religious discrimination of minorities (very angry tone). I might as well get a sign for my forehead. Does that answer your question?? (Paul, Evangelical)

The anger in this response was quite strong therefore I note it in his quotation, to show where the emphasis lay. As a researcher, I felt that I had maybe overstepped some boundaries, but at the next interview session, Paul explained that this reaction stemmed from frustration at having to confront issues which this research process brought up. He explained at length how he wished to view himself as brave and a warrior for God, but that our discussions made him see that his actual behaviour was
far from what he expected of himself, as a proud religious man. He actually thanked me for making him explore some aspects of his life and was working on changing them, not just for himself, but for others who felt powerless like him. I asked him about the risk of his identity being uncovered and he said he was also rebalancing what was important in his life, in order to bring this identity to the fore.

In exploring this strategy of direct challenging of negativity directed towards minorities, it became clear that the sense of frustration at needing to often accept the demeaning comments of others, even if not directed at them caused many of the participants to risk their cover in certain circumstances. These usually tended to be emotive, rather than pre-mediated responses to certain triggers, and used very infrequently. Many felt that this was indicative of the sense of futility they felt in trying to challenge such behaviour and yet balance this with the protection of their own identity.

The final risk taking behaviour strategy which emerged from the data was one in which the participants took the most risk in relation to their religious identities being negatively received.

**Explicit Intersections between Concealed Religious Identity and Wider Public Arena**

This risk-taking behaviour is predicated on incidences where the participants either chose to reveal or had their religious identity uncovered by others, in social circumstances where they had previously felt compelled to keep it hidden. To my surprise, not all of the participants reported having either been discovered by others, or revealing their identity to those in the wider community at some time in their lives.
I had made the assumption based on the time spent in their various religions which ranged from five years to sixty years, that at least once during that time that their cover would have been penetrated. Two of the eight participants – John and Jacob, had never disclosed their religious identity to anyone except close family and friends. I expressly mention my assumptions in this matter for two reasons. First, to highlight that no matter how hard one tries as a researcher to think through and admit all your pre-conceived ideas about issues relating to the research process, it is something that requires constant revision during the project. Therefore, to spend time at the outset of the process exploring your own stance on the subject is crucial, as I did, but it cannot be left in isolation.

There are elements which emerge which one cannot anticipate and as a researcher using a hermeneutic technique I found that as these came up, I had to re-explore my take on subject matter, and how it affected what I perceived in the data. Second, the use of a research journal was invaluable in recording events, feelings and initial reactions immediately following interviews, which provided added richness and depth to the analysis of the data. I specially add in this remark at this juncture in the thesis, as the strategy which I explore in this section in the culmination of what most of the participants strive within their daily lives to avoid, whatever the cost.

Therefore, I presumed that I understood the importance of successful identity concealment to the research group. Within this presumption, I also predicted that there would be incidents where they revealed their religious identity, either inadvertently or in a purposeful manner. This assumption on my part exposed how much I had actually underestimated the absolute importance of successful concealment and maintenance
of that cover in the lives of these participants. As a result, I had misunderstood the
degree to which the fear of negative reactions and stereotyping could thoroughly
dominate most of their public social actions, until I was discussing this particular risk-
taking behaviour. On reflection, this was due to my naivety in relation to the degree of
discrimination and negative social reactions which many of the participants feel as a
minority religious member in Ireland.

The two participants who had never revealed their religious identities either
intentionally or inadvertently were members of the most "unconventional" religions in
the group. Jacob, a practicing Druid and John, a Scientologist discussed how they had
invested enormous energy in maintaining this concealment, to avoid the perceived
social sanctions:

*I could never let anyone know – at work, at my kids’ school, my parents friends, my
neighbours. Any of them. I am not ashamed of what I am part of, but I am not blind to the way
others would see me. So the lengths I might have to go to, to keep it covered up is far, far
better than what would happen if they found out. Job gone, family would be laughed at in the
community. I couldn’t let it happen.* (Jacob, Druid)

John also notes that

*...for me, it’s a choice I knew I was making when I joined. I knew I would have to be discreet
and I actually believe that it’s worse now for people like me... I have to tell you, I was afraid
of what people can do to you before my car was messed up. Now, I am more afraid. I know that
people will go further than I thought. So now I am even more careful, more guarded. It’s what
it has to be.* (John, Scientologist)

I ask if he could ever imagine letting one of his work colleagues or casual friend know
of his religious identity:

*No. No. I don’t think so. It would change everything. So no I couldn’t.* (John, Scientologist)
That left six other members of the research group who discussed the various ways in which they revealed their previously hidden religious identity. Again, no set pattern or situational trigger emerged from the data in relation to this behaviour, which varied across both genders and age range. Three general types of revelation/discovery were found among the participants’ experiences. The first and most widely experienced of these was the non-denial of their religious identity to others. This often involved having been seen at certain events or places associated with their religious group, and in response to questions at a later date, did not deny that they were there for religious purposes:

_"I was coming out of a meeting at the hall and I was standing talking to other women, when two people from work saw me. They must have seen me there a few times, as one of them said to me how are your evenings at the hall? Everyone knows that’s where the meetings of my group take place, so I said it was fine. I knew that she now knew and I had sort of confirmed it to her. (Ava, Born Again Christian)"

This very indirect way of revealing their religious identity was evident among all of the participants’ reports. Paul, reveals how at a social function in response to a discussion on religious affiliation, he did not deny that he was quite religious and part of a Christian Group, but did not elaborate further:

_"He asked if I was religious and I told him I was a practising Christian. It was kind of a conversation stopper to be honest. And we never discussed it again. But he never told anyone either as far as I know. (Paul, Evangelical)"

I discussed with the participants if they considered these discreet non-denials of religious identity as revelations. For most, it was a seen as a partial revelation. Susan for example, tells of how after converting to her religion twenty seven years ago that she had a similar experience with a friend:
We were pretty close as friends you know. But after I became a Baha’i I kept it to myself for a good while. But she sort of twigged it when I became sort of secretive about where I was and what I was doing at certain times. I didn’t really want to tell her to be honest with ya. I almost hoped in a way that she thought I had a secret boyfriend, which could have been much easier. So when she asked if it was a religious thing I was going to, I just said yeah and that was pretty much it. I don’t know how she knew, but it was like a little bond between us after that. (Susan, Baha’i)

All of the six had some degree of experience with this behaviour and I was curious to know why they had chosen non-denial in the place of denial in these situations. For some, it was the perceived origin of the enquiry. In other words, the enquirer knew and was letting them know in an indirect manner, of this knowledge. In these circumstances, the participants explained that denial would have been an act of explicit and pointless lying:

I knew that my neighbour knew after she had mentioned how hard it must be going door to door. I just said yeah. I mean, she knew. If I had denied it she would have known I was a liar too. It would have made no difference and just made me look foolish. (Betty, Jehovah’s Witness)

