Perceptions of death amongst Swedish teenagers

A mixed methods study

Anna Row
coffianne@hotmail.com
Abstract

The absence or presence of death in the public discourse has been on the death studies agenda for a long time. Although the tone of this debate was once set by writers who bemoaned the hidden nature of contemporary death and the unhealthy, dishonest modern death ways, recent research has focused on death’s re-emergence into public discourse, not least via mass and social media. This study aims to contribute to the debate by mapping teenagers’ perceptions of death and the process by which they arrive at them. Furthermore, this study looks into religion’s role in this process. This is a relevant aspect considering that the Church of Sweden is still responsible for funeral organization, despite the 2000 church/state split. This mixed methods study combines data from a survey of three upper secondary schools in three different Swedish cities with data from semi-structured interviews with students from each of the three schools. Socialization theory (more specifically death socialization) and unpacked religion are used to analyse what shapes the teenagers’ perceptions of death. The author concludes that although the teenagers are well aware of the presence of death in media, this presence does not shape the way they think about death. Death socialization instead takes place in the primary group and only in connection to primary group deaths. The religious funeral remains important to the teenagers, but it is disconnected from their personal beliefs and primarily important as a tradition.

Key words: death, death socialization, socialization theory, unpacked religion, funerals
Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction ............................................................................................................. 1
  1.1 Aim and purpose .............................................................................................................. 2
  1.2 Problem .......................................................................................................................... 2
  1.3 Key concepts, limitations and delimitations ................................................................. 2
  1.4 Death in Sweden ........................................................................................................... 4

2 Previous research and theory .............................................................................................. 6
  2.1 Literature review ........................................................................................................... 6
  2.2 Theory ............................................................................................................................ 9
    2.2.1 Socialization ............................................................................................................ 9
    2.2.2 Unpacked religion ................................................................................................. 10
  2.3 Application of theory ................................................................................................. 10

3 Methodology and material ................................................................................................. 12
  3.1 Method ........................................................................................................................ 12
    3.1.1 Survey .................................................................................................................. 13
    3.1.2 Interviews ............................................................................................................ 13
    3.1.3 Ethical considerations ......................................................................................... 15
  3.2 Material ....................................................................................................................... 15
    3.2.1 Quantitative material ......................................................................................... 16
    3.2.2 Qualitative material ........................................................................................... 17

4 Results ............................................................................................................................... 19
  4.1 Survey ........................................................................................................................ 19
    4.1.1 Background factors .............................................................................................. 19
    4.1.2 Questions about religion ..................................................................................... 20
    4.1.3 Questions about death ......................................................................................... 22
    4.1.4 Differences between the cities ........................................................................... 24
    4.1.5 Quantitative analysis ......................................................................................... 26
  4.2 Interviews .................................................................................................................... 28
    4.2.1 What is death? ........................................................................................................ 28
    4.2.2 Contact area .......................................................................................................... 31
    4.2.3 The funeral ............................................................................................................ 35
    4.2.4 Qualitative analysis ............................................................................................. 40
  4.3 Conclusions .................................................................................................................. 44

5 Discussion ......................................................................................................................... 46
  Discussion of theory ......................................................................................................... 46
  Discussion on methodology .............................................................................................. 47
  Suggestions for further research ....................................................................................... 48

Summary .............................................................................................................................. 49

Bibliography ....................................................................................................................... 51

Appendices ......................................................................................................................... 53
  1:1 Interview sheet .......................................................................................................... 53
List of Tables

Table 1 Geographical distribution (Frequency and percentage) .......................... 16
Table 2 Distribution between vocational and academic programmes (Frequency and percentage) ................................................................. 16
Table 3 Year of birth per city surveyed compared to total number of respondents (%) (N=165) ........................................................................................................ 16
Table 4 Areas where respondents come into contact with religion: survey total compared to Religion som Resurs? (%) (N=165) ................................................................. 20
Table 5 Frequency of confirmation: survey total compared to Religion som Resurs? (%) (N=165) ........................................................................................................ 20
Table 6 Religious affiliation: survey total compared to Religion som Resurs? (%) (N=165) ........................................................................................................ 21
Table 7 Factors that influence life philosophy: survey total compared to Religion som Resurs? (%) (N=165) ...................................................................................... 21
Table 8 Area through which respondents have come into contact with questions about death: survey total (%) (N=165) ........................................................................ 22
Table 9 Factors who influence respondents’ view of death: survey total (%) (N=165) .............................................................................................. 22
Table 10 Close confidants relative to questions about death: survey total (%) (N=165) .............................................................................................. 23
Table 11 Agreement with statements: survey total (%) (N=165) .............................................................................................. 23
Table 12 How often do respondents think about death? (%) (N=165) .............................................................................................. 24
Table 13 Frequency of confirmation by surveyed city compared to survey total and Religion som Resurs? (%) ........................................................................................................ 25
Chapter 1 Introduction

When Geoffrey Gorer wrote his famous article *The Pornography of Death* in 1955, he argued that death had replaced sex as the great taboo. Natural death was now hidden from public consciousness, leaving only a pornography of death – the violent, fantastic death portrayed in mass media – in its wake. He complained that where children were once encouraged to think about the grim realities of death and dying, they are now told that those who have died are changed into flowers or lie at rest in lovely gardens. He links the shift to religion: with fewer believers in the traditional Christian doctrine on death (particularly the resurrection of the body (see Bäckström, 1992)), the thought of natural death and decomposition has become too horrible to consider.

*The pornography of death* is a frequently quoted article and a much-used phrase (see amongst many others Hanusch, 2008; Valentine, 2006; Field, 2010) and it essentially set the tone for much of the following sociological debate on death. It is typically used to discuss the way dying, death and mourning has been effectively relegated from the public to the private realm and the potential pathology of this.

This study picks up on two strands from Gorer’s text. First, there is the connection he makes between attitudes towards religion and attitudes towards death. Despite the 2000 separation between state and church, 81% of funerals in Sweden take place in the Church of Sweden (Fonus, 2011) and an additional 10% in other religious contexts. Although Sweden lacks a state church and although Sweden is often described as one of the world’s most secular countries (Edgardh, 2011), the move towards funerals in non-religious settings is very slow indeed. However, this slow move is at least not entirely a result of lazy complacency. Swedish research has shown that the religious funeral is important even for those who do not see themselves as religious (Davidsson Bremborg, 2002; Bäckström, 1992; Gustafsson, 2000; Bäckström, Edgardh, & Pettersson, 2004; Winther, 2013). Unfortunately, few studies have looked into why this is from the perspective of non-religious people and their attitudes towards religious funerals.

The second strand is the way Gorer laments how death has become unmentionable in polite society and hidden away from (particularly) children. In contemporary Sweden, where children and young people (and even adults) have little experience of what Gorer calls ‘natural death’, how are their perceptions of death shaped? This study approaches the question from a point of view of death socialization, asking what the participants feel have influenced them. It also, in the light of the number of funerals still taking place in a religious context, considers religion’s roll (particularly via funerals) in the death socialization process. The funeral is an opportunity for churches to meet those people who rarely otherwise attend them (Aggedal, 2003; Davie, 2007), which opens up the possibility of a sort of religious socialization relative to death in a context where religious socialization is otherwise weak or even non-existent (Sjöborg, 2012: 107).
A person’s late teens is typically the time of life when they try to formulate an independent stance on existential matters (Frisén, 2006). As such, teenagers are useful indicators of current attitudes.

1.1 Aim and purpose

The aim of this study is to identify what perceptions of death are expressed by the study’s participants, their opinion of how these perceptions are shaped and if religion is a relevant factor in this. For this purpose, a survey has been conducted to find out where and how often the respondents come into contact with questions of death, who and/or what they feel influences the way they think about death, who they confide in about death. Additionally, interviews have been undertaken with a small number of informants, during which these issues have been further explored.

The purpose of the study is to contribute to the on-going discussion on the visibility of death by looking at where the participants experience that they come into contact with death. I want to lift death socialization as a meaningful approach to understanding the way young people think about death and what factors shape their perceptions. Using death socialization as well as Ina Rosen’s concept unpacked religion, I will also analyse if and how religion – with particular emphasis on the religious funeral – play a part in this.

1.2 Problem

The fundamental question addressed in this thesis is this:

What perceptions of death are expressed in the material?

The study additionally aims to answer the following questions:

How and where do the study’s participants perceive that death socialization occur? What role does religion (particularly via the funeral) play in this?

1.3 Key concepts, limitations and delimitations

The subject explored in this study – death – as well as the group explored – teenagers – are so general that they border on the nondescript. The primary reason for this is that where most studies focus on a particular aspect of death (young people and death anxiety (Lyke, 2013), young people and grief communication via Facebook (Pennington, 2013), etc.) this study sets out to find out how and where young people themselves experience that they come across questions of death – whether through media, school, family, etc.. The problem was thus generously formulated in order to allow for significant flexibility in the findings.
It seems impossible to write anything within the sociology of religion without first of all defining religion itself. It is of no consequence for the enquiry of this study whether there is any ‘truth’ in any particular religious belief. The question of death, of course, brings with it questions of an afterlife. The design of such an afterlife is likely to affect the context of how death is dealt with amongst the living and thus form the framework in which the participants of this study learn what death is. However, it is the expression of such a belief that is of relevance here, not the accuracy, as it were, of it. It is a form of what Berger (1967) called methodological atheism.

From a point of view of funeral organization and how religion enters into this, it is of use to borrow Walter’s (2005) division of such organization into three types: commercial, municipal and religious. In this division, a religious type of funeral organization is one where the church is responsible for many of the functions that could just as well be taken care of by commercial or municipal interests. With the exception of the municipalities of Stockholm and Tranås, it is the Church of Sweden that holds responsibility for making sure that burial grounds as well as venues for funeral services are available. It is arguably an institutionalized form of religious funeral organization. The duty to organize burial place and appropriate venue extends to those who opt out of a religious service.

Part of the problem that this study addresses concerns the question of how religion affects the participants’ perceptions of death. This means that religion itself comes under scrutiny. To untangle the participants’ perceptions from the institutionalized religious funeral organization described above, I have used Ina Rosen’s (2009) concept unpacked religion. This term will be further presented in the chapters on literature and theory below, but the key point is to consider different aspects of religion and religious expression without presuming that they share a common core. Rosen ‘unpacks’ religion into belief, routinized religion, religion-as-heritage, practice and tradition.

Teenagers is a convenient misnomer for the group whose perceptions of death is the subject of this thesis. It is not inaccurate per se, but misleadingly broad. The group studied are students at gymnasieskolan, roughly the equivalent of the British upper secondary school. Though uncommon, not all teenagers enter into upper secondary education. Those who do not are not included in this thesis. The somewhat more specific group ‘upper secondary students’ is still very broad. The character of this group varies enormously with regards to ethnic/religious background, gender, socioeconomic status, even age, depending on which school or programme is considered. Upper secondary education in Sweden is divided into two main categories: vocational programmes and academic programmes. The vocational programme prepares students for specific areas of employment, whereas the academic programme prepares students for further education.

The primary reason for including students from both vocational and academic programmes in this study is to make the material more representative, not to make a comparison between the two. It is a way of ensuring that the study represents ‘upper secondary students’, rather than ‘upper secondary students at an academic programme’.

Death is another imprecise term in need of definition. Zygmunt Bauman describes in the introductory chapter of his book *Mortality, Immortality and other Life Strategies* (1992; 1994: 2) how everyone knows exactly what death is until asked to define the way we ‘understand’ it. This study is not a philosophical treatise on the nature of death and dying. The teenagers have not been asked to define
death, and as a result, perhaps, there have been no problems talking to them about death. It does not affect the study’s relevance in addressing the problem that death is not specifically defined. If anything, a broad definition has been necessary to allow the informants a level of freedom in their answers. The interview questions have been intentionally unspecific in their formulations to avoid suggestion.

Death does not just need definition but also delimitation. Many academic studies of bereavement limit the scope to a specific type of death, for instance via suicide (Wertheimer, 2001) or AIDS (Wright & Coyle, 1996). In this study, the distinction between different types of death matters in as much as the study is not limited to any specific type of death.

The very allowing definition of death in this study also includes deaths of people who were not personally known to the participants. Death in news media, for example, or the death of celebrities or even characters on television or in books are all examples of how death appears in the life of teenagers and how this might contribute to shaping their perceptions of death. It should be stressed again that this is not a study of bereavement as far as it has been possible to separate death and bereavement, but of how and where teenagers come across death and how they think about it.

Attention will be paid to teenagers’ perceptions of death. That is, the process of becoming or state of being aware of death. It needs pointing out that the death that teenagers are aware of is not necessarily their own but also others’. Their perceptions of death in society are equally relevant for this study as any perceptions they have of what it means to die. Furthermore, the rites and conventions of death might be the context within which the teenagers in this study become aware of death, but the rites themselves are not the subject of this thesis.

1.4 Death in Sweden

The geographical limitations of this study were briefly mentioned in the section above. This section will more clearly situate the study. Drawing on other sources than my own empirical material, I will give a brief introduction to the place of death in Sweden. This picture should not be seen as part of the answer to the research problem, but rather as an effort to more specifically place the study as well as limit it.

It was previously mentioned that 81% of funerals in Sweden still take place in the context of the Church of Sweden. An additional 10% take place in other religious contexts. About 9% of funerals are non-confessional (borgerliga). British sociologist and one of the most well-known names in the field of death studies Tony Walter has asked the relevant question why it is that in secular Sweden the church owns most of the cemeteries, while in religious Italy they are owned by the municipality (Walter, 2005). Although church and state separated in 2000, the Church of Sweden has maintained almost all responsibility for administration and organization of funerals. Walter carefully remarks on how this is an institutional religious model, compared to the cultural religiosity of for instance southern Europe.

Though most of the administrative issues surrounding a death are dealt with by the Church of Sweden, funeral directing is commercial. However, funeral directors often function as interpreters of the family’s wishes and in this capacity they
have contact with the church – as most families (despite not being active churchgoers) – want a Christian funeral (Davidsson Bremborg, 2002).

The link between religion and death goes above and beyond the fact that the Church of Sweden is responsible for a vast majority of funerals and own almost all cemeteries in Sweden. Religion has traditionally provided answers to existential questions, such as what happens to an individual after death. This more than anything shows the change of the circumstances surrounding a death. In his study of Swedish funeral customs, Bäckström (1992) remarks on the discrepancy between funeral customs and funeral orders. He points particularly to the shift from thoughts of resurrection to thoughts of immortality.

The Swedish curriculum for upper secondary school does not explicitly mention death, but the guidelines for religious education state that the subject deals with the way people ‘formulate and relate to ethical and existential questions’ (Skolverket, 2011). It also mentions but does not specify that a student in upper secondary education in Sweden should be aware of traditions and beliefs associated with different religions. Such traditions and beliefs might very well include beliefs relative to death and traditions relative to funerals.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the average age of death in Sweden is 82 years for women and 77 for men and infant mortality rates are the lowest in the world (Nationalencyklopedin).
2 Previous research and theory

Although the argument of this thesis builds on the material collected via a survey and subsequent interviews, it also draws on previous studies. The following chapter places this study in a context of previous research and theory.

