

Saija Peuronen

# Heteroglossic and Multimodal Resources in Use

Participation across Spaces of Identification  
in a Christian Lifestyle Sports Community



JYVÄSKYLÄ STUDIES IN HUMANITIES 305

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## ABSTRACT

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This dissertation examines how members of one particular youth community, Christian lifestyle sports enthusiasts in Finland, use language and other semiotic resources to construct participation in their community of practice (CoP). The CoP is organized around the late-modern activity culture of lifestyle sports. The participants also share the Christian faith and in their snowboarding camps organize Bible study sessions and engage in prayer and worship. The theoretical and methodological framework incorporates sociolinguistics, social semiotics, discourse studies and connective ethnography, including the exploration of both the digital and physical spaces of the community. The dissertation comprises four articles that include micro-level examinations of the community members' situated uses of heteroglossic and multimodal resources, and thus attention to a diversity of socially meaningful language forms and modes. The data for these studies were gathered during the years 2006-2014, each data set representing a different communicative context. Specifically, I analyzed discursive social positioning of self and other in interviews, linguistic and discursive heteroglossia in computer-mediated communication and in spoken interaction, and mediated performance in online videos.

This research shows that participation in this CoP is constructed in shared activities simultaneously with the negotiation of social categories and relations. Hence, participation is defined by a sense of groupness which makes the community distinct from other groups but nevertheless connected to global cultures, practices and styles. The CoP members also articulate an understanding of their joint enterprise, the community's Christian mission, amidst many transcultural flows. Heteroglossic and multimodal resources are employed for negotiating solidarity, constructing expertise (especially in terms of terminologies, products and video-making practices), and interpreting and recontextualizing the Bible and other semiotic material connected to Christianity within the lifestyle sports culture. These findings point to shared translocal actions and practices by which the community members deal with positions, voices and social relations in highly reflexive, strategic and creative ways that enable them to engage in processes of (dis)identification in their own spaces at the intersection of youth culture, religion and lifestyle sports.

Keywords: sociolinguistics, ethnography, discourse studies, youth culture, community of practice, participation, identification, Christianity, lifestyle sports

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ABSTRACT

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## LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

- Article 1 Peuronen, Saija (Submitted for review to *Journal of Contemporary Religion*). Snowboarders as late-modern missionaries: Positioning self and other within a Christian lifestyle sports community.
- Article 2 Peuronen, Saija (2011). "Ride hard, live forever": Translocal identities in an online community of extreme sports Christians. In Crispin Thurlow & Kristine Mroczek (eds.), *Digital discourse: Language in the new media*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 154-176.
- Article 3 Peuronen, Saija (2013). Heteroglossia as a resource for reflexive participation in a community of Christian snowboarders in Finland. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 17(3): 297-323.
- Article 4 Peuronen, Saija (2014). Identifications through multimodal design: An analysis of the mediated performance of Christian lifestyle sports in online video. In Jukka Tyrkkö & Sirpa Leppänen (eds.), *VARIENG eSeries*, volume 15: Texts and Discourses of New Media. Helsinki: University of Helsinki. [online].  
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# 1 INTRODUCTION

This research explores how diverse linguistic, semiotic and discursive resources can be purposefully used as part of the social life of a 'community of practice' (CoP) (Lave & Wenger 1991, Wenger 1998). I focus on one specific CoP, whose participants are young Finnish Christians who are enthusiastic about different lifestyle sports. The goal of this CoP is to build a network of people who share similar interests and values, who can have fun together, create relationships and find ways to share the Christian message. The community comprises a variety of physical and digital spaces, networks, people, and sports. Officially, the members are organized as a snowboarding association, and therefore I often refer to them as 'snowboarders'. Furthermore, in this dissertation summary, I adopt the abbreviation 'CSiF' (Christian snowboarders in Finland) to refer to their CoP.

The aim of this research was to analyze how CSiF members construct participation in their community through a repertoire of heteroglossic and multimodal resources, and thus involved paying attention to a diversity of socially meaningful language forms and modes. Specifically, I analyzed how these resources are mobilized in shared activities by the community across different communicative contexts and how, during these activities, social categories and relations are established and negotiated. The theoretical and methodological framework of the research combines theories and approaches drawn from sociolinguistics, social semiotics, discourse studies and ethnography.