I explored with the participants how these revelations made them feel and how it affected their future strategies in light of this indirect revelation. Sarah explained how it caused a great degree of shock to her, when she was faced with one of her children's friends letting her know that she was aware of her religious background:

It shook me into two ways I think. I wasn’t as careful as I thought I was I suppose and when she said it, it was like “boom”. Then I shocked myself by just going along with it. Afterwards, I was kicking myself – I could have gotten out of it with some explanation I think. She wasn’t the kind of person I wanted to know. So I actually chatted with her about how she had found out and I used that to make sure I wasn’t caught out again. I am sure she let others know too, but that might just be paranoia. (Sarah, Elim Pentecostal)
This revaluation of their concealment strategies also triggered a reassessment of the risks involved in the discovery of their identities. While Susan had initial reservations about having been uncovered by her acquaintance, she grew to like having someone who knew, even if it was in a very indirect manner. For the others, however they reported feeling an increased sense of fear of discovery. Not just emanating from the person who made the indirect reference, but that their cover was inadequate. For Paul, this provided to be a source of great stress:

I kept thinking that I had to do better, at making sure I was keeping stuff to myself. It’s a bloody small world you know. I don’t chat freely about things like where I work anymore even at religious gatherings, ‘cos I think if you are open at things like that then people assume you are open about your religion in everyday life. I even just say that I live in and around (city name removed). I was so scared that it would get out, fretted for weeks. But it’s seemed to be ok. Too close for me though... (Paul, Evangelical)

Therefore, for most of the research group, this strategy of non-denial occurred in situations where they could see no alternative to certain partial revelations. Instead of feeling that some level of disclosure was socially acceptable, such an incidence actually had the reverse effect on the participants, even when the consequences of someone knowing did not result in the negative consequences they predicted. Hence, despite being forced into this risk-taking behaviour, the participants returned to their concealment techniques as a response and adapted their behaviour to try to avoid this reoccurring. In my analysis, of this and of the other risk-taking strategies, the degree of agentic behaviour inherent in the instigation seems to be linked to their perception of the act as positive or negative. In other words, most of the participants felt that if they were forced by circumstance into a revelation, and that the degree of coercion, whether direct or indirect, negated any positive outcomes. Betty and Michael, while discussing my findings, agreed with my analysis:
Sure. I mean if you get pushed into it, it’s not your own choice is it? When it's happened to me, I can vividly remember how upset I was afterwards and afraid of what would happen. I never thought ‘Hey, it might be nice to have someone who I can be honest about things in my life’. And you know, it might have been. But I was and am still about protecting myself.

(Betty, Jehovah’s Witness)

Totally. When you get your choices taken away, it makes you feel vulnerable. Mine wasn’t a bad experience as such. But I don’t want it to happen again. Definitely not a positive thing for me. (Michael, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)

This theme of agency in risk-taking behaviour would reoccur in the other types of revelation/discovery situations. In addition to non-denial of their religious affiliation in certain circumstance, some of the participants discussed how they had at certain times made accidental mentions of their religious activities to others. For some, it was a genuine slip-up in their concealment strategy which led to their revelation:

It was at a birthday party for one of my kid's friends and I was chatting away with one of their fathers. I had only met him once before, but we got on. I let it slip that I was late and there was no parking, 'cos we get so wrapped up in the prayer group that we never get out on time. I knew right away I had made a mistake. I actually ... I mean it crossed my mind for a second to tell him it was a Catholic thing – something to do with the kids or something. But I knew I had to say. So I told him, real casual like "yeah I am part of a little group that meets there on Sunday mornings. Been going for years" I actually remember trying to make it sound so normal, when I was really shaking. I have seen him a good few times since, but he goes out of his way to avoid me. (Ava, Born Again Christian)

Sarah also "slipped up" when explaining an unrelated matter to a work colleague. In this case, the individual he was speaking to had very negative reaction to his revelation and subsequent confirmation of her religious affiliation:

He was all "you are kidding me" "ah come on now knock it off” at the beginning. Then he was can't believe it. I can't believe it. He actually got angry. I mean we weren’t close or anything, but he was incensed that I had somehow been hiding it from him. Because it was such an awful thing, not that I didn’t tell him. He told fucking everyone, everyone. It got so bad I had to leave – moved towns and everything. All my own stupid fault. (Sarah, Elim Pentecostal)

Both discussed with me how foolish they felt and as both of them had negative reactions to these accidental disclosures, how they make sure
Other members of the research group made deliberate mention of aspects of their
religious activities in casual conversation with others. Betty as a Jehovah's Witnesses
discussed with me how she had mentioned some aspects of her religious activities,
unprompted to others in a work setting. By making reference to their missionary work
within a conversation, they were essentially, in their view, making a declaration:

_To me I felt like I have made a huge leap. I thought well I can maybe just tell one person and
see how it goes! (Betty, Jehovah's Witness)_

As with indirect disclosure, agentic control of self-information played an important
role in the perception of the event. In this case, the participants were frustrated, as
they viewed themselves as processing control in relation to self-information in the
given situation and had relinquished it, however accidentally. The negative character
of the reactions seemed to reinforce their need to practice greater monitoring of their
social interactions and avoid the perceived labelling, negative stereotype and loss of
status which comes as a member of small religious groups in Ireland.

The final manner in which overt disclosure occurred among the research participants
was through an explicit declaration of their religious affiliation to others in
circumstances where they had previously hidden it. Only two of the group reported
this explicit disclosure outside of close family members and in each case the
instigation was from the participants, in a premeditated fashion to one other person.
Susan had explained how she had decided to tell a woman whom she worked with for
many years:

_I wanted to stop feeling like I had to hide it. And I felt I owed it to her as my friend. There has
to be a degree of honesty in my life. So I thought about it and thought about it and I decided to_
tell her. I didn’t know when or how but I was going to do it. It actually happened at work, having coffee with a few others in the break room. They didn’t hear. But I suppose I picked that moment in case she went crazy or something! (Susan, Baha’i)

Susan's direct disclosure didn’t elicit a positive reaction as she discussed earlier, and while she had mixed feelings about it, she didn’t regret her decision:

It didn’t work out how I hoped. I think she thought I was out to convert her or something, so maybe I should have thought it out or sussed it out a bit more first. But it was the right thing to do for me. And I wanted to be open. So I felt I gave her the option and she refused, which she has the right to do. But it was my decision and that made it ok that it wasn’t the best reaction in the world. (Susan, Baha’i)

There were other situations which three of the participants spoke of in relation to the discovery of their religious identity. While others may have indirectly let them know that they had seen them at meeting places etc. where there was a chance of denial on their part as discussed above, there were incidents where acquaintances told the participants directly that they knew what their religious affiliation was. John, Michael and Sarah all explained that they were approached by various people, who let them, know that they were aware of their religious background:

You could have knocked me over. He just said straight out "You are a member of the Mormons aren’t you?” He was nice about it though. I said I am. He then told me that he knew why I was keeping to myself and that here it was the right thing to do, as they are very conservative. He was looking out for me, which was great. I knew he wouldn’t say. But it could have put me a bad spot. (Michael, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)

One of my friends let me know that he had found out I was part of the group. He put it in such a matter of fact way there was no way or point of denying it on my part. I asked if he wouldn’t mind not publicising it too much. I was a bit clever too – I said not everyone here is as open minded as you, just to you know play him up a bit. He didn’t let anyone in on it for ages, but then it got out it could only be him. (John, Scientology)
Sarah's experience was similar in the manner in which she was approached by a work colleague, but took a rather different turn following the event;

*The guy was a bit of a dick anyway to be honest. But when he put it right out there – apparently his sister knows someone who goes to my meeting place. I said listen you know what it's like here with gossip and stuff. So can I please ask that you just keep this between us? Which he did for a while. But he held it over me – there were remarks about things with others that only him and me knew that what he was talking about. He used it – I suppose not outright like blackmail but he was he had this thing and it was power to him. I couldn't stand it. It's bad enough having to do this (conceal identity) everyday, but to have him lording over you as well was just too much. (Sarah, Elim Pentecostal)*

So while some of the individuals who uncovered the participants' religious identity were supportive to a point, such an event resulted in the reinforcement of their vulnerability for most. By having their covert identity exposed by another, despite their various concealment attempts, served to remind them of the constant threat of discovery. While in most cases, there was a redoubling of efforts to ensure it did not occur again – such as attending different meetings, being more careful about being seen or what they speak about in unsafe social spaces, there was also an increase of the reality of the social consequences:

*I thought I had it all covered too. It makes me hate living here. There is no where you can just be honest about your religion. Unless you are Catholic and then not so much. If they found out you were something else, you could lose the job, put out in the town, hell for the kids, all just gone. And no one cares. Who are you going to complain to?*  
*(Ava, Born Again Christian)*

I asked if there has been a more positive reaction to the disclosure, how it would have altered their management strategies in any overall sense. For Paul, he thought that it might, but only in relation to the specific person. Ava also doubted if it would change any aspect of her behaviour in a general sense, as the consequences were just too much to risk. The length of time which one had been a member of their religious
group also did not seem to encourage either a greater number of concealment or revelation strategies and a comparison of their reported behaviours at either end of the spectrum did not indicate those who were members for long periods of time were more wary of discovery than short-term members. Nor was the opposite case present in the data. While both of the members of arguably the most controversial religions in the public arena, had never explicitly revealed their religion to anyone outside of close family and friends; neither Jacob or John employed concealment strategies more than any of the other more "normal" religious affiliations. Those with young families who were not of the religion, stated that they were more aware of the need for concealment in order to protect them from negative social reactions. However, this awareness did not seem to translate into a greater use of concealment strategies, or less risk taking behaviours than those which reported no dependents. I also did not find any indicators of greater use of any risk-taking activities based on gender or age among the participants.

There were also no indications to believe that if the research group members partook in more risk-taking behaviour that their activation of concealment strategies would decrease. In this case the opposite seemed to hold. As John explains:

*I know that I do some risky stuff – like speaking up and all. And I do it a fair bit. But it doesn’t mean that I don’t stop hiding. In fact, if I think that I have been giving people a hard time about Jewish jokes or the like, I might pretend more. I mean I might let on I went to Mass and then say oh it was so loooong. Just so they know why I’m talking about it.*

*(John, Scientologist)*

Susan also points to some similar behaviour;
You know that sometimes I feel bad about keeping folks at arms’ length, I am afraid is all. But then it gets to a stage where I have been quiet and kept my mouth shut for so long, that when someone says something stupid about religion, any religion in fact, I just let them have it. Not like a row you see. But I make my point. And then I go back to being quiet. More quiet than before if I am honest. Always afraid of blowing it. (Susan, Baha’i)

Therefore, from the data it appeared that there was a link between the effects of risk-taking behaviour on future behaviour, as many of the concealment strategies were reused and often increased in the wake of certain risk-taking activities. In fact, the actual level of risk taken by the participants was very low, and quite infrequent, which was directly connected to the perceived social reactions of their religious group membership. Yet, it did provide some level of challenge and control to the participants at the time, but did little to alter their sense of stigmatisation in an overall sense. The prevailing fear of propagating stereotypes, loss of social status and discrimination toward themselves and their families made risk-taking seem like a rather futile exercise, and instead many retreated further into self-imposed social distancing within their own religious communities, leading to further social distance between the Irish majority and small religious groups. The impact of this and its relation to religious stigma, discrimination and the Irish social environment I will discuss next.
Table 8.1 Strategies of Identity Management Spectrum

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<th>Concealment Strategies</th>
<th>Revelation/Discovery Strategies</th>
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<td>1. Deliberately Passing as “Irish” Roman Catholic</td>
<td>1. Casual Indirect Disclosures</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Indirect Passing as “Irish” Roman Catholic</td>
<td>2. Confronting Negative Religious Discourse</td>
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The concealment/revelation dichotomy displayed by the participants emerged from the sense of stigmatisation and discrimination they perceived in Ireland, and dominated much of the manner in which they lived their social lives. Over the course of this study, it was my aim to provide a better insight into the lived experience of a minority religious identity in Ireland, exposing the personal effects of stigmatisation and discrimination and linking these micro-interactions explicitly to the social environment in which they occur. I had started this process with the conception of a concealment/revelation spectrum which had been used in various sociological explorations of living with a stigmatised identity, along which the experiences of the participants were placed as they emerged from the data. At the concealment end of the continuum were the strategies of deliberately passing as "Irish" Roman Catholic, Indirect passing as "Irish" Roman Catholic, removal of self from others and removal of the self from all religious discussion. The risk-taking strategies moved the participant more towards the revelation end of the spectrum, with the use of casual...
indirect disclosures, confronting negative religious discourse, accidental religious identity disclosure and direct religious identity disclosure emerging from the data. It is important to stress that while this is conceptually a continuum in terms of the level of concealment or risk of discovery, the various strategies are not exclusive nor are they incremental steps from more concealing to revealing, but as a display of the two types of identity strategies found.