2.1 Literature review

Death is a growing area of research – in Sweden and elsewhere – and the body of literature on the subject is vast. Death studies are not only multidisciplinary in the sense of drawing from a range of academic disciplines (cultural studies, anthropology, sociology, theology, psychology, etc.), but also in the sense of bringing together academic research, practical work and public interest (Høeg & Pajari, 2013).

One of the core issues of debate within death studies is the visibility of death. Since Gorer wrote about the pornography of death (1955), much research has supported the notion that death – if it is seen at all – is seen only in its pornographic form. Natural death is hidden away in hospitals, hospices and care homes. Philippe Ariès wrote a history of death in the Western world from the Middle Ages to present time (Ariès, 1974). His conclusion is that where death was once ‘tamed’, it is now hidden and characterized by lying. A dying person is kept unaware of their state for as long as possible, meaning that he or she is not given the time to properly prepare for death. Historically, there was an art to dying, and, as Ariès writes, people were as ‘familiar with death as they were familiarized with the idea of their own death’ (1974: 25). Ariès draws mainly on representations of death in art and literature. Both Ariès and Gorer romanticize the death ways of the past as well as exaggerate the psychological benefits of them. Though they were (and are still) both hugely influential in the field, few if any contemporary researchers support the notion that death is taboo. Instead death is talked about as private or sequestrated (see Giddens, 1991).

Many studies approach death and dying in a comparative way. Modern death ways are compared (usually quite unfavourably) to traditional ones; modern death is juxtaposed to postmodern death and so forth. Though excellent from a historical perspective, these studies are usually limited in their geographical scope (Walter, 2005). Studies such as that of Ariès (1974) make a clear case of the historical differences, whilst covering up geographical diversity by calling it simply ‘Western’.

The previously mentioned article by Walter (2005) attempts to rectify this and presents three ideal types of funeral organization: commercial, municipal and religious. Sweden serves as example of institutionally religious funeral organization. Walter also briefly and anecdotally touches upon the deep-rooted ideas of how to deal with a person’s ashes: a Swedish student of his was amazed that Britons can do what they like with the ashes; the British students were appalled that in Sweden, the ashes are effectively owned by the cemetery. The example highlights why
it is problematic to make too sweeping geographical generalizations, when there are in fact significant and deep-felt differences between various ‘Western’ countries.

Ariès, as well as other writers (for instance Howarth, 2007) have noted how death and dying is no longer controlled by the dying individual him- or herself. This is not only an issue relative to the process of dying. Much recent research has been dedicated to the funeral and the growing trend of secularization and personalization (Walter, 2005; Venbrux, Peelen & Altena, 2009; Denison, 1999; Holloway, Adamson, Argyrou, Draper & Mariau, 2013; Emke, 2002). In their 2013 article entitled “Funerals aren’t nice but it couldn’t have been nicer”. The makings of a good funeral, Holloway et al. reports on a qualitative study of 46 funerals in the north of England and it shows ‘little evidence of adherence to formal religious belief systems or wider philosophical frameworks amongst the bereaved families but considerable evidence of drawing on religious tradition and specific beliefs to locate personal meaning-making’. They conclude that the funeral remains a ‘significant ceremonial event which is psycho-social-spiritual in character and purpose’.

Anders Bäckström conducted a study in 1992 of Swedish funeral practices and the way they have changed. He concludes that although the Swedish funeral practice within the Church of Sweden has changed, this change is statistically almost invisible. Writing from a perspective of the order of funerals of the Church of Sweden, he spots a possible dissonance between official religion and the religious ideas of the majority of Swedish citizens. The funeral order of today tends towards the personal and his study suggests that in those elements of a Church of Sweden funeral service that allow it, the priest typically try to adjust to the specifics of the situation they encounter. The funeral order of today is also more personal and the content focuses more clearly on comfort, promise and hope.

Perhaps the most well-known researcher on death and funerals in Sweden today is Anna Davidsson-Bremborg. Her 2002 dissertation concerns the work of funeral directors and the way they influence rites around the deceased. The study touches upon the duality of funeral directing, where on the one hand the funeral director deals directly with dead bodies and is therefore considered ‘strange’ and ‘dirty’, but on the other hand is respected for his or her professionalism and expertise. Through field studies as well as interviews with 32 funeral directors, Davidsson-Bremborg has collected data that is both comprehensive and fascinating. It touches upon the practicalities of dealing with everything from dead bodies to the grieving friends and relatives who arrange the funeral, to the rites surrounding the funeral. Apart from the practical aspects of death and the considerations that are particular to the funeral directors, the study makes apparent the views and ideas of society at large via the way the funeral directors talk about their experiences.

A search for articles or books on death socialization does not generate much at all. A search for ‘socialization’ in the popular death studies journal Mortality draws up eleven hits – none of which has the word in the title. Even a Google search does not bring up much. A 1980 article in Population and Environment by Lynn D. Nelson and Julie A. Honnold links death socialization to mortality expectations. The study finds that death socialization can influence subjective life expectancy (SLE) and how the mean SLE of women exposed to same-sex death is markedly lower than that of men or women exposed to opposite-sex death. The results, they write, “underscore the significance of perceived similarity for obser-
vational learning’. Despite this, it may be that death socialization has not been a useful concept for death researchers as it is so infrequently used.

In a 2008 article in Mortality, Folker Hanusch remarks how the presence or absence of death in the public discourse has dominated death studies for some time. The argument that death has disappeared from public discourse to be hidden away in the private realm is increasingly modified by the view that death has been moved back into the public discourse – not least via mass media. As mentioned above, Ariés (1974) was firmly of the view that death had become forbidden since contemporary Western society put such emphasis on happiness, life and joy. Hanusch highlights the lack of research on the visibility of death in Western mass media in connection with the discussion on the private/public nature of death. Death is in a way ‘omni-present’ in news coverage but Hanusch explores how confrontational this coverage is. By interviewing a number of journalists, he explores how two German and two Australian newspapers cover death in terms of graphic photographs. His conclusion is that death still largely remains in the private sphere. Although, of course, the question is whether the lack of graphic imagery of death in broadsheet newspapers necessarily means that death is invisible. Hanusch also raises the relevant question what ‘we’ mean by ‘presence of death’ in the media: is it just the mention of death, or do we include how death is presented and perhaps even problematized?

Outside of the realm of death studies, this study draws heavily on two recent works in the field of sociology of religion. The first is the Religion som resurs? project, a large-scale survey of young Swedes between the ages 16 and 24, carried out in 2008. The 2012 book, edited by Mia Löveheim and Jonas Bromander, presents the results from this study and lets a number of researchers from different disciplines analyse the material. Putting religion in connection to other areas of young people’s lives, the aim of the study was to find out if and how religion function as a resource when young people formulate their values and strategies for living a meaningful and responsible life. The quantitative part of my study is based on a modified version of the Religion som resurs? survey.

The other study is Ina Rosen’s 2009 doctoral thesis entitled I’m a believer – but I’ll be damned if I’m religious. In it, she explores the religiosity of a number of people in the Greater Copenhagen area and problematizes the use of secularization theory to understand contemporary religion, particularly in Denmark. Rosen’s terminology is more flexible and bends to the apparent contradiction of a believing population in a secular country. She additionally explores the social meaning of religious ceremonies and separates tradition and practice.

The starting point for Rosen’s theory is the dissonance she perceives between the way the people she talked to during her study understand religion and the way religion is generally understood in the academic study of religion. The understanding that one would normally find in the study of religion is a ‘set of cultural ideas, values, beliefs, experiences, and practices or as a number of different dimensions, for example, ritual, mythology, sociality or intellectual, institutional, ethical, juridical, etc.’ (Rosen, 2009: 105). Rosen criticises the notion that these ideas all have a common essence. What she discovered in her focus groups is that the informants do not think of all these aspects of religion as being, in a sense, aspects of the same unified concept but rather as a number of different categories. She uses the term packaged religion for ‘the complex of ideas, behaviours, frameworks that are all related with a common essence’ (Rosen, 2009: 105).
Amongst her focus group participants, Rosen finds no contradiction between being atheist or non-religious and being culturally Christian. The practices of such cultural Christianity (for instance christenings or weddings) have little to do with either religion or beliefs, but rather pertain to social expectations of how ‘things are done’. She mentions how Danes watch the New Year’s service on television, not necessarily as a religious ritual but rather as part of the social celebration of the new year. Additionally, it seemed that ‘belief’ did not have any practical implications beyond, possibly, prayer and good behaviour.

2.2 Theory

Two theories are used to analyse the material in this thesis: socialization theory – with particular emphasis on death socialization – and unpacked religion.

2.2.1 Socialization

Socialization is the process by which an individual – child or adult – learns from others how to adjust to a group and behave in a way that is approved by that group. Socialization of the young, Giddens (2009) writes, allows for the more general phenomenon of social reproduction – the process whereby societies have structural continuity over time. Human beings, unlike other animals, are self-aware.

Primary socialization takes place in infancy and early childhood. The child is born into a family and the family members thus become the main agents of socialization. They are significant others, providing a social world and whilst doing so modifying it (Berger & Luckmann, 1966:2003: 155). A child is shaped by the particular circumstances in which it is brought up (e.g. social class or religion), but also by the particular quirks of its primary carers (e.g. parents).

Giddens (2009) points out that despite variations in the exact shape and form of a ‘family’, and despite how many women nowadays are employed outside of the home and return to work relatively soon after childbirth, the family normally remains the major agency of socialization, from infancy to adolescence and beyond – in a sequence of development connecting the generations. A primary group is also an entity with close and diffuse relationships between its members, unlike the more goal-oriented and defined relationships found in the secondary groups (schools, work-places) where secondary socialization takes place (Furseth & Repstad, 2003: 156). The socialization that takes place in school is both formal, in the form of the curriculum, and informal, in the more subtle form of expected behaviour as well as norms dictated by peer groups.

Agencies of socialization are groups or social context in which significant processes of socialization occur (Giddens, 2009). The family is one such agency, school is another, as well as peer groups and mass media. An individual learns the rules and norms of their social context via these agencies.
2.2.1.1 Death socialization

Death socialization is not a commonly used term. The article by Lynn D. Nelson and Julie A. Honnold (1980) is the only one I have been able to find where death socialization is a central concept. In the Nelson & Honnold article, death socialization essentially means death exposure (the loss of someone in your primary group). In this study, the term has been widened to allow the informants to name what they see as important socialization agencies (as defined above), whether family, media or similar.

2.2.2 Unpacked religion

Ina Rosen’s study has already been presented in the literature review. The central point of it is the inadequacy of existing theories to explain contemporary religiosity. Rosen’s solution is the term *unpacked religion*, meaning the disentangling of the various aspects of religion and belief without restricting them by a common core. Rosen ‘unpacks’ religion into five different categories: belief, routinized religion, religion-as-heritage, tradition and practice. She briefly defines them in this way:

Beliefs are developed through individual life experiences and are actualized ad hoc and contextually. They are understood by my focus groups as personal, private, and in the event that they are expressed through practice, this most commonly takes place as inner prayer rather than in outwardly visible forms. A tradition, such as it is understood by my focus group participants is something one does because it is expected, because it has always been done, or because it makes social sense. Religion-as-heritage is understood by my participants to be a cultural expression, a shared background stemming from a shared religious history of values, ideas and norms. Routinized religion pertains to the organization, institution and religious system of beliefs and practices. Traditions and religion-as-heritage are aspects of socially shared life, whereas belief and frequently also practice is not. (Rosen, 2009: 129)

Routinized religion and religion-as-heritage has much in common on the surface, but whereas routinized religion involves both church and a set of beliefs, religion-as-heritage removes the religious content from the religious form. One of Rosen’s (non-religious) informants compares attending a christening in church with attending a child’s birthday party – rather than connecting the christening with other church services, thinking of it as a social event rather than a religious one.

Her theory has been used as an analytical tool in a Swedish context before (see Jarnkvist, 2011) and taking it from its original Danish context to apply to a Swedish context has been unproblematic.

2.3 Application of theory

The question of teenagers’ perceptions of death is essentially descriptive and requires little theory. For an indication of how this question has been restricted, I refer to the chapter on definitions, limitations and delimitations, above.
Socialization theory and death socialization will be used to understand when and how perceptions of death are shaped, while recognizing that it is a long-term and on-going process. Viewing the dead body, whether prior to the funeral service or as part of it (via an open casket), is unusual in Sweden today, and many people are quite old before they see a dead body for the first time. Additionally, children are typically thought to need protection of the grim realities of death and funerals. This means that death socialization could potentially be a long-term process, even more so than socialization in more general terms. Formative exposures to death sometimes stretch well into adulthood. Furthermore, the study considers other areas of socialization, such as social media, the education system and so forth, as well as religious socialization via church funerals.

As such a vast majority of funerals still take place in a religious context, it is relevant to ask what role religion plays in death socialization. Does religion shape the way teenagers think about death? That most funerals take place in church is indisputable. This does not automatically give the funeral any religious significance in the mind of the teenager. To untangle what the teenagers say about religion relative to death, I will use Ina Rosen’s concept *unpacked religion*. However the religious aspect of death socialization is not necessarily limited to the funeral, but also includes thoughts of an afterlife. Rosen’s theory will be used to look at this as well.
3 Methodology and material

3.1 Method

This is a *mixed methods study*, specifically what Creswell (2009: 14) refers to as a *sequential mixed methods procedure*, meaning that ‘the researcher seeks to elaborate on or expand on the findings of one method with another method’. The advantage of a mixed methods design is the possibility to somewhat circumnavigate the limitations of either an exclusively quantitative or qualitative approach. There are many ways to combine methods, depending on the aim of the study. This study combines a (quantitative) survey with (qualitative) interviews. The purpose of the survey was to give a numeric description of trends in the material with regards to socialization agencies and contact areas; the purpose of the interviews was to obtain a more detailed understanding of teenagers’ views of death and their opinions on how these views were shaped. Combining the qualitative and quantitative data, allowed me to gain a more exhaustive understanding of my topic.

The mixed methods approach brings with it particular challenges. The time it takes to collect and analyse two types of data is the most obvious challenge for a thesis on this level. I have worked with this thesis part time over nearly two years, and this has made it possible for me to revisit research sites as well as doing the analysing work in stages. Additionally, the mixed methods approach ultimately means an extent of prioritizing width over depth, not least in the analysis stage.

Mixed methods studies also raise the question of *when* and *how* the mixing occurs. In this study, the methods are connected between a data analysis of the first phase of (quantitative) research and the data collection of the second phase of (qualitative) research, then analysed separately and brought together in the conclusion. The ambition was to give equal weight to both parts.

The wide definition of death also gives cause for methodological considerations. Leaving death undefined has posed no particular challenges, as none of the participants have required a definition. It is worth considering that the lack of definition leaves the subject at the core of this study elusive. However, allowing the informants to think about what death means to them is an important part of exploring the research problem. Providing them with a ready definition of death would have been contrary to this aim.