In this chapter, I describe how the CSiF community can be characterized as a CoP, situate my work by reviewing previous studies, and introduce the participants, communicative contexts and history of the CSiF. I also discuss cultural and religious flows along with the goals, ideas and beliefs shared in the community. Finally, I outline my aims and research questions and describe the organization of this dissertation, which includes four research articles.

## 1.1 A sociolinguistic exploration of a community of practice

The communicative contexts in which the studied Christian snowboarders operate are all characterized by globalization and late modernity. Thus, CSiF members engage in their community's activities amid changes to traditional boundaries, heightened mobility of people and their sociolinguistic resources, and the increasingly important role of digital communication technologies in the lives of individuals and groups (Giddens 1991, Blommaert 2010, Jacquemet 2005, Arnaut 2016, Androutsopoulos & Juffermans 2014, Vertovec 2007). In this research project, I analyzed the ways in which CSiF members draw on and combine the various linguistic, semiotic and discursive resources at their disposal in situating themselves in the fields of global youth cultures, lifestyle sports and Christianity. For instance, by using discursive strategies of social positioning they critically evaluate traditional, evangelical, church discourses. Similarly, the role of women in the church is interpreted by a humorous, heteroglossic treatment of specific Bible passages. In addition, they are able to draw on multilingual and multimodal resources in digital environments for the purposes of constructing solidarity and expertise as well as representing their community to others. As such, this research adopts the rationale of ethnographically-oriented sociolinguistics in studying meaning-making practices at a micro-social level (Hymes 1972: 37, Rampton, Maybin & Roberts 2015: 18). This approach allows analysis of the ways in which CSiF members negotiate and represent meanings in their local contexts of communication and at the same time interpretation of how certain discourses and voices cut across different layers of the social, cultural and ideological realities of their community.

Translocality is therefore a key characteristic of the community and its members' communicative practices. The phenomenon of translocality refers to the connectivity of locales in processes of globalization, as the meaning of the local is increasingly being defined in terms of other locales, global styles and different modalities (Leppänen et al. 2009, Alim 2009, Kytölä 2016). Thus, attempting to understand the diversity and simultaneity of contexts and resources has repercussions on how the concept of a community can be viewed in present-day social settings. As a case in point, the recent concept of 'superdiversity', originally a term used in migration studies, provides a theoretical lens for researching "the specificity of different superdiverse contexts and how superdiversity variables are simultaneously at play in these contexts and impact on a variety of actors, institutions and localities that are the arenas of these contexts" (Meissner 2015: 560, see also Arnaut 2016). On the issue of conceptualizing communities in an age of superdiversity, Li Wei (2014: 476-477) suggests that complex social formations require us to re-evaluate definitions of community, including a shift of emphasis from physical closeness, place or ethnicity to shared social understandings.

This focus on shared social understandings was adopted in this research via the conceptual framework of a 'community of practice'. The idea of communities of practice was originally developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998) in the context of a social theory of learning. Within this framework, learning is approached as social participation, understood as "being active participants in the *practices* of social communities and constructing *identities* in relation to these communities" (Wenger 1998: 4, original emphases). Thus, practices emerge as social actors engage in joint endeavors and at the same time negotiate meanings associated with self and other in the context of their community. Examples of typical CoPs include families, neighborhoods, workplace communities, school classes, music bands and sports clubs. Hence, in communities such as these, participation is also achieved through a trajectory by which "newcomers become included in a community of practice", moving from a peripheral position to full membership of the community (Wenger 1998: 100, Lave & Wenger 1991). Overall, in this process of becoming a member of a CoP, identity is constantly negotiated and constructed through participating in shared practices, which Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992: 464) define as "[w]ays of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations". In order to describe how practice is associated with and how it creates coherence in a CoP, Wenger (1998: 72-73) outlines three dimensions of a CoP: mutual engagement, a joint enterprise and a shared repertoire. In the following, I explain how these three dimensions feature in my approach to analyzing participation in the CSiF community.