In some of my final discussions with the participants, some revealed to me how useful they found the idea of such a spectrum in conceptualising both their lives and social behaviour. I shared my findings and subsequent analysis with the entire group, in order to explore the resonance of the model with their experiences. This is an important step in hermeneutic research, as it provides feedback on a general overview of the findings, and ensures an accurate representation of the phenomena. There was unanimous agreement on the spectrum of concealment behaviours/risk behaviours in correctly capturing the range of their reported actions:

*I never really thought about it to be honest, but when you put it like that, it actually made real sense you know. I see it now as like a slider thing, you know. At work, I have it right down, and when I go to watch my son play football, I might slide it up a bit. And if I meet my son’s headmaster there, I will slide it right down again. In a funny way, I like that I have something to sort of measure stuff by now you know!* (Paul, Evangelical Christian)

*I get that. I mean when I am somewhere, with people and I feel that if they find out, even a whiff, I could lose everything. I and my family would be a laughing stock, the whole lot. That’s when I go into lockdown. Where I don’t feel that, I might be a bit more open. Or pretend to be a Catholic. (Laughs) (Jacob Druid)*

Therefore, the participants felt that my findings in respect of the range of their identity management techniques provided an accurate and illuminating visualisation of their behaviour as discussed throughout the research process. There was also agreement
that the mode of presentation should not be "a step-by-step" gradation from one end of the scale to the other, but rather as a grouping of the strategies utilised at either end of the spectrum. In addition, by grouping these tactics together under the two main types of strategies identified, it indicated in a clear fashion that the non-exclusive nature of the strategies deployment by the participants. For example, in the course of a single day, a participant may evoke indirect passing as an "Irish Roman Catholic", confront negative religious discourse and remove themselves from another incidence of negative religious discourse, as they deemed appropriate within each context.

**Overview of Findings and Discussion**

The complementary qualitative interview brought forth many aspects which the survey did not. Despite the vast differences among the eight groups which took part in terms of religious beliefs, practices, worldly orientations and public perceptions, there were remarkable similarities in their experiences. The identity strategies which emerged in this thesis highlight the difficult social environment which the participants navigate each day, and how they attempt to avoid or confront these forms of discrimination. By using the tactics of identity management as a prism, I was able to understand the intersections of the individuals with various social spheres, and explore the manner in which they perceived the structural formation of labelling and stereotypes, and the links to various types of discrimination.

While some individuals did experience forms of religious hatred, and outright incidents of direct religious discrimination, all of the eight interview participants discussed how discreet, indirect religious discrimination was by far the most commonplace occurrence. Therefore, discrimination reported in the workplace, in
social groups and in relation to education was far more likely to emanate in an informal manner from their work colleagues, group members and other students and parents, then directly from the institutions of work and education themselves. This discreet discrimination could range from polite, social exclusion right through to the loss of the individuals' personal and professional credibility. This discreet discrimination was mostly reported as involving elements of religious prejudice, trivialisation and ridicule which many of the participants linked to a lack of religious literacy among the wider Irish public.

These discriminatory actions were connected by the interviewees to the processes of stigmatisation, especially labelling, connections to negative religious stereotypes, the influence of social distance between the general Irish public – either imposed, desired or self-appointed by members of the religious groups. These elements were closely linked to the perceived loss of social status and credibility, which made the participants feel very much "lesser" than the majority. This image of members of these religious groups as lesser also translates, in the participants view, into a rationale and justification for much of the discriminatory behaviour which they reported throughout this thesis.

While the accounts of the participants linked the actual acts of discrimination to more informal settings, the elements of stigmatisation which are inherently linked to these discriminatory acts were firmly viewed as entrenched in major social institutions in Ireland, such as the media, the education system, anti-cult organisations and the Roman Catholic Church. The interview participants cited these social spheres as directly and indirectly promoting small religious groups as social "others" and were
seen as both creating and maintaining religious based stereotypes, while simultaneously conferring formal approval of this prejudicial view. Within the exploration of the wider social context, there also emerged a strong sense of implicit secularity which appears to be expanding in the Irish social environment. This concept refers to the increasing implicit, social attitude that those who are religious are inherently tribal, non-modern and unenlightened, or "those who are religious cannot be rational", as Jacob (Druid) succinctly puts it. What emerged from this data was a paradoxical juxtaposition between secular rationality and the expected Roman Catholic norm in contemporary Ireland's approach to religion. This concept is seen as operating in conjunction with the promotion of Roman Catholic normalcy in the Irish context, but with a specific, compartmentalised, "low-temperature" (Bouama 1999, 2011) public displays of religiosity. There was some acknowledgement that to be open and devoutly Catholic in today's Ireland may also be somewhat problematic, but the interviewees also make the point that such people would still be within the accepted boundaries of normalcy in relation to religious identity. All of the interview participants agreed that it was not the compartmentalised nature of Irish religious expectations that was most problematic to them, but the implicit expectation of Roman Catholicism as one's religious identity.

The participants discussed and acknowledged the degree to which being Irish and being Roman Catholic have become strongly intertwined. Research on cultural identity has explored this individual/group dichotomy within the process of identity closely, while emphasising the concept of cultural collectively based on a common history and the emergence of a collective core self (Hall 1996). In chapter four, I argued that despite its fall from dominance, the Catholic Church and its influence is
still deeply interwoven into both the collective Irish psyche and culture, resulting in the ongoing marginalisation of other religious groups. By exploring the negotiation of minority religious identities, I argue that this cultural collectivity emerges as crucial element in the social atmosphere experienced by the participants. In other words, it is my belief that this sharing of historical commonalities and collective cultural coding mechanisms, becomes the basis of unity and stability by underpinning the referential framework of mainstream Irish culture. From this position, any group religious or otherwise which operates outside of this collective, risks marginalisation and construction as a social "other".

Many members spoke both formally and informally about the effects this social othering had on their lives, and also their wider life circumstances. Many religious members who did not wish to take part formally in the research process, but who agreed to have their comment used in a general sense, echoed the experiences of the eight research participants. Many reported distress, feelings of powerlessness, injustice and frustration that this type of "invisible" discrimination is not taken seriously. I wondered why they continued to be part of such a group when the social cost of membership was so high. Some felt that had been born to their religion, and were therefore chosen to follow this path, with the adherent difficulties part of testing them. Others who had converted, such a John and Jacob spoke of

...finally finding something that works for me. It makes sense and it makes me more centred, focussed, less afraid of life. (John, Scientology)

I feel connected, personally, spiritually and physically to the dimensions in a way I never felt before. I couldn’t turn my back on that (Jacob, Druid).
When I asked if the price was too high, Susan encapsulated the response of many of the various groups in saying

…it’s a high cost. But I get great reward from my religion. I have to remember that it's society's problem, they are the one who are afraid and uninformed. I have done nothing wrong. I hope someday that that ignorance and fear will be gone. (Susan, Baha’i)

There was also widespread resignation that little could be done on an individual basis to confront casual discrimination or the wider machinations of stigma generation, as they seemed both ingrained and discreetly promoted within Irish social structures. Throughout this study of the macro-elements of stigma designation and the micro-experiences of discrimination are closely linked, demonstrates the utility of the expanded conceptualisation of stigma and religious discrimination in this thesis. By building on Link and Phelan's (2001) proposal that the issue of stigma requires a more holistic sociological approach in order to be both comprehensive and effective, I was able to break down the various types of discrimination experienced by the individuals and make links to various social institutions which were cited as instrumental in the designation and perpetuation of stigma. By linking the individual experiences to the wider social context, it is my aim that this study will be the first step in tackling the admittedly difficult issue of informal discrimination in Ireland.