Finally, there is my own role in this study and how it affects the results. Although the quantitative stage is easily replicable, it cannot be said with the same certainty that a different researcher would have gained the same responses in the interviews as I did. Interviews, particularly semi-structured or unstructured interviews, necessarily entail a level of interpretation in the moment. Even using the same interview sheet, there is no guarantee that another researcher would have asked the same follow-up questions that I did. That does not necessarily mean that
the study lacks either generalizability, validity or reliability, but it does mean that the interviewer is likely relevant for the interview results.

3.1.1 Survey

The original intention was to survey students from two different schools in Uppsala and Jönköping. Because of difficulties gaining access to schools this had to be changed to one school per city. To compensate for this, a third city was added: Enköping.

Contact with administrative staff proved useless in finding participants, as did direct contact with teachers. Instead I have contacted teachers I knew personally or whom I could be introduced to via mutual friends.

The respondents were chosen on the single criteria that they belong to the group of which I am writing: upper secondary students in Sweden. In choosing classes to survey, the only criterion was that it had to be two vocational and two academic classes from each school.

3.1.1.1 Processing the material

The surveys (see Appendix 1.3) were handed out in printed form in the classroom. I have personally handed out and collected the surveys. Once the surveys were completed, the results were put into SPSS. I have looked at the frequencies and percentages for each question, both for the individual cities as well as the total number of respondents and compared the result with the result from Religion som resurs?.

3.1.1.2 Generalizability and validity

The survey is for most parts identical to the one handed out in the Religion som resurs? project. The Religion som resurs? survey was sent out to 4000 individuals and returned by only 1316. Despite the low response rate, the reliability of the study is good (Bromander, 2012). My study’s small sample does obviously not allow for the same generalizability. It is possible to observe trends, but it would not be possible to translate the figures from sample to population without considerable caution.

3.1.2 Interviews

Finding students who were willing to be interviewed proved even more of a challenge than finding classes to survey. On the final page of the survey, the students were encouraged to leave their e-mail address if they were interested in being interviewed. Out of the 100 students who completed the survey in Uppsala and Jönköping, twelve left their e-mail address. When these twelve students were contacted at a later stage, only one was still interested. The other informants were approached directly by their respective teacher.

The procedure in Enköping was slightly different, as it took place at a later stage in the research process. The question was put to the class directly after the
survey if anyone would consider taking part in the interview. Three students volunteered and the interview followed directly on the survey.

3.1.2.1 Processing the material

The interviews were recorded with a dictaphone app on an iPad, with a traditional analogue dictaphone as back-up. I have personally transcribed every interview, as soon after the interview had taken place as possible. I have also made notes of any non-verbal communication (particularly laughter) when this has affected the way I understand what is being said.

It is not only the transition from oral conversation to text that is potentially problematic, as it removes the conversation from situatedness and contextuality (Rosen, 2009). In their book on research within the social sciences, Esaiasson et al. (2007: 65) remark on the difference in clarity between the precise language used in academic writing versus the casual, unclear spoken language. Everyday statements are put into an academic context and the meaning of what is being said needs to be ‘translated’ from everyday language to the more precise academic language.

In a final stage, extracts of the interviews have been translated from Swedish to English for reproduction in this text. This act of translation further increases the distance between the original interview situation and the presentation here of the data thus collected. I have translated the quotes myself and although the translation reflects how I understood what was being said at the time, the reader should be aware that what they are reading here is essentially an interpretation.

3.1.2.2 Generalizability and validity

The findings of the interviews that make up the qualitative part of this study can not be generalized as the sample is very small. However, on certain topics there are patterns emerging across the interviews, despite the informants having very different experiences, opinions and ideas in other respects.

The most significant problem with the sample is that the students interviewed are all students at academic programmes. In her doctoral dissertation on gender, class and sexuality, Fanny Ambjörnsson studies girls from two different upper secondary school classes: one vocational and one academic. She has chosen these different classes in order to gain access to students from different socio-economic backgrounds (Ambjörnsson, 2003: 33). She notes that the academic programme students tend to come from ‘well-ordered’ backgrounds and that their parents, compared to the parents of the vocational programme students, are more likely to be university educated. I have not been able to establish any such formal differences between the classes in my material. Students at both type of programmes come from diverse backgrounds. That is not to say that there are no differences, but what differences there are were not caught by the background factors of the survey. The problem of course is that the interview sample is not representative of the population.

Validity is the effort to bring together the theoretical level and the operational level (Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, & Wångnerud, 2007: 63). In short, whether this study is actually exploring what I say it is. This is not least complicated by the fact that ‘death’ is left essentially undefined. Esaiasson et al. (2007: 63) discuss the difference between validity of concepts and validity of results. They write that the distinction between the different types of validity can be made clear by their
respective place in the research process. The validity of concepts enters into the research process once the theoretical concepts and operational indicators are decided upon. In the case of the qualitative part of this study, the theoretical concepts were lifted straight from the survey. The interview sheet (see Appendix 1.1) was designed to further explore areas of interest that were identified via the SPSS analysis. The qualitative part expands the survey questions via the research questions. To whatever extent possible, the quantitative study validates the qualitative study.

3.1.3 Ethical considerations

Minors are a vulnerable group (Creswell, 2009: 89) and as such demand particular ethical consideration. Additionally, death is far from an unproblematic subject. These two factors combined make up the point of departure for this study’s ethical considerations.

The teachers of the surveyed classes were offered to see the survey beforehand, and the purpose of the study and how the collected material would be deal with was explained to them. The respondents were given the same information, and informed of their anonymity and given the opportunity to ask questions. The students were unambiguously informed that participation was voluntary; however, the voluntary aspect was compromised by the fact that they answered the survey during lesson time and were thus strongly, if not explicitly, encouraged to partake.

The interviews involved more thorough considerations. The informants were given a letter (Appendix 1.2) with information about the study, which they were given the opportunity to read and sign. They were given the opportunity to ask questions and informed that they were free to stop the interview at any time. After every concluded interview, the informants were asked about their experiences and if they then had any questions. The school counsellor was contacted in advance and the informants were advised to contact this person if they needed to talk about the interview.

When asked about their experiences of the interview, all informants expressed that it had been unproblematic.

3.2 Material

The empirical data that form the basis of this study consists of a survey (N=165) and interviews (N=7). All participants are students at either a vocational or academic programme at upper secondary school (gymnasieskola) in Uppsala, Jönköping or Enköping.

The cities were chosen for their different profiles. Uppsala is the fourth largest municipality in Sweden with a resident population of just over 200 000. Uppsala University is the third largest employer, after the municipality itself and Landstinget (regional service organization) (Uppsala municipality website, 2013).

Jönköping is the ninth largest municipality in Sweden and recently reached 130 000 residents. As in Uppsala, the largest employers are the municipality and the regional service organization, and third place is held by Husqvarna AB (Jönköping municipality website, 2013).
Enköping is a small town, the 57th largest in Sweden, with a population of 40,500 people. The biggest employer is the municipality, followed by the armed forces, and the regional service organization (Enköping municipality website, 2013).

39.4% of the Uppsala population have studied for at least three years after completing their upper secondary education, compared to 25% in Jönköping and 17.8% in Enköping (Statistiska Centralbyrån, SCB). The national figure is 24.8%. Jönköping has a strong free church tradition, which does not necessarily manifest itself in higher rates of formal membership, but does create opportunities for people to come into contact with various free churches and the activities they offer.

The different cities were chosen to make the material more representative, not to make a comparison. Geographical differences will therefore not be shown in the tables. Further, with such a small sample, it would be misleading to show the survey results from each individual city: it would exaggerate small differences in the material, making them look more significant than they really are. Thus the tables will only show my total sample compared to the Religion som resurs? one, and any significant geographical differences will be shown in a separate chapter.

3.2.1 Quantitative material

The respondents are unevenly distributed relative to city and type of programme, as the tables below show. This is a result of the different size of classes. Typically, academic programmes tend to have much larger classes.

Table 1 Geographical distribution (Frequency and percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jönköping</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uppsala</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enköping</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Distribution between vocational and academic programmes (Frequency and percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of programme</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic</td>
<td>102</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The age span of the respondents is quite wide – even within classes – with Enköping being the most homogenous city surveyed.
Table 3 Year of birth per city surveyed compared to total number of respondents (%) (N=165)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of birth</th>
<th>Uppsala (N=39)</th>
<th>Jönköping (N=61)</th>
<th>Enköping (N=65)</th>
<th>Total percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>35.9</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>51.3</td>
<td>47.5</td>
<td>6.2</td>
<td>32.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>90.8</td>
<td>42.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2.2 Qualitative material

The qualitative part of this study consists of four interviews: two single interviews, one interview with two informants and one with three. Each interview is between 40 and 50 minutes long. The working material has been the transcription of these interviews.

3.2.2.1 The informants

The seven informants are between 17 and 19 years old and at the time of the interview were second or third year students at an academic programme in upper secondary school.

U1 is a 19-year-old female from Uppsala. U1 is the only informant who answered the appeal on the survey – all the others were contacted by their respective teacher. U1’s father is of Middle Eastern origin and her mother is from Sweden. Religiously, she identifies as agnostic.

U2 is an 18-year-old male from Uppsala. His father comes from an Eastern European country and his mother is from Sweden. He is baptized in the Orthodox Church that is the state church of his father’s country of origin, but he is ‘absolutely not a believer’, or ‘religious in any way’, even though he is ‘maybe not an atheist either’.

J1 is an 18-year-old female from Jönköping. Her father is from a Mediterranean country and her mother is from Sweden. She has been ‘brought up as a Christian’ but is reluctant to say that she adheres to any particular religion. However, she does believe in a higher power or energy.

J2 is a 17-year-old female and a classmate of J1’s. Both her parents come from Sweden. She says that she has not been brought up with a religion so much as a tradition – in this case the Church of Sweden. She cites Christmas and end-of-term ceremonies in church as examples of this. Like J1, she believes in a higher power or energy, but not in a god.
E1 is an 18-year-old male from Enköping. Both his parents are native Swedes and he describes himself as having a ‘Christian background’ within the Church of Sweden. Relative to his beliefs, he says that ‘one has to believe in something, otherwise you wouldn’t get out of bed in the morning’, but he does not expand on what this ‘something’ is.

E2 is an 18-year-old male and a classmate of E1’s. His parents are both native Swedes and his religious background is Church of Sweden. Though he believes in ‘parts of’ Christianity, he does not want to call himself a believer.

E3 is an 18-year-old male, and a classmate of E1 and E2. Like them, he has native Swedish parents and his religious background is the Church of Sweden. He agrees with E2 on his relationship to Christianity, and says that he ‘does not call himself a Christian’.
4 Results

4.1 Survey

4.1.1 Background factors

The respondents were asked a number of background questions. Over all, the results are very similar to those of Religion som resurs?. The biggest differences between my data and the Religion som resurs? data is the percentage of students whose mothers have not studied beyond secondary school. The fact that the data for my study is collected amongst upper secondary school students and the Religion som resurs? data is collected amongst 16-24-year-olds regardless of their educational status possibly accounts for this difference as parents’ educational level is one of the most important background factors – if not the most important – for students’ achievements (Skolverket, 2006).

The students were also asked about the environment in which they were brought up. A smaller percentage than in Religion som resurs? report growing up in homes with a keen interest in current affairs, involvement in clubs and associations, and a keen literary interest. There are no remarkable differences between the cities surveyed, apart from the question of religious faith (see chapter 4.1.4, below).

The next question concerned life situation, and the respondents were asked to rate their agreement with a number of statements. Whereas the first five statements were optimistic (for instance, ‘I have sufficient opportunities to affect my life situation’), the last five were more pessimistic (for instance, ‘I feel that I am not good enough’). Looking only at the number of respondents who agree with any given statement, the optimistic statements score quite high and the pessimistic statements quite low, giving the impression that the respondents generally have a positive outlook on life.

Next, the students were asked to rate the importance of a number of suggested factors for living a good life. Friends (96%), family (93%), self-confidence (92%) and good health (90%) score the highest. All four score 97% in the Religion som resurs? study.

Teenagers’ involvement in clubs and associations is decreasing (Lövheim & Sjöborg, 2006: 12). Compared to the Religion som resurs? data, the respondents in this survey are quite active in clubs and associations.
4.1.2 Questions about religion

The most common way for teenagers come into contact with religion is school (66%). This is unsurprising as religious education is a compulsory part of the curriculum for all programmes. It should however be noted that the survey does not explicitly say whether a respondent has come into contact with religion in class or for example via classmates or a school chaplain.

The second most common contact area is television (56%). Again, the survey does not say anything about the particulars of this contact area. Is it contact via a televised service? A religious character in a soap opera? News reports of a religiously motivated conflict? Television is closely followed by internet (55%). Many of the other questions in the survey show the importance that respondents attribute close relations. Considering religious contact areas, we find ‘friends’ on fourth place (47%). Church (or other place of worship) scores the lowest.

Table 4 Areas where respondents come into contact with religion: survey total compared to Religion som Resurs? (%)(N=165)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact area</th>
<th>Total percentage</th>
<th>Religion som Resurs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church, mosque, etc.</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of the number of respondents who are not confirmed, the figure is rather similar to the Religion som Resurs? one: 44% of respondents in this survey compared to 49% of respondents in Religion som Resurs?. The differences between Church of Sweden confirmations and confirmations in other congregations can be explained by geographical particularities, see table 13.

Table 5 Frequency of confirmation: survey total compared to Religion som Resurs? (%)(N=165)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total percentage</th>
<th>Religion som Resurs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church of Sweden</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other congregation</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 show respondents’ religious affiliation. Christianity is naturally the option that the highest number of respondents affiliate with (20%), followed rather far behind by Islam (3%). Looked at from the other side, an impressive 64% of respondents say that they affiliate ‘not at all’ (45%) or ‘not much’ (19%) with Christianity. Even accounting for those who affiliate with other religions, this is quite high. The table shows the number of respondents who reported that they affiliate ‘completely’ or ‘quite a lot’ with a religion.

**Table 6 Religious affiliation: survey total compared to Religion som Resurs? (%) (N=165)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Total percentage</th>
<th>Religion som Resurs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christianity</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Islam</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buddhism</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judaism</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The importance of close relationships is apparent in table 7 as well. Parents and friends top the list of influential factors with 61% and 56% respectively. Media is the third most popular factor with 36%.

The table shows the number of respondents who answered either ‘quite a lot’ or ‘completely’.

**Table 7 Factors that influence life philosophy: survey total compared to Religion som Resurs? (%) (N=165)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influential factor</th>
<th>Total percentage</th>
<th>Religion som Resurs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celebrities</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious tradition</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.3 Questions about death

The questions about death were not part of the *Religion som resurs?* survey. They are phrased similar to the questions about religion and aim to answer roughly the same questions (of socialization agencies, etc.).

The most common area through which respondents come into contact with questions about death is friends (62%). Family and television are on a shared second place (58%), closely followed by the internet (55%). The least common contact area is church or other place of worship, but it is still interesting to note that 20% of respondents have come into contact with questions of death in a religious setting in the past six months.

The table shows the number of respondents who have encountered questions of death *at all* in the past six months.

**Table 8 Area through which respondents have come into contact with questions about death: survey total (%) (N=165)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact area</th>
<th>Total percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church or other place of worship</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most popular alternative for who or what influences respondents’ view of death is parents (18%). Friends, science, media, religious tradition and films are deemed roughly equally important. And although school is a relatively important contact area (49%), none of the respondents said that their teachers ‘quite a lot’ or ‘completely’ influence their view of death.