Since CSiF members form a faith-based, non-institutional community (there are no requirements regarding formal membership of CSiF, nor is CSiF affiliated with any particular church) that builds on volunteer work and the participants' shared interest in practicing lifestyle sports, mutual engagement is one of the defining elements of the community. To unpack the ways of participation through mutual engagement in the CSiF community, I focused on the interactive and semiotic events of the community and the processes of identification enacted in these events (see Brubaker & Cooper 2000). The events in question, which took place in both the community's digital and physical spaces, included casual conversations with specific interactional goals, multimodal performances and evaluations of the community's joint enterprise. The analyses of these events are presented in the four research articles, each of which deals with a different type of data. The data types consist of ethnographic interviews conducted with the community members, messages posted on their Internet discussion forum, spoken interaction at snowboarding camps, and online videos produced by the community members themselves. Each data set represents a different social space that is discursively constructed by the participants in particular communicative events (cf. Androutsopoulos & Juffermans 2014: 4). These social spaces I have termed *spaces of identification*, the intention being to capture the dynamics of participation in a Cop. Thus, spaces of identification are established in and through mutual engagement in shared activities and related processes of identification (and dis-identification) that



take place in certain situated contexts of the community through the deployment of a shared repertoire. Negotiations on the community's joint enterprise, which form an integral part of the community's activities, are also realized in these spaces (see Meyerhoff & Strycharz 2013: 430).

However, since the community members operate in different digital and face-to-face environments, it can be argued that, as a theoretical notion, CoP is unable to capture all the intricacies of CSiF's fluid socio-cultural contexts. In fact, according to Madsen (2015: 51), "[s]ociolinguistic studies of communities of practice typically focus on smaller groups of people in well-defined contexts of repeated face-to-face encounters, such as school classes or workplaces". In comparison to typical school classes, for instance, the community of Christian snowboarders may be characterized as more diverse in its variety of locations, discursive spaces and participants. Moreover, the forms and duration of participation may vary according to the individuals' interests, the social relations they form and their personal situations in life. The community is thus simultaneously a loose network of people interested in similar lifestyle sports activities, a group of regular participants dedicated to the Christian mission of the community, and a variety of different clusters of friendships connected in various ways through shared activities in its physical and digital spaces. Overall, then, despite the community's fluid and complex character, its socio-cultural and ideological foundation unites all those who participate in the interactive and semiotic events in these spaces, which function as shared environments for establishing, negotiating and representing meanings that are specific to the community.

To investigate *how* the CSiF members construct participation in their spaces of identification, I examine the uses of the community members' repertoire of *heteroglossic and multimodal resources*. Thus, their shared repertoire of a diversity of linguistic, discursive and semiotic resources provides means for communicating meanings which carry social, cultural and ideological value for them. This communicative work is enabled especially by heteroglossia, a notion for representing a diversity of language forms, and multimodality, i.e., the combination of different semiotic modes. For instance, CSiF members modify the spelling and orthography of English and Finnish along with adapting biblical registers and the terminologies of extreme sports for their local communicative purposes, and combine moving image, sound, music and cultural artefacts in their video-making practices. Furthermore, the CSiF members' *discursive strategies of positioning self and other* highlight the ways in which they build (dis)identifications with certain cultures, values, and lifestyles.

In sum, the research articles appended to this dissertation summary explore ways of participation in the CSiF community by focusing on the participants' mutual engagement and the related processes of (dis)identification. Article 1 focuses on aspects of CSiF members' negotiations of their joint enterprise by analyzing the discursive positioning of self and other in the articulation and evaluation of the community's Christian mission as well as their social relations. Article 2 addresses the use of heteroglossic language in

specific online activities, particularly with respect to resources in Finnish and English, while article 3 discusses the ways in which the young people, during their interaction at a snowboarding camp site, reflexively engage in dialogue between the different social and ideological voices present in their community. Finally, article 4 focuses on ways of constructing identifications through multimodal means in mediated performance.

### **1.1.1 Studies of youth culture, religion and lifestyle sports**

In this section, I review selected studies on youth culture, religion (focusing predominantly on Christian contexts) and lifestyle sports, thus introducing the broader social contexts relevant in situating my work. The purpose of reviewing these studies is to show how I contextualize, define and use the concepts of youth, religion and lifestyle sports in this dissertation. The studies are located in the field of sociolinguistics as well as other language-focused fields, such as literacy studies, and in the related fields of sociology, anthropology and cultural studies. Like the empirical analyses included in this dissertation, these studies contain examinations of face-to-face interactions, interviews, multimodality, as well as discussions and representations that take place in digital environments. Furthermore, they provide perspectives on the negotiation of religious identity and community through language and other semiotic resources, construction of participation by multimodal resources, construction of shared understandings on religious practices and sacred texts, legitimacy in communities of practice, the role of videos in skateboarding communities, and ideologies of lifestyle sports more generally. Since they bear similarity to the topics of this dissertation, they support the interpretation of my findings and help me to identify a research gap that this research seeks to fill.