Conclusion

Two categories of identity strategies emerged from the data, which were placed on a continuum from total identity concealment to total religious identity revelation. Strategies of concealment were discussed in chapter seven. At the opposite end of the spectrum were risk-taking behaviours, which I explored in this chapter which covered
Casual Indirect Disclosures, Confronting Negative Religious Discourse, Accidental Religious Identity Disclosure and Direct Religious Identity Disclosure. These were used by the participants to challenge various behaviours, or in relation to the propagation of stereotypes. While these were used quite rarely, an examination of these actions proved illuminating. What emerged was a sense of agency within their action, which they felt denied within many aspects of their lives, and how even a small revelation, or brief challenge to religious stereotypes had a sizable impact on the participants' sense of well-being. This highlights how the use of an identity management perspective can provide insight into what may seem to be trivial events, yet can be of great significance to the actors involved.

In the final section, I laid out what the study has shown in relation to the eight research groups, the Irish environment and the experience of the individuals who made up this thesis, and drew the findings together with the debate on religious freedom in western society. In the final chapter, I will sum up the implications and contributions that this research will make to our understanding of religious stigma and discrimination in Ireland, the studies limitations and will conclude with recommendations for further research.
Chapter Nine
Conclusion

Introduction

In this final chapter, I outline the significance of my thesis findings and the contribution to the existing field. I will summarise the main points of my exploration of religious discrimination and stigma among these eight groups in the context of the Republic of Ireland and examine the utility of my theoretical approach. I will also present the limitations of my study, with recommendations for further research in this vein.

This thesis empirically explores the experience of religious-based stigmatisation and discrimination among eight minority, non ethno-religious groups in Ireland at a time of considerable changes in the religious ecology of the nation (McCourt 2011, 2012). These changes have seen an increase in discriminatory research relating to Muslim and other ethnically-linked religious affiliations (Carr 2011; Colfer 2009). However, while the entanglement between religious and ethnic identity remains an issue, non ethno-religious denominations remain to date under-researched. Weller (2001, 2011) and Bouma (1997) point particularly to the lack of exploration among druids/pagans, untraditional religions and minority white Christian groups, and how discrimination among these groups may be far more prevalent than previously realised. My approach looked to build on these findings and my sampling strategy reflected this aim, by purposely sampling members of religious minorities who were not connected to an
ethnic identity. In other words, in order to focus as exclusively as possible on negative reactions to a specific religious identity, I chose participants who were similar demographically to the majority of the Irish public. In chapter three, I discuss my sampling strategy at length, which proved effective in providing a sample where over 70% were Irish and white. This is an important step forward in religious discrimination research as the influence of ethnicity or nationality has been greatly reduced and focuses on what Weller (2011, p.5) refers to as "invisible religions" in Irish society. In an Irish context, this is the first in-depth exploration of religious discrimination from a multi-faith perspective, which allows a breakdown of the results into affiliation specific categories. Therefore, an analysis of the level and severity of negative reactions can be compared across the groups, which provided important information on which groups were most affected, and so begin an investigation to why this is so.

In order to look at this area, I explored various theoretical avenues available to underpin my study. Current research into the theoretical understanding of stigma and discrimination tends to be based on variations of in-group/out-group dynamics and social identity theory, and usually explore discrimination and stigma as separate entities. Following the work of Link and Phelan (2001), I attempted to strengthen and make explicit the research links between studies of stigma and discrimination to provide a holistic, sociological multi-level examination of religious stigma and discrimination. To do so, I constructed an expanded definition of discrimination and stigma, based on the multifaceted components of the concepts as put forward by Weller (2001, 2011), Woodhead and Catto (2009) and Woodhead (2011), combined with Link and Phelan's (2001) pattern of disadvantage. The machinations of
stigmatisation and discrimination are best understood in relation to each other (Link and Phelan 2001; Oliver 1998; Fiske 1998) and create a link between the micro-experiences of stigma and identity management and the macro-environment within which they operate. I argue that a holistic understanding of stigma and discrimination can be best achieved by linking the experiences of the individuals to the wider social environment, which provides greater insight into the actions which perpetuate and maintain these social reactions. This is crucial in studies of stigma and discriminatory behaviour, as micro-studies while illuminating in their own right, can be much more impactful when connected to the external elements which propagate and maintain such social disadvantage. In terms of this study, such an approach proved fruitful and exposed the day-to-day experiences of those who feel they live with a stigmatised religious identity, but also crucially, the manner in which social agents, such as the media and a legacy of religious and nationalistic identity convergence can influence the social environment through the exertion of social power.

Analysis of the interview data brought forth an array of concealment/revelation strategies in relation their religious identity, which were strongly associated with the social environment in which they found themselves. I chose to explore this from a Goffmanian perspective (1963), focussing on the management of such an identity and what their reactions tell us about the social environments they encounter. The interview participants revealed that being open about their religious identity in Ireland would be likely to result in negative social reactions and a sustained pattern of disadvantage. The interview data also concurred with the survey results in chapter three, which revealed a large percentage of discrimination as taking place within the informal social spheres. My results indicate high levels of defacto discrimination in
relation to informal social arenas, such as with work colleagues, in social groups and from friends and acquaintances reflecting the prevalence of a culturally pervasive entity rather than the institutional Church of the past. Some of the management tactics employed were in direct contravention of their own religious and personal beliefs, yet they found it necessary to do so to safeguard their families, jobs and their social status which they felt were at risk. The sanctions which resulted were reported as indirect for the most part and ranged from polite social exclusion in the workplace and community to becoming objects of ridicule, but also included personal harassment and intimidation. The participants also greatly feared the knock-on effects of these actions on their employability, credibility and for their families who often did not share their religious affiliation.

In addition, explicit macro links were made to the idea of "Irish" Roman Catholicism or cultural Catholicism as displaying social power within contemporary society and how other religious groups had to negotiate this. The religiously-based school system, anti-cult organisations and the lack of religious literacy perceived in Ireland were highlighted as influential factors by the research participants in tipping the balance of social power towards this culturally-based Catholicism. In fact, the lack of religious understanding encountered in Ireland appears repeatedly in this thesis and appears connected to a lack of objective, factual discourse on the subject, the groups' lack of access to representative social mechanisms and the effect it has on their social status. I argue that these elements are indeed symptomatic of the ongoing influence of the Cultural Catholicism in Ireland, but the evolution of the social space also has a role to play in the discrimination reported in this thesis. The religious sphere in Ireland has evolved into a contested social space where a juxtaposition of religious individualism
is coupled with sense of secularism, which simultaneously portrays those who are religious as non-modern and naïve, and as a potential social problem which must be countered, but also accommodated. The data also revealed how some members were responding to this situation by withdrawing into their own religious communities, which I argue will create further social distance, less opportunities for positive social interactions and adds nothing to the furtherance of balanced inter-religious dialogue in Ireland. These links to the social environment are reflective of findings in Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom as discussed in chapter two, and are perhaps indicative of the increased tension between religious pluralism and public secularism in western democratic nations. This is an important issue to note, for as religious affiliations continue to grow in these nations, the question of secularity in the public arena will require further sociological analysis in order to address how best to approach this.