The table shows the number of respondents who answered either ‘quite a lot’ or ‘completely’.

**Table 9 Factors who influence respondents’ view of death: survey total (%) (N=165)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influential factor</th>
<th>Total percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The most important confidants for questions about death are family and friends (55% each), followed by siblings (36%), no one (27%) and boyfriend/girlfriend (23%). It seems that if the respondents talk to anyone at all, they talk to the people close to them. The most common option that is not a relative, friend or partner is God.

Table 10 Close confidants relative to questions about death: survey total (%) (N=165)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confidant</th>
<th>Total percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boyfriend/girlfriend</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other relative</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online meeting spot</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leader of organization</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priest or other religious leader</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curator, etc.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth health centre</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone helpline</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the light of the interviews, the statements that the respondents were asked to rate their agreement with turned out to be only semi-relevant for the purpose of addressing the research problem. Their inclusion in the survey is a result of the ambition to create a statistical sounding board in case any of the subjects (euthanasia, abortion, suicide, funerals) turned up in the interviews. From this perspective, the most relevant question turned out to be the one about funerals, where 74% of respondents say that the funeral is an important ceremony. The table shows the number of respondents who answered that they agree either ‘quite a lot’ or ‘completely’ with the statements.

**Table 11 Agreement with statements: survey total (%) (N=165)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Total percentage</th>
<th>Religion som Resurs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The funeral is an important ceremony</td>
<td>74</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suicide is wrong</td>
<td>52</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euthanasia is wrong</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abortion for other than medical reasons are wrong</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To get an idea of whether death is something that respondents think about at all, they were asked how often they think about death. About half of them (53%) say that they ‘sometimes’ think about death. 32% say that they ‘never’ think about death and 15% say that they think about death ‘often’.

**Table 12 How often do respondents think about death? (%) (N=165)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often do you think about death?</th>
<th>Total percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Often</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.1.4 Differences between the cities

Overall, the answers from the different cities are very similar. The same things seem to be important to the respondents regardless of their home town and their backgrounds are quite similar. However, there is one area where significant differences consistently appear: religion.

A theme quickly emerges in the material where Jönköping respondents report high levels of religiosity and Enköping very low levels. Uppsala typically falls
somewhere in the middle. When asked to rate their agreement with various statements about their upbringing, 23% of Jönköping respondents answered that they agree ‘quite a lot’ or ‘completely’ with the suggestion that they grew up in a home with an active religious faith. The corresponding figures for Uppsala is 15% and for Enköping 2%.

The number of respondents who in the past six months have participated in activities organized by a religious association is 28% in Jönköping, compared to 13% in Uppsala and 3% in Enköping. A slightly higher number of respondents in Jönköping (28%) say that they have encountered religion in a place of worship in the past six months, compared to the respondents in Uppsala (18%) and Enköping (22%).

The biggest difference is confirmation rates, as shown in table 13.

**Table 13 Frequency of confirmation by surveyed city compared to survey total and Religion som Resurs (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Uppsala (N=39)</th>
<th>Jönköping (N=61)</th>
<th>Enköping (N=65)</th>
<th>Total percentage</th>
<th>Religion som Resurs?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church of Sweden</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other congregation</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not confirmed</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The percentage of respondents confirmed in other congregations than the Church of Sweden is 34% in Jönköping, compared to 8% in Uppsala and 0% in Enköping. Whereas 67% of Uppsala respondents and 77% of Enköping respondents were not confirmed at all, the figure in Jönköping is a mere 18%. The difference is slightly smaller when considering Church of Sweden confirmations, but Jönköping still boasts the highest number of confirmations with 36% compared to the Uppsala 26% and Enköping 22%.

Looking at visits to a church or other place of worship in the past six months, Jönköping again score the highest in almost every single instance. The factor that more clearly than the others suggest an actual religious affiliation – participating in a service – scores significantly higher in Jönköping (28%) than Uppsala (15%) or Enköping (5%).

In terms of religious affiliation, 33% of Jönköping respondents say that they affiliate ‘completely’ or ‘quite a lot’ with Christianity. This compared to 15% in Uppsala and 11% in Enköping.

The question of whether the respondents see themselves as atheist, religious, believing, spiritual or searching show small differences between Uppsala and Jönköping. 21% of respondents in both Uppsala and Jönköping see themselves as atheist, compared to 43% in Enköping. 23% in Uppsala and 28% in Jönköping see themselves as believing, compared to 3% in Enköping. 18% in Uppsala and 20% in Jönköping see themselves as religious, compared to 3% in Enköping. 13% in
both Uppsala and Jönköping see themselves as spiritual compared to, again, 3% in Enköping.

4.1.5 Quantitative analysis

The research question at the root of this study was that of perceptions of death. The quantitative results cannot on their own answer this, nor can it satisfyingly describe the role of religion in death socialization (even if the high number of respondents who think that the funeral is an important ceremony suggest the possibility that it is a relevant factor). Rather, the quantitative data gives an idea of the context of death: what is the respondents’ view of socialization agencies and contact areas? Do they feel that questions of death are something they encounter in their everyday life or is death largely absent? The following chapter will not directly address the research questions of this study, but rather use them as a point of departure to create a picture that can then be put together with the qualitative data in the conclusion.

Contemporary death is often talked about as sequestrated (see Valentine, 2006) or hidden (notably Ariés, 1974). However, this absence of direct experiences of death in the public consciousness (Giddens, 2009) coexists with an abundance of mediated death. Death is one of the most common themes in movies (Niemiec & Schulenberg, 2011) and is a frequent feature of news reporting (Hanusch, 2008). As if this paradox was not enough, death appears in new contexts, particularly in social media such as Facebook, where it is possible to remain ‘friends’ with someone even after his or her death (Pennington, 2013) or turn the deceased person’s Facebook profile into a memorial account (Facebook, 2014). With so many possible contact areas available to them, do the respondents still perceive that death is absent?

Contact areas

First of all, it should be said that the respondents do not feel that they come across questions of death as often as one might expect if taking into account mediated death. The most common reply is that the respondents have encountered questions about death ‘a few times’ in the past six months. The question does not specify what exactly is covered by the term ‘questions of death’ and both personal bereavement and news reporting about a fatal accident could fit. The respondents are also asked to consider each contact area separately, and there is no saying that they have encountered questions of death in the same way between options. Having said that, even without specifying ‘death’, the question answers in what context respondents feel that they have ‘been aware’ of death. Where have they perceived death? The top alternatives give a hint: the most common context in which teenagers experience that they come into contact with questions of death is amongst friends. The second to top alternative is parents and television. With some caution, this places death in the respondents’ close relationships.

Influential factors

When naming their influential factors, the low response rate immediately stands out. The alternative that most teenagers feel have influenced their perceptions of death – parents – still only gets 18%. Friends, science, media, religious tradition
and films follow with 12%, 12%, 11%, 10% and 8% respectively. What this tells us is not that teenagers today are ‘really’ without influence in all matters death, but that they are unable to identify influential factors. By comparison, one might consider that 61% of respondents say that their parents ‘quite a lot’ or ‘completely’ influence their view of life and 56% say the same about friends. It is clear from the survey that it is important for the respondents that their philosophy of life is their own choice (a statement with which 92% of respondents agree ‘completely’ or ‘quite a lot’), but it is also clear that they are not averse to being influenced. The low percentage of respondents who feel that they have been influenced in their view of death cannot be explained away as a statement of independence. It should instead be seen as an indicator of death’s place in the life of young people. It might be worth considering the idea that the comparatively high number of respondents who admit being influenced about their philosophy of life compared to the low number of respondents who admit being influenced about their understanding of death means that these two things are separate. The idea of death is not a part of a person’s philosophy of life.

Previous research has shown that contemporary death is absent from the public consciousness and that the deaths that affect us are few and therefore impactful. This means that death is only visible when it happens. Until the teenagers experience the death of a friend or relative, death is remote. There is no ready context into which they fit death, but when it happens, they feel left to deal with it on their own. It is an event isolated from life in general.

That death is invisible until a person is affected by it also suggests that there is no place for death outside of those affected by it. Whether it is fair to talk about death as ‘hidden’, it could perhaps be somewhat pointedly argued that death is hidden away amongst the bereaved. Death only concerns those who are immediately affected by it, thus ‘protecting’ those who are not from having to deal with it.

The place of death in close relationships is further supported by who the respondents chose to confide in when they feel the need to talk about death. Parents, friends and siblings are the top three, followed by ‘no one’, then boyfriend/girlfriend and other relative. Impersonal, professional contacts score very low, indicating that death is something the respondents are fairly comfortable talking to their friends and family about. If it is correct that death is a matter for the bereaved and that death is absent or at least remote until a person is directly affected, it makes perfect sense that the respondents confide in the people closest to them. It is somewhat speculative, but perhaps the people they confide in are also affected by the same death.

Considering the quantitative results from a point of view of socialization theory, it is interesting to note first of all that whatever socializing agencies there are, these are clearly not recognized by the respondents. Second, the consistent support for death’s location in close relationship points to perceptions of death being shaped in the primary group. This study has not looked into how death is portrayed in media and so I hesitate to draw any far-reaching conclusions about media’s role in shaping teenager’s perceptions of death. However, overall the results from the survey suggest fairly traditional socialization paths. They also suggest that death is isolated from a person’s life philosophy in general and limited to bereavement.
4.2 Interviews

The qualitative part of this study consists of interviews, aiming to provide more fleshed-out answers to the research question, as well as offer depth and nuance to the survey data. The following chapter presents the data collected through these interviews.

4.2.1 What is death?

The informants were not presented with a ready definition of death. As a way to get them thinking about death, and as a not-so-gentle introduction to the topic, they were asked what death meant to them. It was an opportunity for them to associate freely and an opportunity for me as the interviewer to get an idea of a starting point.

The Uppsala and Enköping informants supply remarkably similar responses to the question. To them, death is the end of life.

U1: Er… I feel that death is… Is the end of life, like. You’re not there after, at all, but then you’re, like, done on earth, so to speak. Er… So I would like to say that it’s like the end of a beautiful book, maybe. [Laugh]


Anna: What is death to you?
E1: Well, it is… The end of life, simply. Yeah. So to speak.

The Jönköping informants express a higher degree of uncertainty; they are open to other possibilities. Whereas the Uppsala and Enköping informants describe death as the end of something, the Jönköping informants view it more as something in itself. However, the question of death is clearly entangled in the question of life.

J2: I think, I mean, death is…it can be from…it’s so big.
J1: It is infinite and you don’t really know. You hardly know why you’re alive either. It feels like you got some illusion of what life is and what death is, but is it really like that? It feels a bit, yeah, I don’t know…
J2: I feel that death is, yes, as you [J1] say, it is big. But it’s also like, I don’t know if it’s the beginning of something new or if it’s like… Yeah, sometimes I wonder whether my whole life is an illusion, if this is real. If we really live in this. And what’s the point of it. And death, whether it’s the end.
J1: If it’s the end or if it’s the beginning.

After talking about what death means to the informants specifically, the conversation moved on to the meaning of death generally. Again, there is a division between the Uppsala and Enköping informants on the one hand and the Jönköping informants on the other. The Uppsala and Enköping informants do not see death as having any meaning in itself at all; the Jönköping informants are more vague and refer to the ‘unknown’ nature of (a potential life after) death and the lack of control associated with it.

That the Enköping and Uppsala informants define death as the end of life does not necessarily mean that they categorically reject all ideas of an afterlife.
Throughout the interviews, they frequently return to how no one can know for sure what happens. However, the explicit belief in a life after death seems to be something they associate primarily with childhood.

Anna: Did you ever think about death?
E2: Yeah, of course. But that was more when one was younger, I think. If a relative died. That makes you think about it a lot.
Anna: In what way did you think about it then, do you think?
E3: If a relative dies, then you think about life after death. Like, you think—
E1: Then you want to believe in it.
E3: Yeah, then you want to believe in it. But. Yeah… Yeah, that’s how it is. Actually.
Anna: If you think about death now, when you’re adults, after all? Do you think about it in the same way as you did when you were children?
E3: No, I think, as we said before, that it just, like, ends. To me, anyway.
Anna: But what you’re saying about how, if a relative passed away when you were little, for example, and you wanted to believe in a life after death… Do you still want to believe in a life after death, do you think?
E3: Yeah, I suppose you want to, but…
E2: Deep inside, I’m sure you want to.

Common to all the interviews is the expression of insecurity about death. Thinking about death is strongly associated with worrying about death, and as worry is seen as pointless and unnecessary it follows from this that thinking about death becomes pointless and unnecessary.

E2: On the other hand, if you prepare for it, you’ll just spend your time worrying about it, so I think it’s better if death comes as a surprise. Than if you spend all your time worrying about it anyway. I’d say. But on the other hand, people can have different ideas about that as well.
Anna: But just because you think about death, does that necessarily mean that you worry about it, do you think?
E2: No… But I think that’s pretty natural. It’s… Everyone is afraid of it. Of death. Somehow, you’re afraid of death. So if you think about it, you’ll worry about it, I’d say.
Anna: Is everyone afraid of death, do you think?
E3: In some way.
E1: Mhm.

U2’s answers are much along the same line. Death is not something that ‘interests him’ and thinking about it will only increase a person’s worries and insecurities as it is impossible to reach a definite conclusion. Answering the same question as the Enköping informants above (whether ‘thinking about death’ can be a positive thing) he says:

U2: I mean, maybe. But it will only lead to more insecurity, I think. You won’t find a definite result or conclusion, even if you think about it. Unless you’re like, well, religious or find some view that you like, from, like, the outside. But I think it’s very difficult to arrive at something on your own.
Anna: You need input?
U2: Yes, exactly.

Again, the Jönköping informants are slightly different in that they state that ‘some’ people worry about death, but significantly they do not. They mention religion as a way of dealing with one’s fear of death. This fear is highly linked to the insecurity that the other informants talk about. Religion, they say, is a way of dealing with the insecurity and therefore deal with one’s fear of death.
U2 also mentions religion relative to fear of death, but from the other perspective. Even though religion might provide you with a conclusion relative to life after death, religion itself might also be a source of worry:

U2: If you’re a Christian you might be afraid of going to hell. Er... Yeah. It depends on what your view is. But most people are insecure [relative to death], I’d say, at least in Sweden.
Anna: Do you think it’s different in other countries?
U2: Yeah, of course. If it’s, like, religious countries, then I think so.

It is hardly surprising that the informants associate death with old age. Although they recognize that death sometimes happens to young people, death’s rightful place in old age is taken for granted. The following quote from the interview with U1 illustrates this:

U1: [Death] is something that is a bit scary, like. It’s not something you want to happen. To put it like that. But of course, it’ll happen to everyone at some point in life. [Laughs] But it’s more expected, perhaps, if it’s someone who’s old or so, but it’s not like I think I’ll die now.
Anna: No.
U1: To put it like that. So that’s why I’m not so worried about myself. But, er… For example, my grandparents will die soon and that won’t be that fun, to put it like that.