The notion of 'youth' can be approached from a cultural perspective. Thus, instead of seeing youth specifically in terms of biological age and defined merely as a transition period from the incompleteness of adolescence to a complete adulthood, youth may be understood as culturally relative to childhood, adulthood and old age as well as to other youth, i.e. the peer group (Bucholtz 2002: 532). In addition, a cultural understanding of youth includes treating their engagement in specific activities and undertakings as practices in their own right, and thus not as something that stands in for adult identities (Androutsopoulos & Georgakopoulou 2003: 3). Therefore, these practices are viewed as a means for constructing relevant meanings and identities in young people's own socio-cultural contexts, including lifestyle-related communities with their associated values and ideologies. Pujolar (2001: 4), in his sociolinguistic study of two particular youth cliques in Barcelona, treats youth culture as the "whole set of social practices young people organize as they gather together in their leisure time". By drawing on the concept of heteroglossia, he explores how young people's ways of using a repertoire of speech styles, varieties and languages contribute to the construction of their worldviews, community memberships, relationships within their groups and, above all, identities related to gender (Pujolar 2001: 6). His findings show that

language occupies a central position in young people's negotiations and struggles over meaning (ibid.: 301).

Giampapa (2004: 195) studied Italian Canadian youth and their narratives of self-identification in relation to specific spaces for negotiating identity both in the workplace and in their peer groups. One participant in her study negotiated her Italian Canadian identity primarily through ethnicity and language while her self-identification as an Evangelical Christian, and thus non-Catholic, placed her on the margins of the Italian Canadian world. This marginalization (in terms both of ethnicity in the Canadian world and religion in the Italian Canadian world) required her to find spaces and networks which allowed the simultaneous articulation of the different, and seemingly contradictory, aspects of her identity (ibid.: 216). Similarly, Strhan (2013: 339) studied how belonging to a certain religious community (an Evangelical Anglican church in London) may cause tensions between the church members' expressions of their faith and the norms of equality with respect to gender, sexuality and other religions in the surrounding society. These tensions, of course, may be present *within* religious communities, as well (see Woodhead 2009: 8). Ultimately, religions can be viewed as 'social forms' which, in their orientation to "a higher or ultimate level of reality", affect the ways in which people organize their social relations (Woodhead 2009: 11).

In their study of young people's language and literacy practices in the context of religion, Lytra, Volk and Gregory (2016: 1) stress that children and adolescents are "knowledgeable and active meaning makers". They consider them to be capable of defining and reworking their understandings of religion both locally and globally in different social contexts, such as their relationships, activities and rituals. Thus, like the cultural understandings of youth, Lytra et al. (2016: 2) approach religion as a cultural practice that forms an important part of many people's lives. As a case in point, Souza, Barradas and Woodham (2016) applied a multimodal analysis to examine how Adam, a nine-year old Polish boy in London, developed symbolic knowledge through participation in the family's Easter celebration in their home. Souza et al. (2016: 52) conclude that in addition to the use of written and oral texts, faith can be performed in practices of multimodal meaning-making. In her study of the interpretation of sacred texts, Nissi (2010) focused on how young adults in Finland negotiate the meanings of certain biblical texts in their Bible study meetings. By drawing on conversation analysis, she points out that in order to arrive at a shared interpretation, the participants orient to the biblical texts as problem-solving tasks engaging in these in a co-operative and non-hierarchical manner while at the same time taking turns in adopting specific expert positions during the course of the interaction (ibid.: 304-305).