In order to critically approach this underlying tension in this thesis, I explicitly noted the relative position of each of my research groups to wider Irish society in chapter one. Some of these groups have been connected to controversial and unusual practices, while some have been accused of illegal activities in the past, which could contribute to the manner in which they are perceived in Ireland and their agency to counter discrimination. Yet, despite the resolution of many of these issues, such as the abolition of polygamy in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, the research participants reported that they continued to be connected to it within popular culture. Non-traditional religions such as Druidism and Scientology may also suffer discrimination due to the level of difference between their beliefs and practices and those of traditional religions. Also, there is much mystery surrounding both religions,
and recently have been the subject of much speculation and allegations, especially on
the internet (see www.operationclambake.com). Scientology in particular, which is a
highly organised religious institution, has legally countered many of these allegations
and drawn attention to the paucity of evidence in many cases, displaying their
relatively more powerful position within society than the much more dispersed Druid
movement.

Yet, even these attempts at countering falsehoods appears to do little to dispel
stereotypes and lay theories, especially in relation to the more esoteric religions. In
fact, analysis of the survey results revealed a commonality of discriminatory
experiences, independent of their religious affiliation. Therefore, while the degree of
discrimination may vary, groups such as the Baha'i whose history contains very little
controversy, especially in an Irish context, report a very similar experience as
controversial religions such as Scientology. In addition, over 70% of the survey group
reported feeling negatively viewed in Irish society, while 71% concealed their
religious identity, so it would appear that there are other factors to consider, outside of
the pertinent religious practices.

**Limitations and Further Research**

It is important at this juncture to note the limitations of this study in relation to my
findings. While the survey sample was sizable, the underlying purposive sampling
cannot claim the same levels of generalisability as with random sampling. Only eight
groups were included, so there is the possibility that other groups in Ireland may have
experiences to the contrary which would challenge the findings of this thesis. The
qualitative interviews were based on a small sample, but there are, as I discussed in
chapter five previous studies based on such numbers have achieved socially
significant results. I do also note that the experiences articulated here are a
representation of their perceptions over a short period of time and as such are subject
to change.

At an empirical level, we must also ensure the building of effective research in this
area which sees various religious affiliations being more effectively explored
(MacCourt 2011). By that, I mean that groups do not get placed into unsuitable
categories or named as "Other" in analysis, therefore providing a group specific
exploration of how various religions experience discrimination. In this thesis, by
breaking down the survey responses into group specific results, I was able to uncover
that the groups with the most consistent reports of discrimination and concealment
were members of Scientology, Druidism, Born Again Christian, Evangelical and
Baha'i. The lowest were members of the Elim Pentecostal group and Jehovah's
Witnesses, but were still very high results when compared with surveys such as The
Experience of Discrimination in Ireland (Russell et al. 2008; McGinnity et al. 2012)
which finds that approximately 12% of the population has fallen victim to some type
discrimination.

Hence, there are several future research opportunities which arise out of the
limitations of this thesis. Echoing Weller (2011) and the findings of this study, there is
scope for an extended, more representative exploration of the issues, especially in
relation to the more non-conventional groups, such as Scientology, Druids and
Pagans. Within Ireland, I believe it would be fruitful to explore and disseminate the
manner in which negative religious stereotypes can be countered, looking at practical
applications, such as within the media, public discourse, the raising of religious literacy, increased positive interactions, and more community and civic involvement for small religious groups. In particular, I argue that a more affiliation specific exploration of issues of discrimination and stigma would further bring the issues highlighted in this thesis to prominence and would contribute to the field's conceptualisation of within a changing religious environment.

**Conclusion**

Overall, this study revealed very high levels of perceived stigma and discrimination among the eight groups in Ireland, based on their religious identity rather than any other intersectional factors. This was quite beyond what I had anticipated at the outset of this project, based on my review of the literature on discrimination, both religious and otherwise. The survey element showed that 70% of those that took part had experienced religious discrimination in the past five years. There were also very high levels of religious identity concealment reported by the participants, with over 70% indicating that they had hidden their identity within certain social sites, pointing to a strong sense of stigmatisation among the participants. The results although limited to the groups which took part, point to a far greater issue than was previously thought in relation to invisible religious stigmatisation and discrimination in Ireland. This thesis is therefore of importance, both in relation to Ireland and the international field on religious discrimination, which is just beginning to explore the experience of non ethno-religious groups in society.

This research also makes a significant contribution to our understanding of the machinations of religious discrimination in a specifically Irish context where the
findings point to the enduring power of an evolving type of cultural Catholicism which appears to have distanced itself from the institutional Roman Catholic Church. In chapter four, I explored the manner in which this type of “Individualised Catholicism” (Inglis 2008) evolved, looking at the various configurations of religion and the state since the 19th century. What the research revealed was the extent to which Irish identity is still very much connected to being Catholic, if not quite being part of the Catholic Church. The legacy of intertwined nationalism and religion as a defence against foreign rule and latterly as the civiliser and provider of cradle to grave care and guidance (O’Toole 2010) is still very much evident today, and was revealed in the interviews with the participants, as they described their day-to-day interactions with Cultural Catholicism as a powerful force in Irish informal society.

Associated with this powerful cultural Catholicism was the manner in which Ireland appears to be experiencing secularisation. I discussed secularisation theory in chapter four, and found a neo-secularisation approach to be most useful in relation to the experience of religious change in Ireland. I use the term religious change expressly, as I feel that secularisation can imply religious demise or removal to the private sphere. As research has shown (Malesevic 2008; Inglis 2010; Anderson 2010), it is far too early in the case of Ireland to cite either of these options as occurring at a society-wide level. At this juncture, there appears to be various types of religious change occurring at the three levels of society. At the macro-level, Ireland has indeed begun to experience increased differentiation (Fahey et al. 1994; Hornsby-Smith 1996) with a separation of the Church from the state in terms of its official relationship. Surveys have also shown a marked decrease in the numbers of Irish Catholics attending
religious services, abiding by Church teachings on moral and personal issues. Therefore, at a macro-level one can point to a definitive change in Ireland. However, the interviews in this thesis revealed that at a micro-level the change appears to be of a different type and pace. Religious change at a micro-level is not keeping pace with the evidence of change at the societal level, with many of the research participants revealing the influence which cultural Catholicism has at day-to-day level. What cultural Catholicism refers to is essentially an ongoing adherence to one’s individual and collective identity as a Catholic, but which is distanced from the institutional church (Malesevic 2008), and reconfigured into an individualised bricolage of Catholic beliefs (Inglis 2010) and partaking in some ritualistic aspects (Anderson 2008). In addition, there have been accusations from conservative groups of the presence of aggressive secularism within Ireland, which promotes the removal of all religious imagery and discourse from the public sphere to the private sphere (Waters 2010; Quinn 2011). However, empirical research into this area has been scant in Ireland and little is known about the actual influence which the discourse of aggressive secularism has on the Irish environment.