The social aspect of death

Although the informants express great insecurity about what happens after death, they seem disinclined to think too much about it. Rather than considering death relative to themselves, they associate it with either news reports or with old age. This does not mean that death is unthreatening. However it is what might be called the social rather than existential aspect of death that is important to them. That is, the informants are more concerned with the implications of death for the bereaved than the deceased. U1 makes this connection when she says that she is not worried about her own death because it is a distant thing, but more worried about her grandparents who are old and will soon die, which ‘won’t be that fun’. E2 expresses the same thought:

E2: I think it’s more of a change for those around the person who has died. I mean it’s not—I don’t think about it as they do in Christianity, that there is a life after [death], I think it’s more a case of life changing for those who experience death alongside the person who dies.
Anna: So death has no meaning for the person who dies?
E2: Personally I don’t think so, no.
Anna: No. Can you expand on this idea, how does it affect the people around [the person who died]?
E2: I guess it’s emotional, all of it. Life, it completely changes track. The person who has always been there for you isn’t there anymore, so that must make something different.

There is an idea amongst the informants that a dying person approaches death with a sense of closure, an idea that makes dying seem like less of a threat. A dying person is presumed to be prepared and in acceptance. U1 puts it like this:

I think that for the person in question who will die, maybe it’s kind of nice, somehow. A bit boring that you won’t get to hang around and do anything else. But still pretty nice to not have to, if you’re sick or if you’re just old and you don’t have the energy for it. Yeah, to just not have to do it. You’ve done your bit. It’s no fun for everyone around you, but for the person in question maybe it’s kind of nice. [Laughs] That sounded strange, maybe...?
The Jönköping informants, who are the only ones to say that they talk about death and also more prone than the other informants to consider deaths in young age, still talk about the acceptance of death by the dying person. A person does not have to be old to die, but they have to be ‘done’:

J2: [...] I want to do something different, I want, I want to feel. I mean, you can live a life but you’ll feel like you’re mechanic, you don’t feel like you’re alive. I mean, I might not have that much money, or, well, other consequences, but I want to feel that I was alive before I died.
J1: Mmm... Be a free spirit. For once.
J2: Yes. But sometimes I feel that I’ve done most things and sometimes I actually feel done, like. Sometimes.

The Jönköping informants talk more than the other informants about making sure that you live life to the fullest, but the sentiment that a dying person is typically ready to die is shared by all of them.

On first glance, the image that emerges in what the informants are saying seems conflicting. On the one hand, death is described as inherently scary; on the other hand, there is a presumption that (in normal circumstances) a dying person is prepared to die and unafraid of it. However, the scariness of death applies only to death in an abstract sense. It is scary because it is the end of life. The death of others is made manageable by presuming that the dying person is okay with it.

The threat, thus, is not to the person who dies but to the people who are left behind. As U1 puts it in the quote above: *It’s no fun for everyone around you, but for the person in question maybe it’s kind of nice.*

### 4.2.2 Contact area

The survey showed that teenagers primarily experience that they encounter questions of death in their close relationships. Considering the prevalence of death in news media, it is interesting that newspapers, the internet and television score so comparatively low.

In the interviews, the informants were instead asked *how often* they hear about death. Though the informants feel that they hear about death frequently – even a bit ‘too often’ as one informant puts it – they do not feel that ‘death is really talked about’ or that it is something that is dealt with ‘in depth’. Maybe the question is not so much *where* teenagers encounter questions of death as *how*.

**Media**

When asked if they feel that they hear about death often, the informants agree that they do.

Anna: Do you think you hear about death often?
U1: No-o, I wouldn’t say that. Not too often. Maybe, yeah, but, a lot about war and that sort of stuff. When there are big catastrophes. That’s when you hear a lot about, like, this many died. But it’s not like you talk about death itself. It’s just that it’s mentioned, just that you say that ‘these people died’. Every now and then. And then it’s newspapers, like, obituaries and that, but it’s not often you read those. Unless you know who they are [who have died]. It’s a bit… But apart from that, I don’t think you really talk about death.
What U1 is saying is that although you do hear about death – for example in news media – it is in purely quantitative terms. Death itself is not talked about. The problematizing view is absent.

The informants from Enköping make a similar division. When asked if they hear about death often, E1 says this:

Yes… You hear about natural disasters and everything in the world and people who… pass, so to speak, but these are not, no, no real, how should I put it, well, moral questions. If there’s life after death, or…

In all the interviews, this distinction between a ‘quantitative’ report and ‘qualitative’ exploration of death seems instinctive. E3 is the only one who says that he does not encounter questions of death very often:

I don’t watch a lot of, like, news and I don’t read a lot of newspapers, but… [laughs] I, like, hear about it a little in school or so…

When asked when he last heard about death, E3 cannot recall any instance. Despite this, he then says that it is because there is too much of it. So much, he says, that you see it and then you just turn the page. Although he does not necessarily feel that he encounters questions of death often, he immediately places death in news media. The reason he does not encounter questions of death often is that he does not watch news or read newspapers.

Like the others, the informants from Jönköping agree that there are many reports of death in news media but that these reports are purely quantitative. Unlike the others, they seem to view the distinction as problematic:

Anna: Do you think you hear about death often? Do you come across death?
J1: Yes, pretty often. You hear about it, like, on the news, people around you and that… It’s not so often that it’s someone close to you, but people you know of, in any case. So it’s…
J2: But, I mean, I think that it’s silenced quite a lot and it’s like, you try… Eh… I mean, deal with death like it’s a given, almost, but you never want to deal with it in depth. ‘What is it that happens with this person now’ and what is it that’s… This person isn’t with us anymore, like.
Anna: Do you think that’s missing, this depth?
J2: Yeah, definitely.

U2 makes the same distinction. While recognizing that he often hears about death in news media, it is ‘not like it makes you think about it’. Unlike the informants from Jönköping, he does not think that it is a problem that death is not dealt with in depth. It is not missing, he says, it would just be ‘weird’.

It is as though death is only relevant if it affects someone personally. Anonymous death does not affect them. According to U1, it is even difficult to take anonymous media death seriously. It could just as well be made up, she says.

U1: I mean, it’s maybe a bit more hyped in the media. In reality [death] mostly concerns your family and that. Or what can you say? In the media it’s more hyped and everybody should know about it and everybody should feel for this person and yes… It’s a bigger thing, like. But everything becomes bigger when it’s in the media, I suppose.
Anna: But it’s not as emotionally charged in the media as it is if you have your own experience to relate to?
U1: No. Maybe if it’s a documentary or something. Because then you get to know this person through the documentary, but when it’s just a news report, it’s not so personal.
Anna: Why do you think it’s like that? News reports can be pretty brutal sometimes.
U1: Yeah, but... I don’t know. It’s not as real, like. It’s like it’s made up because you don’t know yourself, it’s not like you can see that, ‘Yeah, but this person looks very dead’. It could just as well be made up, like.

When asked if they hear about death often, all informants mention hearing about it in the news (however they make no mention of the medium through which they get their news; whether television, internet or newspapers). E2 additionally mentions social media, something which the other informants do not explicitly mention. When we discuss talking about death with one’s parents, he makes the point that there are differences between the generations:

E2: It’s like it is with everything, there is a difference across generations. I mean, it’s not a massive difference, but on the other hand, we have experienced this whole technological development and everything, so we have, the social development and everything, we’re closer to everyone around us, so I think that we’re affected in a different way. Still.

Anna: How? That’s an interesting thought, can you develop it?
E2: It’s like... I think, internet bullying and things like that. There are more... It feels like there are more suicides and that sort of stuff now, that one is closer to that, somehow. So I think that we think that death is closer to us in our everyday life than maybe what [our parents] did when they were our age. But I can’t say that for sure because I don’t know what it was like then. But it feels like somehow, it’s... It feels like it’s closer to us than it was them. And that’s where the difference lies, but fundamentally I suppose it’s the same. I think.

Although it is possible that social media expands the circle of people who are affected by a death, E2 seems to mainly talk about it in the same quantitative terms as the informants talk about death in news media. Social media does not necessarily inflate the number of deaths that affect you, but it makes it more difficult to get away from reports of death.

Family and friends

The informants appear relatively unconcerned about death in news media. They are well aware that it exists, but they attach little emotional meaning to it. Instead it seems that it is in their close relationships that the informants encounter death in a significant way.

When asked what they think it is that could make a person think about death, the Enköping informants say this:

E2: Life experience. If you have experienced it before. If you have experienced a lot to do with death, it’s easy that you think a lot about it. That’s what I personally think.
Anna: Do the rest of you agree?
E3: Yeah, I do.
E1: Me too.
Anna: When you say ‘experience’, do you then mean deaths that affect one personally?
E2: Yes, exactly. I mean, I’m personally... When I was young, there was no one in my family who had died, it’s more in recent years that several of them have passed on, and then it’s like... It’s now that I... Think about death, more than I did when I was young, as someone said earlier [in the interview]. Because I’ve not experienced it before. So I think about it more now, but it’s not like it troubles me, in a way.

So whereas news media does not make a person think about death, being personally affected by death does. The connection that E2 makes between the relevance of death (thinking about it, etc.) and experiencing the death of a loved one is one that permeates all the interviews. U2, who is the informant with the least interest
in death, also mentions the death of relatives as the only instance that made him think about death:

My grandfather died when I was 12. And my great grandmother as well. That’s what I remember. I didn’t understand what had happened to them, like. I just think it’s meaningless.

The relevance of family and friends becomes further apparent when considering whom the informants talk to about death. When U1 described a funeral she had attended, I asked her if she talked to anyone about it afterwards. The question was asked in a context of influential factors and we were talking about the sort of reactions discussing one’s ideas of death might provoke and how this affects one’s views.

U1: Nooo. They didn’t know the person [who had died]. They didn’t even know the family in question, so that makes it a bit weird to bring it up. ‘This is how I felt when I went to the funeral of someone you don’t know who it is.’

She is not the only one of the informants who expresses this view. None of the informants seem to think that you can talk to other people about a funeral you have been to or a loss you have suffered unless the people you talk to also knew the deceased. Or, as suggested by U1 in the quote above, at the very least know the family involved.

Asked how he would react if someone came to him and wanted to talk about death, E3 says this:

Well, it’s… I don’t suppose I’d be able to… I would absolutely try to help, but, like, it’s difficult to think of what to say. It becomes, like… I don’t know the person who have [passed away] – or I don’t know if I know that person… I probably don’t know the person who has passed away. So I don’t really know how you, how you, like… Yeah. You can’t say that it’ll be fine, because it’ll never be properly fine. I don’t know. But you try to help, of course.

It seems that there is nothing to say unless you knew the deceased personally. You need to share in the grief for a conversation to take place. U1 turns the very idea of talking about a funeral to someone who did not know the deceased into a joke. She is not being malicious about it: if anything it underlines the importance of a personal connection. The idea of talking about death in general terms or without the personal connection is simply alien to her.

The Jönköping informants – maybe because they are the only ones who admit to talking about death with each other – do not mention discussing personal loss with other people. They do, however, talk about what qualities a person needs to be a good confidant about matters of death. J2 describes how she has tried to talk to one of her other friends about death, but was met with reluctance as her friend was ‘afraid of it’.

The fear of death and how that is a factor when talking about it is also touched upon by U2, who does not otherwise show any interest in talking about death.

As has been shown above, death in media does not seem to affect the informants much. In fact, although the informants are aware that they are virtually bombarded with accounts of death in media, it does not seem to stick with them. Bearing this in mind, it is perhaps unsurprising that media is never mentioned when the informants talk about factors that has influenced their view of death.

The most important influential factor seems to be parents, despite differences in the shape and form of this influence.
E1: Well, we’re very similar. Me and my dad – that’s who I’m thinking of now – we’re very alike in many ways and we’re… Well, we have pretty much the same opinions of everything.
Anna: But you have never talked about it or so?
E1: Yeah, of course we have and yeah, I’ve asked him what he thinks and then he’d say what he thinks and I’ve thought, yeah. That’s how it is. Probably. Or, I don’t know. It’s really difficult.

E3 says something quite similar:

Eh… I think… I don’t really know. We don’t talk much about death at home, actually. But I think it’s like E1 said earlier that yeah, I think mostly the same way as my parents. And we have the same opinions about a lot of things. So I think that we have the same view [of death]. And obviously they’ve…We’ve talked about it when I was younger and they’ve probably influenced me. So they’ve, they’ve hit me with their ideas, you could say.

U1 mentions how her parents have different views and how she has chosen to listen to her mother:

I think my mum has influenced me a lot because she’s always said that, like, ‘death, that’s nothing I’m afraid of, I’m not afraid to grow old’. Whereas my dad is very like, ‘oh, I don’t want to get older’. So I’ve listened more to my mum.

With a somewhat clearer idea of where the informants locate death (close relationships), it is maybe unsurprising that most of them mention their parents as influential factors, however the nature of this influence differs somewhat between the informants.

When talking about whether or not they think much about death, the Enköping informants say that they do not; that thinking about death is something that they associate with childhood. ‘If a relative died,’ E2 says, ‘that made you think about it a lot’. It seems that death is not talked about until it becomes relevant, for instance when a family member or someone close to the family dies. This makes the family the logical and obvious place for death socialization.

4.2.3 The funeral

The survey showed that 74% of respondents considered the funeral to be an important ceremony. What the survey does not show is why the funeral is important or for whom it is important. The following chapter will look closer at the way the informants talk about funerals, how and why they feel the funeral is an important ceremony, how they relate to the religious aspects of funerals, and how they see the funeral as an intimate occasion.

The importance of the funeral

All of the informants agree that the funeral is an important ceremony. But the funeral is not just important as a ritual for the dead (if indeed at all). It also fills a supportive function for the bereaved.

When asked if they agree that the funeral is an important ceremony, the Uppsala informants answered:

U1: Yes.
Anna: Why?
U1: Because it’s the last thing that the person does. Or, he or she doesn’t do it themselves. But yeah… It’s the last thing that those who were close do with that person. And then it’s good that it’s something nice. That it’s not just, like, “Okay, bye.” [Laughs] “You died. Oh well. Now we’ll have to get to know someone new.” It’s like… Maybe to properly understand yourself that the person really has passed away. Because otherwise you might just get depressed. Instead of really seeing that yes, this person has passed away. We say goodbye to the person [who has died] and that might make it easier for you to move on.

U2: I mean, it’s probably more important for those who go to the funeral of a person than it is to that person themselves, I think.

Anna: Why?

U2: Even if you’re dead you’re like… I don’t understand what difference it makes for that person [who is dead]. Sure, it’s a lovely idea that people mourn you when you’re gone, but it should be out of their free will, is my opinion.

Anna: Their free will who are left behind?

U2: Yeah, exactly.

Anna: Why is that important, do you think, for those who are left behind, that there is a funeral?

U2: No, but, it gives you closure. I believe.

The informants from Enköping describe the funeral in a similar way. It is an opportunity for the bereaved to say good bye, something they describe as ‘important.’

E1: It’s also a form of respect, to, maybe to that person’s family. But I think this last goodbye, it’s very important. That’s the first thing you think of [in connection to funerals].

E2: It’s a help to move on yourself, afterwards. Like, accept that it has happened. So that you really understand that it has happened. Because it can feel unreal sometimes.

When the Enköping informants were asked if the funeral is more important to the bereaved or the deceased, they all immediately say the bereaved. They refer to how they see death as the end, and how it is unlikely that the deceased is ‘looking down’ at his or her own funeral. E1 is the only informant to describe the funeral as a form of respect, but even this respect is aimed at the deceased’s family rather than the deceased person him- or herself.

If there is a connection between belief in a life after death and the importance of the funeral for the person who has died, what do the Jönköping informants have to say about it? They are the informants with the most ‘open-minded’ attitude towards the idea of an afterlife.

J1: I mean, I believe it’s like… I don’t know how to put it, but I suppose it’s up to each person. Er… But in the end all bodies will be united with the earth and… I mean, the physical bodies. Er… If there is a soul, you don’t know where that will end up, or er… But I think funerals are more for the people around you. Or for the people around you so that they can get closure and, like, close one chapter and move on. Not just that, “Oh, this person died and the priest buried him and we’ll just pop around to leave flowers every now and then.” That doesn’t give you that closure. You won’t be able to close the book and go, “Yeah, but this person is dead now.”

J2: I also think it’s a bit like… The funeral is mostly for the people around you and for the family’s sake, so that you can say these things that you’ve always wanted to say and to remember this person in a way, I mean, really taking the time to, “Yeah, but what did this person bring to my life,” that you think of good memories and bad memories and that you’re trying to think of the positive things this person had in their life. Maybe then you’ll feel some sort of meaning with it.
J2 then continues to talk about what she would like for her own funeral (very well planned, people there thinking about her one last time, etc.), the only of the informants to do this.

Interestingly, even the more spiritually inclined Jönköping informants talk about the funeral as a way to get ‘closure’ and an occasion that is ‘mostly for the people around you’.

**The intimate nature of death**

Considering how the funeral seems to play an important part for the bereaved, it is maybe not so surprising that a common theme in all the interviews is the importance of a person’s relationship to the deceased. Contemporary death is often talked about as ‘private’, but when the informants talk about death and funerals they do not focus on the privacy of it but of the intimacy. If privacy is the state of being free from intrusion or disturbance, or something being confined to and intended only for the persons concerned, intimacy instead stresses the close, familiar, usually affectionate or loving personal relationship. It is in this sense that ‘intimacy’ is used here, and it is the word that best describes how the informants talk about death and funerals.

E2 describes the idea like this:

> I think that family and friends gather and try to remember the person [who has died]. The positive aspects. And try to support each other and that. I usually meet people I’ve never met before but who share the same… We share this thing, we share the person. And that’s how it is. It connects you. So it connects family and friends. I think.

Those who attend the funeral are connected by their shared experience of the deceased person.

However, when intimacy is a requisite for a death or a funeral to have meaning, it also shuts those out who do not share in this intimacy. U1 describes attending the funeral of her ex boyfriend’s grandmother and how being there made her feel awkward and unsure of her role. As she does not share in the emotions (e.g. grief) and did not know the grandmother, she lacks protocol.

> It felt a bit unreal. It wasn’t quite so… Well, I wasn’t close to her, so it felt a bit weird in some way to be there and like, yeah, but, ‘ah, you’re dead’. Ehm… I don’t really know. It was, it was a bit sad in a way, but since I didn’t know her that well it was also a bit… Stupid, somehow. Like, why should I say farewell to someone I don’t know?

Because she did not know the grandmother, U1’s describes her presence at the funeral as ‘a bit stupid, somehow.’

E2, in the quote above, describes how a funeral can unite people in that they all relate to the same person and have all experienced the ‘same’ loss. U1, in describing the funeral of her ex boyfriend’s grandmother, describes the same sort of thing but from the other perspective.

> You feel like you should be, like, sad and cry and, like, feel sympathy with the family and that, but it’s not like, you can’t force emotions either. You’re sitting there, a bit, ‘Alright, what do we do now? Should we sing a song or what?’ It is difficult to deal with those who were actually close to her. What do you say to them?

Rather than feeling united with the other funeral guests, she finds it difficult to deal with them.
It is not just funerals that seem pointless for those who did not know the deceased. As has been described in the chapter *Family and friends*, above, even talking about death appears to somehow hinge on some familiarity with the person who has died. If you did not know the deceased, there is nothing to say.

**The religious funeral**

Given how the informants describe the funeral as an opportunity for closure, it is interesting to see how they still take the religious funeral for granted. The most blatant example of the obvious nature of this connection is the following quote from the interview with U2:

Anna: Is that why a Christian funeral is important? As an insurance that you won’t end up in hell?
U2: No, I mean, it’s not supposed to be like that. But how else are you going to do the funeral?
Anna: You could have a non-confessional funeral?
U2: Does that exist?

Other informants casually reference the ‘priest’ as the person in charge of a funeral and the ‘church’ as the obvious venue. When talking about organizations that may be important when someone has died, U1 says this:

I mean, I think that the church plays a very big part, because many people chose to have the funeral in church even if they’re not believers. It’s, like, a place that you associate with funerals or weddings or so, even though not everyone in Sweden is Christian. It’s a place that is there. Like, cemeteries and yeah…

The Jönköping informants, who at every mention of funerals have talked about church and priest, are somewhat surprised when I suggest that it might be considered somewhat strange that someone who is not religious would have a religious funeral. They consider whether this is somewhat hypocritical.

J1: It feels a bit like, many people say, ‘Oh, I believe in God,’ or many people will say that they’re Christian, but then they don’t believe in God, they don’t believe in Jesus, they don’t believe in… Er…
J2: They believe in celebrating Christmas and going to church sometimes, like.
J1: Yeah, exactly. Ehm… They stick by the traditions. But they don’t believe in anything behind, anything that lies behind that. Yeah, it’s exactly as you [J2] put it, it feels a bit phoney to have a funeral and you’re preaching and eh… talk about God and everything when this person in the grave didn’t believe in anything at all. Maybe it’s better then to make it a bit more personal and sure, you can have your funeral in church but that it’s not like…
J2: I think that, yeah, church and cemeteries, I think it’s really nice, but I think that it’s, I don’t understand, it doesn’t have to be all that connected to God? Maybe. If you could have a church, like, or a cemetery for non-believers.

The connection between a church funeral and a Christian faith does not seem obvious to the Jönköping informants at all. A church funeral is more about tradition than religion, and as such it is important. Even when considering non-religious alternatives, J2 suggests a ‘church’ for non-believers.

U2 argues along the same lines. Although he considers the possibility that everyone is ‘a little bit Christian,’ a Christian funeral is primarily about tradition:

U2: But then, everyone has a Christian funeral, right? As ethnic Swedes, almost, in any case. It’s just tradition, like.
Anna: What do you think about that? Swedes are supposed to be a pretty secular people, yet we have our funerals in church. How does that seem?
U2: No, but, I don’t know. It’s just that it’s tradition and that people have always done it that way and traditions tend to hang around.

A little later in the interview, he returns to this thought. I ask him if it is important, when arranging a funeral for someone, that the person has had some sort of relationship to the church before arranging their funeral there.

I mean, it feels a bit weird to have a funeral for someone in the Church of Sweden who has never been a member there or had, like, any association with them at all. But yeah… Why should you… Why should you follow rituals from a religion you don’t believe in? That’s not very logical, maybe. If you don’t believe it makes a difference. It’s more a nice thing, that’s how people see it. More than a religious thing, I think.

The Enköping informants do not see a contradiction in having a church funeral if the deceased has not set foot in church for many years. That’s the beauty of Christianity, they speculate, that you are always welcome back. When I suggest that in theory, at least, a person could have a non-confessional funeral, they say this:

E1: People like their traditions though.
E2: Yeah, that’s right.
Anna: Is tradition important when someone has passed away?
E3: Yeah, I think so.
E1: Yeah, me too.
Anna: Why?
E3: Because, like, how that person’s family has traditionally been buried, if it’s non-confessional or confessional. I suppose that matters.
E2: You honour that person, somehow.
E3: Yeah.
Anna: Mm.
E1: It’s how we have been taught to deal with death, as well. In those ways. So to speak. Well, I have. With a church funeral. That’s my way of learning how to move on.
Anna: It’s what you’re familiar with, so to speak?
E1: Yeah.
E2: It doesn’t feel like there’s anything else that is relevant, really. It’s what feels right. What feels right for that person [who has passed away] as well. If you think about that person [who has passed away] and yourself, it’s what feels right. It’s what you were brought up with.

The Enköping informants are more outspokenly positive to the religiosity of a church funeral than the other informants, however they are essentially putting words to what the other informants more implicitly talk about: the importance of tradition and the familiar, the obviousness of the church funeral. How it makes sense, not from a religious perspective, but from a familiar one.

U1 reasons along the same lines.

Anna: Do you think it’s important that you have a relationship to this church or whatever it may be before you die […]?
U1: Uhm… I don’t know. Maybe it doesn’t matter so much.
Anna: But if I put it like this, if you’ve not had any contact with the church, for example, why would you turn there, specifically?
U1: Good question. It’s what has been done, for loads of years. Like. So it’s something that you’re used to. I don’t think very many people think of anything else when they’re arranging a funeral for someone. It’s what you’re used to and so you go with what you’re familiar with.
The religious funeral is important in its familiarity. The religious content – whether it corresponds to what the informants believe in or not – seems fairly unproblematic. The only informant who makes explicit reference to the religious content of a church funeral is E1, who says this:

I think, in some way, it’s nice to hear, somehow, the priest talk. It feels like it’s someone who in some way... Yeah... No, but I don’t know. Somehow it feels nice to hear a few verses from the Bible or how I should put it. About, how, what you believe happens. Somehow. It’s usually positive things that will happen. That usually feels good.

4.2.4 Qualitative analysis

The questions that this study aimed to answer were those of teenagers’ perceptions of death, how they arrived at these perceptions and the role of religion in this. The following chapter looks at these questions in the light of the qualitative material presented above.

Perceptions of death

The informants did not receive any help in defining death when they were asked about the nature and meaning of death. Instead they were given free reins to associate. Looking at the way they talk about death, their perceptions of death can be broadly divided into two categories: 1) death is the end of life, and 2) what happens after death is a great unknown.

The informants (bearing in mind that none of them have claimed to be religious) see death as primarily the end of life. If death has any meaning other than this, it is unknown and uncertain. That death is seen as the end of life brings with it certain ideas that the informants express in either explicit or implicit terms. Death is something that either holds no meaning to them or the meaning of which is unavailable to them, and so the relevance of death is in the way it ends life. As death is the end of life, it is important to the informants that by the time a person dies, they are ‘done living’.

All informants instinctively locate death in old age. In a country like Sweden where the average age at death is among the highest in the world, it is unsurprising that death is something that the informants feel that they will not have to think about for many years yet. However, regardless of how the informants view death as something that takes place in old age, death is also seen as something of which most people are afraid. The uncertainty of death plays a big part in this. Significantly, the informants connect this death anxiety to the uncertainty of what happens after death rather than the circumstances of a person’s death. It is not so much a question of being scared of dying as of being dead.

The other possibility mentioned by the informants is that whether or not death happens in old age, it ‘should’ happen when a person is ready for it, when a person feels that they are ‘done’ living. Most contemporary deaths take a long time (whether in a residential home or in a context of medical care), and in many cases, the final stages of dying involves heavy medication. This can create an image of a dying person who has stopped fighting and accepted their fate, which in turn supports the idea that people in general accept that they are dying if only the circumstances are right. If the dying person gives the appearance of having accepted their situation, it is not strange that the dying process does not enter into the informants’ concerns.
The challenge of death lies not in accepting their own death, but in accepting
the death of others. This point is underlined by the way the informants talk about
the effect of death on those who are left behind. The general consensus amongst
the informants is that death holds no meaning for the person who has died (other
than as ‘the end of life’), and death instead becomes meaningful in the way it af-
fecteds the bereaved. The shift of focus from the funeral as a ceremony that com-
mends the dead to an opportunity for pastoral care or healing for the bereaved (see
for instance Bäckström, 1992 and Bringéus, 1986) is another aspect of this. When
someone dies, the focus is primarily on the bereaved and their well-being rather
than the deceased.

The informants view funerals very much in this way. They describe the funeral
as an important opportunity to say good-bye and as a way to get closure, to under-
stand that the death has really taken place. When this is the focus and the very
purpose of the funeral, it is perhaps not strange that only those are expected to be
present at the funeral who are in need of closure.

Considering how the funeral seems to play an important part for the bereaved,
it is not surprising that a common theme in all the interviews is the importance of
a person’s relationship to the deceased and how this relationship affects most as-
pects of how the teenagers relate to a death. Contemporary death is often talked
about as ‘private’ or ‘sequestrated’ (Valentine, 2006), but when the teenagers talk
about death and funerals they do not focus on the privacy of it but of the intimacy.
The terms are not mutually exclusive, of course, and there is no denying that there
is a level of privacy and indeed sequestration in the way young people think about
death, but the tone is primarily one of intimacy. One of the informants talks about
meeting other people at a funeral and describes how the funeral guests have the
person who has died in common, and how one gets to know the dead person again
at a funeral through the other people who are there. This is very much a familiar
and affectionate way of describing something.

However, in considering the informants’ perceptions of death, it is equally in-
teresting to consider what they are not saying. Perhaps the most glaring factor that
is left out is any mention at all of dying. The informant sample is small, but none
of them mention the process of dying. Also interesting is the way the informants
talk about the funeral as an opportunity for closure and to understand that the
death has actually taken place, implying that there is no other opportunity to do
this.

Death socialization

Gorer set the tone for sociological research on death with his article about the
pornography of death (meaning, the hidden natural death and the public porno-
graphic version of death). Giddens (1991) and Mellor (1993) both refer to death’s
absence in public consciousness, and the more intense private presence of death
for the individual. Nelson and Honnold (1980) wrote of this very same issue:
when the deaths that concern an individual are few, the impact of them is that
much greater. The public absence and the intensity of the private presence of
death is certainly something that the interviews confirm.

Giddens (2009) and others point out that there are new areas of socialization,
for instance media. Death is a very frequent element in news reporting, which all
of the informants acknowledge. Indeed when asked if they feel that they often
encounter questions of death, all of them mention news reports. It is a potential
socialization agency of which the informants are well aware. However, none of them attach any significant meaning to death in media. It is quantified, impersonal, something that happens somewhere else and that does not concern them. What is interesting is the very clear and instinctive distinction they make between the kind of death they encounter in for instance news media and what they term ‘death itself’.

So if the death encountered in news media is not ‘death itself’, then where can ‘death itself’ be found? The simple answer is that ‘death itself’ is found in those few impactful deaths that form that intense private presence of death for the individual. It is these deaths that the informants accredit with shaping their perceptions of death. When the informants were asked where they got their ideas of death from, they all mention their parents. Whether they feel that they think about death in the same way as their parents or they feel that their parents have encouraged them to think for themselves, it seems perceptions of death are shaped in the primary group. In addition to their parents, one informant mentions day-care and two mention teachers, but parents are without doubt the strongest influential factor.