There does appear, however, to be a complex and constantly evolving contested public space in relation to religion in Ireland. This appears to be the result of the intersection of some level of structural differentiation which has removed religion somewhat from wider social spheres, the continued adherence to a cultural form of Catholicism as discussed above and the increased demand for religious pluralism within this space. In essence, religious pluralism is becoming increasingly visible, as the Irish religious landscape evolves to accommodate those of other religions. Special dietary and practice provisions are being increasingly seen within public spaces in
Ireland (Health Service Executive 2007) and are somewhat at odds with the removal of the many of the institutional elements of Catholic Church from Irish society. Therefore, such changes at the macro and micro-levels have resulted in the creation of tension within the social environment, where secularism, pluralism and cultural Catholicism are found at various levels and representations within a contested space in Irish society.
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Appendix A: Cover Letter Left on Site for Later Collection; Churches, Religious Centres etc.

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research. I am a postgraduate student at the University of Limerick, and I am presently conducting research for my PhD thesis in Sociology. The research topic centres on the experience of religious discrimination and stigma within small religious groups in Ireland.

The questionnaire attached should only take a few minutes to complete - all questions are short and most involve simply ticking the appropriate box. No specialist knowledge of any sort is required and instructions are provided with each question. The questionnaire is designed to protect your identity as neither your name nor date of birth is requested, so you can be assured of anonymity. Please place the completed questionnaire in the collection box provided. The collection box will be in place until DATE HERE. For any completed questionnaires after that date, please contact me as indicated below and I will arrange for collection. Please note that you must be over eighteen years of age to participate.

As it is the aim of this research to contact as many members of the religious community as possible, I would ask that if it is at all possible to take at least one questionnaire and have a person who has not attended this gathering to complete it. For various reasons, individuals may not be able to attend religious gatherings on a regular basis and as such can be hard to contact. **The sheet attached overleaf contains the guidelines for taking part in the project.**

It is voluntary to participate in the research project, and you have the option to withdraw from the project at any time, without having to state any reason for doing so. All information shall be treated confidentially, and will be stored securely during the course of this research. The only persons with access to the information will be my research supervisor, Dr. Carmen Kuhling and myself. Following the completion of the research project, all information will be securely destroyed.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for taking part in this research. If you have any questions, please contact me by e-mail; olivia.cosgrove@ul.ie or at the address given below. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Carmen Kuhling, at the Department of Sociology, University of Limerick by email carmen.kuhling@ul.ie or on 061-213147.

Yours sincerely,

Olivia Cosgrove

Dept of Sociology

University of Limerick
*IMPORTANT; GUIDELINES FOR TAKING PART IN THE RESEARCH

- Must be over eighteen years of age.

- Participant should live primarily in the Republic of Ireland.

- The project is looking for people who are members of a religious or spiritual group OTHER than the following: Roman Catholic Church, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist or No Religion.

- Please do not complete this questionnaire if you have already completed one at another meeting centre or over the Internet.

- If possible, please take at least one questionnaire and have a person who meets the above three guidelines complete it.
Appendix B: Cover Letter – Email Questionnaire

To whom it may concern,

Thank you for taking the time to participate in this research. I am a postgraduate student at the University of Limerick, and I am presently conducting research for my PhD thesis in Sociology. The research topic centres on the experience of religious discrimination and stigma within small religious groups in Ireland.

To take part in the survey, the following guidelines must be met;

- Please note that you must be over eighteen years of age to participate.

- Participant must be normally resident in the Republic of Ireland.

- The project is looking for people who are members of a religious or spiritual group OTHER than the following; Roman Catholic Church, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist or No Religion.

- Please do not complete this questionnaire if you have already completed one elsewhere or over the Internet.

The questionnaire attached should only take a few minutes to complete - all questions are short and most involve simply ticking the appropriate box. No specialist knowledge of any sort is required and instructions are provided with each question. The questionnaire is designed to protect your identity as neither your name nor date of birth is requested, so you can be assured of anonymity.

As it is the aim of this research to contact as many members of the religious community as possible, I would ask that if it is at all possible to forward the link to this questionnaire to one other person who has meets the three guidelines above.

It is voluntary to participate in the research project, and you have the option to withdraw from the project at any time, without having to state any reason for doing so. All information shall be treated confidentially, and will be stored securely during the course of this research. The only persons with access to the information will be my research supervisor, Dr. Brendan Halpin and myself. Following the completion of the research project, all information will be securely destroyed.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you again for taking part in this research. If you have any questions, please contact me by e-mail; olivia.cosgrove@ul.ie or at the address given below.
You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Carmen Kuhling, at the Department of Sociology, University of Limerick by email carmen.kuhling@ul.ie or on 061-213147.

*IMPORTANT; GUIDELINES FOR TAKING PART IN THE RESEARCH

- Must be over eighteen years of age.
- Participant must be normally a resident in the Republic of Ireland.
- The project is looking for people who are members of a religious or spiritual group other than the following:
  Roman Catholic Church, Church of Ireland, Presbyterian, Methodist or No Religion.
- Please do not complete this questionnaire if you have already completed one elsewhere or over the Internet.
Appendix C: Changes in Social Distance towards Religious Categories (1972-73, 1988-89, 2007-08)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>National Sample MSD</th>
<th>Dublin Subsample MSD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Roman Catholic</td>
<td>1972-1973</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988-1989</td>
<td>1.06</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protestants</td>
<td>1972-1973</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988-1989</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>1.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>1972-1973</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988-1989</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atheists</td>
<td>1972-1973</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988-1989</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agnostics</td>
<td>1972-1973</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>2.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988-1989</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>1972-1973</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988-1989</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hare Krishna</td>
<td>1972-1973</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>4.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1988-1989</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007-2008</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"In-Groups" or those favoured by the respondents show a score of 1.500 or lower. The groups which score above 1.500 are viewed as "out-groups" which the greater the figure indicating the greater desired social distance from that group (MacGreil 2011, p.61).
1. Please indicate your religious affiliation.

(PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>Box</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BAHAI</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAPTIST</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BORN AGAIN CHRISTIAN</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUDDHIST</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHURCH OF IRELAND</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHURCH OF SCIENTOLOGY</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DRUID</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HINDU</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JEWISH</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LANDMARK/ THE FORUM</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAGNIFICANT MEAL MOVEMENT</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MUSLIM</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAGAN</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PENTECOSTAL / EVANGELICAL</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESBYTERIAN/METHODIST</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QUAKER</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RAELIAN</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROMAN CATHOLIC</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIKHISM</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRANSCENDENTAL MEDITATION</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNITARIAN</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WICCAN</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHRISTIAN – OTHER DENOMINATIONS</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEW AGE – OTHER DENOMINATIONS</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO RELIGION</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER (PLEASE SPECIFY)</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q. 2 Please indicate your place of origin

(PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY)

IRISH .................................................................................................................. ☐ 1
OTHER EUROPEAN .......................................................................................... ☐ 2
NORTH AMERICAN ......................................................................................... ☐ 3
CANADIAN ......................................................................................................... ☐ 4
AFRICAN ............................................................................................................. ☐ 5
ASIAN ................................................................................................................... ☐ 6
AUSTRALIAN ....................................................................................................... ☐ 7
NEW ZEALANDER .............................................................................................. ☐ 8
OTHER .................................................................................................................. ☐ 9

Q. 3 Please indicate your ethnic background

(PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY)

WHITE IRISH ..................................................................................................... ☐ 1
WHITE IRISH TRAVELLER .................................................................................. ☐ 2
ANY OTHER WHITE BACKGROUND .................................................................. ☐ 3
BLACK OR BLACK IRISH - AFRICAN ................................................................. ☐ 4
BLACK OR BLACK IRISH – ANY OTHER BLACK BACKGROUND ..................... ☐ 5
ASIAN OR ASIAN IRISH - CHINESE .................................................................. ☐ 6
ASIAN OR ASIAN IRISH - INDIAN ...................................................................... ☐ 7
ASIAN OR ASIAN IRISH – ANY OTHER ASIAN BACKGROUND ..................... ☐ 8
ANY OTHER BACKGROUND (INCLUDING MIXED BACKGROUND) .................... ☐ 9

Q. 4 Please indicate your gender

MALE ...................................................................................................................... ☐ 1,
FEMALE ............................................................................................................... ☐ 2,
Q. 5

Discrimination takes place when one person or a group of persons are treated less favourably than others because of their gender, marital status, family status, age, disability, ‘race’ – skin colour or ethnic group, sexual orientation, religious belief, and/or membership of the Traveller community.

Discrimination can occur in situations such as where a person or persons is/are refused access to a service, to a job, or is/are treated less favourably at work. In other words, discrimination means treating people differently, negatively or adversely because they are for instance Asian, Muslim, over 50 years of age, a single parent, and/or homosexual.

If the reason you may have been treated less favourably than someone else is due to another reason (such as your qualifications, being over an income limit or because you are further back in a queue for something) this does not constitute discrimination. (Russell at al., 2010)

In the past five years, have you personally felt discriminated against due to your religious affiliation?

YES ................................................................................................................................. ☐ 1,
NO ................................................................................................................................. ☐ 2,
NOT SURE .................................................................................................................... ☐ 3,

Q.6. How would you best describe the effects of discrimination had on you?

Please tick NOT APPLICABLE to this question if you answered NO to Question 5 above.

(PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY)

VERY DISTRESSING ..................................................................................................... ☐ 1,
QUITE DISTRESSING ............................................................................................... ☐ 2,
NOT SURE .................................................................................................................... ☐ 3,
A LITTLE DISTRESSING ............................................................................................ ☐ 4,
NOT DISTRESSING AT ALL .......................................................................................... ☐ 5,
NOT APPLICABLE ........................................................................................................ ☐ -9.
Q.7 How many times in the past FIVE years have you experienced religious discrimination?

(PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY)

NEVER ................................................................................................................
ONCE ....................................................................................................................
TWO TO FOUR OCCASIONS ...............................................................................
FIVE TO TEN OCCASIONS ............................................................................... 
MORE THAN TEN OCCASIONS ........................................................................ 
NOT SURE ............................................................................................................

Q.8 Where did this discrimination take place? (Please indicate all which)

IN THE WORKPLACE ...........................................................................................
WHILE SEEKING WORK ..................................................................................
WHILE IN SHOPS, PUBS OR RESTAURANTS ..................................................
IN RELATION TO THE SERVICES OF BANKS OR OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS ....
IN RELATION TO EDUCATION AT ANY LEVEL ..................................................
WHILE LOOKING FOR HOUSING/ACCOMMODATION ......................................
ACCESSING TRANSPORT SERVICES ..............................................................
WHILE ACCESSING OTHER PUBLIC SERVICES ...............................................
WITHIN OTHER SOCIAL GROUPS (E.G. PARENT OR COMMUNITY GROUPS) ..... 
WITHIN YOUR FAMILY ...................................................................................... 
FRIENDS/ACQUAINANCES ..............................................................................
ELSEWHERE ......................................................................................................
Q. 9 In your opinion, which best describes the public perception of small religious groups such as yours in today's Ireland.

(PLEASE TICK ONE BOX ONLY)

VERY POSITIVE ....................................................................................................................... ☐
SOMewhat POSITIVE .................................................................................................................. ☐
NOT SURE .................................................................................................................................. ☐
SOMewhat NEGATIVE .................................................................................................................. ☐
VERY NEGATIVE .......................................................................................................................... ☐
NOT SURE .................................................................................................................................. ☐

Q. 10 In your opinion, which factor has most influence on the public opinion of small religious groups in Ireland?

(Please write your answer below)

......................................................................................................................................................
......................................................................................................................................................
......................................................................................................................................................
......................................................................................................................................................

Q. 11 Have you ever concealed your religious affiliation?

YES ....................................................................................................................................................
NO .....................................................................................................................................................
NOT SURE ........................................................................................................................................

Q. 10 Please indicate where this concealing of your religious affiliation occurred.

(Please tick all which apply)
Q.12 Please indicate where you concealed your religious identity. Please tick all locations which apply.

IN THE WORKPLACE ..............................................................................................................

WHILE SEEKING WORK ........................................................................................................

WHILE IN SHOPS, PUBS OR RESTAURANTS ........................................................................

IN RELATION TO THE SERVICES OF BANKS OR OTHER FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS ....

IN RELATION TO EDUCATION AT ANY LEVEL ......................................................................

WHILE LOOKING FOR HOUSING/ACCOMMODATION ..........................................................

ACCESSING TRANSPORT SERVICES ....................................................................................

WHILE ACCESSING OTHER PUBLIC SERVICES ......................................................................

WITHIN OTHER SOCIAL GROUPS (E.G. PARENT OR COMMUNITY GROUPS) ..............

WITHIN YOUR FAMILY ...........................................................................................................

FRIENDS/ACQUAINTANCES .................................................................................................

ELSEWHERE ............................................................................................................................