As well as naming their parents as the main influence, most of the informants place the experiences that have made them think of death in childhood. The pattern that reproduces itself over all the interviews is one where a close relative dies, which makes them think of death, which makes them talk to their parents. Death socialization, thus, takes place in the primary group in childhood.

Typically, thoughts of an afterlife is also something that the informants associate with childhood and although they are still unsure about what happens after death, the idea of the dead relative being in paradise or heaven is something that they at least want to appear to have left behind.

In short, death can be said to be an extremely remote and abstract concept until a close friend or relative passes away. The informants do not mention any aspects of death other than the death happening and the funeral taking place. The funeral is also a strong death socialization factor in that it appears that it is the funeral that makes death visible. The informants talk about the funeral as an opportunity to accept that the death has really taken place, implying that there is no other opportunity for this. As such it is a pivotal moment of death socialization. The informants talk positively about the funeral as a ceremony that helps them to deal with and come to terms with a death.

It becomes clear during the interviews that when the informants talk about funerals, they talk about a funeral in a religious setting. They take for granted that the funeral is hosted by a priest and that the venue is a church. The next chapter will further explore the meaning attached to a religious funeral.

The role of religion

Considering that such a high percentage of Swedish funerals take place in a religious setting, it was only to be expected that the informants would associate funerals with church. The questionable relevance for contemporary people of traditionally religious funerals and the promotion of personalized funerals have been getting much attention in death research (Holloway, Adamson, Argyrou, Draper, & Mariau, 2013). Sweden is often seen as one of the world’s most secular countries, and one might wonder why, in a secular country, the move from church funerals to more personal and/or non-confessional funerals is not happening faster.
However, this is only a paradox if the idea that only traditionally religious people find the religious funeral meaningful is taken for granted.

It has been described above how the public manifestations associated with death are essentially limited to the funeral. In addition to the fact that all of the informants, when asked, say that the funeral is an important ceremony, the fact that they talk about the funeral as an opportunity for closure and acceptance of death implicitly attaches significant meaning to the funeral. That the funeral has shouldered this responsibility opens up for the possibility that organized religion plays an important part in influencing the way teenagers think about death. That there exists an influence is absolutely indisputable: none of them even mention any other possibility for a funeral than a religious one; but the nature of this influence is not obvious.

In the results chapter above, it has been shown how the informants immediately and instinctively detach religious faith from a religious funeral. None of them claim to be religious, although none of them are willing to settle firmly on non-religious or atheist as a label. Despite this, they all stress the relevance of a religious funeral.

That a church funeral is so natural, indeed important, to the informants does not mean that the influence is religious. The informants do not express that the church funeral is important as a religious ceremony, but as a cultural, social, traditional one. They justify it, as it were, on traditional grounds. Whatever they believe in is disconnected from the religious form.

The image that emerges during the interviews is one where the religious funeral is a) taken for granted and b) associated with positive values. Ina Rosen finds in her material that religion-as-heritage is positive: it is seen as a common language and imagery. Whereas religion as system is seen as negative, religion-as-heritage (social and cultural values and ideas) is not. The informants of this study do not seem to consider the idea that religious or other values are imposed upon them via the funeral. Nor do they seem to think that the religious aspect of a funeral is irrelevant or unwelcome. Instead they seem to view positively that the values are there, available to them when they want them. Some of the informants discuss the church and Christianity from the point of view that one is always welcome back into the folds of the church, rather like the prodigal son.

However, perhaps the category of Rosen’s that best fit the way the informants talk about the religious funeral is tradition. Tradition is a category that although rooted in religion is without significant belief content. Such an approach makes it possible to participate in a religious ceremony without recognizing that it is, indeed, a religious ceremony. None of the informants in this study connect a church funeral to their own beliefs. They do not claim to believe in an afterlife, and they do not even touch upon the religious content of the funeral until specifically asked about it. As church funerals are so common in Sweden, this is perhaps not particularly strange. However, that all the informants, when questioned about the apparent paradox between never having set foot in church and having a church funeral, maintain that the religious funeral is important was unexpected.

Anders Bäckström (1992) has pointed out how funerals have changed albeit in a way that does not show statistically (by, for instance, a higher percentage of non-confessional funerals). One might argue that funeral services, though religious ceremonies, are religious ceremonies adapted to a largely non-religious public. However, this does not detract from the way the informants talk positively about the religious aspects of the funeral, be it the church as a venue or the
religious content of the service. They also stress the traditional aspect of it, without once problematizing the religious content.

4.3 Conclusions

The point of departure of this thesis was a three-part research problem on teenagers’ perceptions of death, how and where they perceive that death socialization occurs, and the role of religion via (particularly) the funeral in this. The following chapter will bring together the quantitative and qualitative results to address these questions.

At the basis of the study is the question of teenagers’ perceptions of death. A poignant and mildly dramatic way of putting it would be to say that the teenagers largely lack perceptions of death. Death is a great unknown, not only in a spiritual sense but also in a practical and social sense. They are typically not exposed to the process of dying and any rituals concerning the dead person are limited to the funeral. However, it is a statement in need of some modification. Although the interviews suggest that the teenagers attach little meaning to death and dying from the perspective of the dying person, the relevance of death can instead be found in the way a specific death affects family and friends. Death’s place amongst the bereaved is supported by the quantitative data, which promotes friends and family as the primary contact area for death. The suggestion is that not only is death located in the close relationships, but very much limited to them.

The translation of ‘death’ to ‘bereavement’ also supports what previous research (Giddens, 2009; Mellor, 1993; Nelson & Honnold, 1980) says about the public absence of death and the impactful presence of private death. This idea of death as something that concerns only the bereaved spills over into the way the teenagers view funerals. The funeral is less for the sake of the deceased and more an opportunity for the bereaved to come to terms with the death.

The second question concerned death socialization. There are two factors that seem to shape death socialization: first, there is the absent nature of death. Regardless of whether it is fair to say that contemporary death is invisible, it is at least not public. The days of public mourning and visible displays of grief are gone. Death appears frequently in video games, movies, news media and so forth, but rarely in a context where there is a deep-felt emotional dimension. Despite the way all informants say that they often or even ‘too often’ hear about death in news media, they clearly make a difference between this sort of mediated death and what they call death itself. This is further supported by the way ‘media’ scores surprisingly low in the survey on areas where the respondents encounter death. Second, the deaths that shape young people’s understanding and perception of death are few. The interviews underpin the idea that death is fairly abstract until there is a personal experience of bereavement. Death is very much remote, either physically (the idea that death happens in old age) or emotionally (anonymous death in news media, for instance).

Both the survey and the interviews give overwhelming support to the idea that death socialization takes place in the primary group. Although the number of respondents who admitted any influence at all was fairly moderate, the fact that they name family and friends as their primary contact area for questions about death as
well as their main confidants supports this idea. The informants were more open to talk about the influence of their parents and/or the formative experience of deaths of people close to them (e.g. grandparents). New socialization agencies, such as media, seems to play little role in shaping the way the teenagers view death.

The third and final research question concerned the role of religion in death socialization. A level of religious influence is immediately apparent in the way the religious funeral is taken for granted. Further, the religious funeral is not just a matter of course but something that the informants view as positive. It is a source of comfort and familiarity to them.

It is tempting to pose the question why, in a secular country like Sweden, young people find comfort in a religious ceremony – even if, as has been implied above, the comfort is psychological rather than spiritual. Ina Rosen has suggested the term *unpacked religion* as an approach to the apparent contradiction of the Scandinavian (in her case Danish) churches’ high membership rates and the atheism of the Scandinavian people. Her objection to traditional secularization theory is that it presumes a common core shared by various religious expressions. The data collected for this study supports the idea that no such common core is necessary. The relevance of the religious funeral is not primarily religious but social. The religious funeral is important because it is traditional and because it is what the teenagers know; not because it corresponds to any ideas they have of an afterlife. There is no apparent connection between the informants’ practice, tradition and belief. The influence of religion seems to be primarily a question of form rather than belief content.
5 Discussion

The results from this study fit neatly with previous research in the field. The image that emerges is one where death is remote and largely absent from public view but rare and impactful in an individual’s private life.

Perhaps the most surprising result of the study is the positive feelings the informants have towards the religious funeral. Although the apparent paradox of a non-religious population appreciating and requesting religious funerals is well documented in Swedish research (Davidsson Bremborg, 2002; Bäckström, 1992; Gustafsson, 2000; Bäckström, Edgardh, & Pettersson, 2004), the nature of the importance of the religious ceremony has been largely neglected. By using Rosen’s concept unpacked religion to analyse the role of funerals in death socialization, this study contributes in some small way to bridging this gap.

The funeral directors in Davidsson Bremborg’s (2002) study point to intimate, personal funerals as the ideal format. This idea is clearly reflected in this study as well. It has been suggested that limiting the number of guests at a funeral to those closest bereaved is a way to avoid disappointment at a small attendance (Gustafsson, 2003). Whether or not the practice of small, intimate funerals originates with this concern, this is how the informants view the funeral: it is for those who had a close personal relationship to the deceased.

The importance of the funeral is as an opportunity for the bereaved to accept the death, say their goodbyes (for their own benefit) and pay their respects (to the family of the deceased – not to the deceased him- or herself). This speaks of the lack of other opportunities to grieve and come to terms with a death. The death beds that Gorer and Ariès describe are a rare occurrence in contemporary Sweden, and perhaps the change of funeral focus from deceased to bereaved is a consequence of there being no other opportunity for the bereaved to accept the death. It is very clear from the material gathered for this study that dying is a fairly invisible process.

Discussion of theory

Death socialization is not a frequently used theoretical approach. The link between mortality and other social factors (gender, sexual orientation, race, social class, etc.) has been the subject of many studies (see Liljeberg’s 2005 summary of studies on death and social participation), but it seems that the term death socialization has fallen out of fashion. This despite how Nelson and Honnold (1980) establish the influence of death socialization on Subjective Life Expectancy (SLE), and other studies have shown how SLE predicts mortality (for instance van Solinge & Henkens, 2014). Perhaps the term falls somewhat between disciplinary chairs as death socialization is a sociological theory and SLE is a term that appears primarily in psychological/health studies.
However, I would like to promote it as useful when researching, particularly, young people and death. Not only in the most obvious sense of determining how and where death socialization happens, but also in the way it can aid to gauge the visibility of death in the public sphere. For instance, the low score of newspapers and other media in the survey of this study is somewhat surprising in light of how prevalent death is in news reports. When considering the visibility of death in various media, it has been more common to look at things like the number of mentions of deaths, or the frequency of graphic photographs of dead people in newspapers (Hanusch, 2008), which says little of the impact of this material.

Socialization theory is a sometimes tricky theory to use because there is on the one hand the issue of what has ‘really’ shaped a person, and on the other hand what a person perceives has shaped him or her. This study is clearly focused on the latter, allowing the respondents and informants the freedom of naming their own influences without trying to second-guess them. However, it should be mentioned that it is possible that media reports of death are ‘really’ more impactful than my data suggests.

I have additionally used Ina Rosen’s theory of unpacked religion to analyse the nature of the funeral as a death socialization agency. Unpacking religion allows an approach that does not presume that all aspects of religion are innately connected and where apparent religious expressions can be valuable to a person without necessarily being expressions of that person’s personal beliefs. Severing the link between ceremony and belief goes some way to explain why the religious funeral is continuously relevant. Gustafsson (2000) writes of how the sociologist of religion often feels awkward when faced with the task of describing why non-religious people turn to the church for funerals, weddings and christenings. Unpacking religion makes this task easier as it disentangles aspects from each other that are otherwise often taken for granted.

**Discussion on methodology**

From a methodological point of view, this study reached very widely to try to capture an elusive concept. This has created a situation where, in the process of working with the material, there have been occasions where a particular line of enquiry has presented itself but was not possible to pursue. It was pointed out in the chapter on method, above, that a mixed methods approach by necessity entails a level of width over depth. This is a sometimes frustrating part of the process of using that method. However, death and bereavement is an area that generally benefits from a mixed methods approach. Christine Valentine (2006) writes this:

By taking twentieth century bereavement literature as a topic of investigation, sociologists have identified a tension between the discourses of science and nature. This has produced a conceptual and disciplinary split in which the grief of modern Westerners has been psychologized and medicalized, while the mourning or ritual behaviour of pre-modern and non-Western others has been exoticized and romanticized (Hockey, 1996, 2001; Walter, 1999).

She writes further that this has occurred within a positivist paradigm in which the prioritizing of quantitative methods has excluded the subjective experiences of
self-reflecting individuals. Prioritizing quantitative methods is more a concession to the science-based discourse of modernity than it is an efficient way to access the experiences of the bereaved. A mixed methods approach applied to death studies combine the best of two methodological worlds; this study has aimed to span both the numeric descriptions of the quantitative method while not leaving out the experiences of the subjects.

Ultimately, the question is what was lost by using a mixed methods approach and if it was worth the cost. The most tempting alternative was to leave out the quantitative stage and increase the number of informants. However, the benefit of a mixed methods approach lies not only in the circumnavigation of single method limitations: the combination of methods contribute to the results as well. The obvious example is the low score for encountering death in media versus how the informants feel that there is too much of it.

Suggestions for further research
I have previously stressed the width over depth issue with this study. There are several strands that are dealt with almost sweepingly that could certainly be explored much more in-depth.

The obvious way of dealing with the issue of lack of depth is to narrow the scope. For instance, the informants in my study talk almost exclusively about non-threatening deaths. The death of a grandparent is sad but not unexpected. Limiting the types of death to less ‘comfortable’ deaths (e.g. death in the peer group) might provoke other thoughts amongst the informants.

Social media’s role in communicating death to teenagers is another possible angle. One of the informants mention social media as something that has brought death closer. Presuming that it is true that death is only visible and relevant when it affects a person directly, is it possible that social media has expanded the number of such relevant deaths?

Davidsson Bremborg (2002), Gustavsson (2000) and Bäckström (1992) amongst others have written about the paradox of funerals in religious settings and non-believing mourners. I would suggest using unpacked religion as a way of revisiting this area and looking more closely at the nature of the relevance of the religious funeral.

Finally, in the light of the results of this study and considering some discrepancies between the survey results and the interview results, a more specified survey could be developed. Particularly the question of where the respondents have come into contact with questions of death should perhaps be modified to make the nature of contact clearer. The results of this study show an equation of ‘death’ with ‘bereavement’, and a modified survey should be designed to accommodate this.
Summary

Sweden is one of the most secular countries in the world, yet 91% of funerals take place in a religious setting (81% in the Church of Sweden, 10% in other religious contexts). This opens up for a religious socialization in a context where religious socialization is otherwise weak or non-existent. This study used these circumstances as its point of departure and sought to answer the following questions:

- What perceptions of death are expressed in the material?
- How and where do the study’s participants perceive that death socialization occur?
- What role does religion (particularly via the funeral) play in this?

The questions were addressed using a sequential mixed methods procedure. The quantitative element was a survey, handed out to a total of 165 students at upper secondary school in three Swedish cities (Uppsala, Jönköping, Enköping). This material was then entered into SPSS and a numerical description of trends in the material was thus acquired. Based on this, as well as previous research in the field, an interview sheet was designed. The qualitative stage of semi-structured interviews were then undertaken with students who had already answered the survey.

The first question is descriptive in nature and was limited not by theoretical frameworks but by the scope of the thesis. To analyse the second question, socialization theory – more specifically death socialization – was used. The third question was analysed using the theoretical concept unpacked religion, a term coined by Danish sociologist of religion Ina Rosen.

The results of the study indicate that death holds little meaning in itself and is instead meaningful in the way it affects the bereaved. Outside of bereavement, death is largely invisible. Though the teenagers are clearly aware that death is frequently reported in news media and frequently the subject of fiction, these accounts seem to be mostly irrelevant to them.

In line with this, death socialization happens almost exclusively in the primary group and in connection with death exposure. The survey shows a low response rate for any influence at all on their thoughts of death, though close relationships top the list; the interviews show a more clear parental influence. The data combined speak strongly for traditional socialization paths and low relevance of new socialization agencies, e.g. media.

The role of religion in this process is multi-faceted and occasionally difficult to pin-point. The religious (church) funeral is taken for granted but simultaneously seen in a positive light as a relevant way for the teenagers to come to terms with a death. ‘Unpacking’ the meaning of the religious funeral suggests that the relevance has little to do with the informants’ personal religious beliefs and more to
do with tradition and social expectations. The religious funeral is a matter of course, but one that matters.
Bibliography


Enköpings kommun (2014). Kommunfakta. Downloaded from http://www.enkoping.se/


51


Appendices

1:1 Interview sheet

1. Öppningsfrågor
Vad heter ni och hur gamla är ni?
Vilket program läser du?
Vad skulle du säga att du har för bakgrund (etnicitet och religion)?

2. Introduktionsfrågor
Vad tycker ni att döden handlar om? Vad är döden? Vad betyder den?
Tycker ni att man ofta hör om döden? På vilket sätt? Kan ni komma ihåg när och
var ni senast hörde om döden (det kan vara antingen ett kort nämnan vide i nyhets-
media eller något mer djuplodande).
Vem pratar man med om döden? Vem är bäst lämpad att prata med? Tror ni att
det är lättare för vissa att prata om döden än andra? Varför?
Har ni funderat på döden någon gång? Varför tror ni att folk funderar eller inte
funderar på döden?
Tror ni att det är viktigt att man funderat på döden? Varför /inte?

3. Övergångsfrågor
Var tror ni man får sin uppfattning om döden från?
Kan ni komma på någon film ni sett/bok ni läst/etc. som har fått er att fundera
över döden?
Tycker ni att man kan relatera till/känna igen sig i/förstå den bild av döden som
man möter i media? Förstår man döden annorlunda i filmer/böcker än bland orga-
nisationer?
Tror ni det var annorlunda förr i tiden? Hur?
Skulle ni säga att ni tycker och tänker likadant som era föräldrar om döden?
Många som svarade på enkäten tyckte att begravningen är en viktig ceremoni.
Tycker ni det? Varför /inte?

4. Nyckelfrågor
Var tror ni att man får sina tankar om döden från? Var har ni fått era tankar från?
Är det viktigt att ha en uppfattning om döden?
Finns det några organisationer/institutioner som är viktiga när någon har dött? Är
det viktigt för den som har dött eller de som är kvar? Motsättning? Måste man ha
en relation till institutionen redan innan dödsfallet eller går det bra att ta första
kontakten efter döden? Kan ni tänka er att vända er till en organisation/kyrka med
såna här frågor för första gången efter att någon dött? Tror ni att det är lättare att
hantera döden om man är religiös?

5. Avslutande frågor
Är det något jag har missat? Något ni vill lägga till?
1:2 Letter to the informant

Masteruppsats om ungdomars föreställningar om döden


Resultaten från gruppintervjun kommer att användas tillsammans med resultat från enkäten för att ta fram kunskap om hur ungdomar i Sverige idag resonerar kring döden och frågor som har med döden att göra. Dina svar och dina resultat kommer att behandlas så att inte obehöriga kan ta del av dem.

Du kan när som helst avbryta ditt deltagande i intervjun. Intervjun tar ca 40 minuter. Om du skulle vilja prata med någon efter intervjun så kan du vända dig till kurator på skolan.

Stort tack på förhand för din medverkan!

Om det är något du undrar angående undersökningen är du välkommen att vända dig till mig. Du kan också vända dig till mig om du är intresserad av att ta del av undersökningens resultat.

Anna Row
anna.row@live.se

Samtyckesformulär (kopia till eleven):
Jag har fått information om projektet och gruppintervjun muntligen och skriftligen enligt ovan, fått tillfälle att ställa frågor, fått dem besvarade och samtycker till deltagande i studien.

Elevens namn, datum, namnteckning

E-postadress
1:3 Survey

Först några frågor om din bakgrund

1. Vilket är du född?

2. I vilket land är du och dina föräldrar födda?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jag är född i…</th>
<th>Mamma är född i…</th>
<th>Pappa är född i…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Sverige</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Övriga Norden</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Övriga Europa</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Utanför Europa</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Vilken är din egen och dina föräldrars högsta avslutade utbildning?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Min egen utbildning är…</th>
<th>Mammas utbildning är…</th>
<th>Pappas utbildning är…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Grundskola el. motsvarande</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Yrkesförberedande gymnasium</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Studieförberedande gymnasium</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Högskola/universitet</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Saknar utbildning</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Vet ej</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Jag har vuxit upp i en familj med…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Instämmer inte alls</th>
<th>Instämmer ganska lite</th>
<th>Varken eller ganska mycket</th>
<th>Instämmer helt och hållet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Ett aktivt socialt liv</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Många konflikter</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Aktiv religiös tro</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Stort samhällsintresse</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Stort intresse för idrott</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Aktivt föreningsengagemang</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Stort intresse för böcker</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Några frågor om hur du ser på livet

5. Hur väl instämmer du i följande påståenden om din livssituation?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Inte alls</th>
<th>Ganska lite</th>
<th>Varken eller</th>
<th>Ganska mycket</th>
<th>Helt och hållet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Jag har goda möjligheter att påverka min livssituation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Mitt liv idag motsvarar mina förväntningar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Jag känner mig ofta ensam och utanför</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Det går att lita på människor i allmänhet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Jag upplever mitt liv som meningslös och tomt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Jag ser positivt på min egen framtid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Jag har blivit utsatt för mobbing eller diskriminering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Andra ställer för stora krav på mig</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Jag upplever att jag inte duger</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Jag tror att livet har en mening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Hur viktigt är nedanstående för att du ska kunna leva ett bra liv?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Inte alls viktig</th>
<th>Inte så viktig</th>
<th>Varken eller viktig</th>
<th>Ganska viktig</th>
<th>Mycket viktig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Att se bra ut</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Att få resa och se världen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Att ha vänner</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Att ha familj</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Att ha bra självförtroende</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Att ha en bra utbildning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C1</td>
<td>C2</td>
<td>C3</td>
<td>C4</td>
<td>C5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Att ha pengar</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Att ha god hälsa</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Att kunna förverkliga mina idéer</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Att ha en tro på något</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Att ha ett fast arbete</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Att ha mycket fritid</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Att få egna barn</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Några frågor om dina vanor

**7. Hur ofta har du under det senaste halvåret…**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C1</th>
<th>C2</th>
<th>C3</th>
<th>C4</th>
<th>C5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inte alls det senaste halvåret</td>
<td>Någon eller några gånger</td>
<td>En eller ett par gånger per månad</td>
<td>En eller ett par gånger i veckan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Druckit alkohol</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Rökt cigaretter</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Sett på tv mer än tre timmar per dag</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Spelat data- eller tv-spel mer än tre timmar per dag</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Hoppat över frukost, lunch och/eller middag</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Tagit värttabletter</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Haft svårt att sova</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Haft huvudvärk</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Försökt gå ner i vikt</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Känt stress över skola, studier och/eller arbete</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Känt oro eller ångest</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**8. Hur ofta har du under det senaste halvåret deltagit i aktiviteter som ordnas av…**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C1</th>
<th>C2</th>
<th>C3</th>
<th>C4</th>
<th>C5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Inte alls det senaste halvåret</td>
<td>Någon eller några gånger</td>
<td>En eller ett par gånger per månad</td>
<td>En eller ett par gånger i veckan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Idrottsförening</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Religiös förening</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

57
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>eller organisation</th>
<th>[ ]</th>
<th>[ ]</th>
<th>[ ]</th>
<th>[ ]</th>
<th>[ ]</th>
<th>[ ]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C Humanitär förening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Amnesty, Röda Korset, etc.)</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Dator-, roll- eller konflikt-spelsförening</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Politiskt parti</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Miljöförening</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Hobbyförening (motor, slöjd, djur, mm.)</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Kulturförening (teater, dans, film, musik)</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Elev/studentförening</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Annan, ange:</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
<td>[ ]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


- [ ] Någon av mina föräldrar/styvföräldrar
- [ ] Syskon
- [ ] Annan släkting
- [ ] Lärare
- [ ] Kurator eller skolsköterska eller annan vuxen som arbetar på min skola
- [ ] Kompis
- [ ] Pojkvän/flickvän, make/maka
- [ ] Ledare i en organisation där jag är med
- [ ] Bris eller annan telefonjour
- [ ] Ungdomsmottagning
- [ ] Präst, imam eller annan religiös företrädare
- [ ] Någon mötesplats på internet
- [ ] Gud
- [ ] Ingen

Några frågor om religion
10. I vilka av följande sammanhang har du det senaste halvåret stött på frågor om tro och religion?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inte alls det senaste halvåret</th>
<th>Någon eller några gånger</th>
<th>En eller ett par gånger per månad</th>
<th>En eller ett par gånger i veckan</th>
<th>Varje dag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A  I familjen</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B  Bland vänner</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C  I skolan eller på arbetet</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D  I kyrka eller annan religiös lokal</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E  På TV</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F  På internet</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G  I tidningar</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H  I böcker</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Är du konfirmerad?

- □ Ja, i Svenska Kyrkan
- □ Ja, i annat samfund
- □ Nej

12. När jag det senaste halvåret har besökt en religiös lokal (kyrka, moské, synagoga, etc.), var det för att…

- □ Delta i gudstjänst/bön/samling
- □ Fira en helgdag/högtid (jul, ramadan, etc.)
- □ Delta i en familjehögtid (dop, konfirmation, bröllop, begravning)
- □ Delta i skolavslutning
- □ Gå på konsert eller kulturevenemang
- □ Göra studiebesök
- □ Få lugn och tid att tänka efter
- □ Få tröst i en sorg- eller kris situation
- □ Som turist
- □ Annat, ange:
- □ Jag har inte besökt någon religiös lokal under det senaste halvåret

13. I vilken grad ser du dig som tillhörig…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inte alls</th>
<th>Ganska lite</th>
<th>Varken</th>
<th>Ganska</th>
<th>Helt eller</th>
<th>mycket</th>
<th>hållet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Kristendom</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 14. Varför ser du dig som tillhörig det av alternativen ovan som du känner starkast för?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternativ</th>
<th>Inte alls</th>
<th>Ganska lite</th>
<th>Varken</th>
<th>Ganska</th>
<th>Helt och eller mycket</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A  Det är en del av min kultur</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B  Det är en del av min nationella tillhörighet</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C  Det är något jag föddes in i med min familj</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D  Det är något jag delar ha nytta av som jag tycker är viktiga</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E  Det är mitt personliga val</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F  Det visar vem jag är</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G  Det är något jag kan visar på värderingar som jag tycker är viktiga</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 15. I hur hög grad ser du dig själv som...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternativ</th>
<th>Inte alls</th>
<th>Ganska lite</th>
<th>Varken</th>
<th>Ganska</th>
<th>Helt och eller mycket</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A  Religiös</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B  Sökande</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C  Troende</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D  Andlig</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E  Ateist</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 16. Hur väl instämmer du i följande påståenden om din syn på livet?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alternativ</th>
<th>Inte alls</th>
<th>Ganska lite</th>
<th>Varken</th>
<th>Ganska</th>
<th>Helt och eller mycket</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A  Är mitt eget val</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B  Är något jag delar med andra</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i en gemenskap</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Ard något jag delar med min familj och släkt</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Ger lugn och trygghet</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Ger svar på frågor om livets uppkomst och vad som händer efter döden</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Ger starka upplevelser av något andligt</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Ger tydliga regler för hur man lever ett rätt liv</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Svarar på frågan om meningen med mitt liv</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Utgår från en tro på en Gud, högre makt eller kraft</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J Utgår ifrån något andligt inom mig</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

17. I hur hög grad tycker du att din syn på livet påverkas av…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>och</th>
<th>Inte alls</th>
<th>Ganska lite</th>
<th>Varken</th>
<th>Ganska</th>
<th>Helt eller</th>
<th>mycket</th>
<th>hållet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Föräldrar</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Vänner</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Lärare</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Medier (TV, radio, tidningar, böcker och Internet)</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Religiöss tradition</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Kändisar</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Politisk ideologi</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Filmer</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Naturvetenskap (forskning)</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sist några frågor om din syn på döden

18. I vilka av följande sammanhang har du det senaste halvåret stött på frågor om döden?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inte alls det</th>
<th>Någon eller</th>
<th>En eller ett</th>
<th>En eller ett</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

61
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>senaste halvåret</th>
<th>några gånger</th>
<th>par gånger per månad</th>
<th>par gånger i veckan</th>
<th>Varje dag</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A I familjen</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Bland vänner</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C I skolan eller på arbetet</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D I kyrka eller annan religiös lokal</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E På TV</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F På internet</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G I tidningar</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H I böcker</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19. I hur hög grad tycker du att din syn på döden påverkas av…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>och</th>
<th>Inte alls</th>
<th>Ganska lite</th>
<th>Varken</th>
<th>Ganska</th>
<th>Helt eller mycket</th>
<th>Helt hållet</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Föräldrar</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B Vänner</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C Lärare</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D Medier (TV, radio, tidningar, böcker och Internet)</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Religiöös tradition</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F Kändisar</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G Politisk ideologi</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H Filmer</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I Naturvetenskap (forskning)</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. Vem eller vilka brukar du prata med då du har frågor kring döden?

*Ange högst fem alternativ*

- □ Någon av mina föräldrar/styvföräldrar
- □ Syskon
- □ Annan släkting
- □ Lärare
Kurator eller skolsköterska eller annan vuxen som arbetar på min skola

Kompis

Pojkvän/flickvän, make/maka

Ledare i en organisation där jag är med

Bris eller annan telefonjour

Ungdomsmottagning

Präst, imam eller annan religiös företrädare

Någon mötesplats på internet

Gud

Ingen

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>21. Hur väl överensstämmer följande påståenden med vad du tycker?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>och</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A  Abort, annat än av medicinska skäl, är fel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B  Aktiv dödshjälp (att på medicinsk väg påskynda någons död på dennes begäran) är fel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C  Självmord är fel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D  Begravningen är en viktig ceremoni</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. Döden är någonting jag tänker på...

A  Ofta □

B  Aldrig □

C  Ibland □

Jag skulle kunna tänka mig att delta i en gruppintervju om resultaten av denna enkätundersökning. Min e-postadress är_________________________

Tack för din medverkan!