Furthermore, in a sociolinguistic study of religious language use, Niemi (2015) focused on a group of three young adults sharing membership in a charismatic Pentecostal church in Finland's capital city, Helsinki. She explored the young adults' ways of using Helsinki slang and religious terminology as a shared style that is constructed in interaction and as part of the social actors'

everyday practices (Eckert 2003, Auer 2007). The linguistic resources of Helsinki slang and the religious terminology are very different in their formality, values and contexts of use. Nevertheless, the study participants combined these resources effortlessly in their interaction to construct specific social personae of contemporary Christians who treat their faith as natural part of their young adult lives (Niemi 2015: 308–309, see also Lappalainen 2004: 361).

In a study exploring religion and new media, Campbell (2007) focused on the impact of digital technologies on religious communities. For instance, she studied articulations of authority in interviews with members of Jewish, Muslim and Christian online communities. She approached authority from the viewpoints of hierarchy and authority roles, structures, ideology and the role of religious texts. Overall, Campbell (2007: 1057) points out that global connections established by digital means influence how the idea of a religious community and various issues related to religious authority are defined in local contexts. For instance, the Christian participants emphasized the role of the Internet in facilitating the adoption of a globally shared Christian identity, as this was something that their local congregation alone was not able to provide. Hence, social relationships created online contributed to their conception of a global Christian church that reaches beyond the structures of their local churches (ibid.: 1050–1051).

By focusing on language use in a text-based online forum, Sul and Bailey (2013) discuss how a religious online community was constituted by the means of communicative practices specific to Zen Buddhism. They studied messages posted to a Zen Buddhist online forum and analyzed how “ways of thinking about communication and language use” were negotiated between members of the forum (Sul & Bailey 2013: 230). Certain cultural and ideological notions of communication were conveyed through the construction of a Zen Buddhist identity, expertise and the community’s membership online. Thus, the avoidance of ‘idle chatter’ and the use of paradoxical language that challenges everyday logical thinking were valued among the forum participants (ibid: 218). Similarly, Jousmäki (2015) examined the discursive construction of identities and subculture on Christian metal bands’ websites (based both in Finland and the US) as well as in the bands’ song lyrics. She found that Christian metal artists drew on visual and sonic elements of the metal subculture while also extracting ideas and specific passages from the Bible in order to recontextualize them to suit their own contexts and discourses (Jousmäki 2015: 73, Jousmäki 2012).

In discussing lifestyle sports and related terminologies in the articles included in this dissertation, I have used both the terms ‘extreme sports’ and ‘lifestyle sports’. While these terms are not mutually exclusive, ‘extreme sports’ is often associated with media and commercialism (Wheaton 2004: 3). However, my use of the term was initially adopted from the participants of *Godspeed*, an Internet discussion forum that I studied for article 2. The use of the term can also be justified as many of the CSiF community’s members engage in dangerous and risky activities, including hang gliding, ‘off-piste’ (going outside

of marked safe areas) skiing and snowboarding, and different motor sports. They sometimes also commented in a humorous manner, e.g., in the context of hiking, on the use of the term 'extreme' (Peuronen 2008: 84–85). Subsequently, I adopted the term 'lifestyle sports' since it points to the specific meanings, attitudes, values and ideologies that the practitioners of such sports have towards their sport and life in general (Wheaton 2004: 4, see also Maffesoli 1996: 96). Thus, using both these terms, which derive from the community itself and from the research literature, has enabled me to incorporate both emic and etic perspectives.

In general, the field of lifestyle sports comprises a vast variety of activities, most of which are best characterized by their 'alternative' nature (Harinen et al. 2015: 6). Ideologically, these activities differ from 'mainstream' sports in that they are "different from the traditional rule-bound, competitive and masculinised dominant sport cultures" (Wheaton 2004: 3). However, such distinctions are not always so clear-cut. Thornton (2004: 178), for instance, analyzed ultimate frisbee players' processes of identification through the framework of 'critical ethnography'. To examine ultimate frisbee's "potential for the subversion of dominant sporting identities" he focused on ambivalent issues of gender difference and physicality along with the self-regulatory character of the game (ibid.: 193). Thornton concluded that despite the ideal of ultimate frisbee to constitute a game that promotes gender equality, absolute fair play and constrained competitiveness, his informants nevertheless expressed gendered readings of athletic bodies and celebration of physical aggression. Thus, they reproduced many meanings and practices current in other, more competitive sports.

Snowboarding presents an interesting case among the many lifestyle sports since it has grown out of its originally marginal, subcultural status in dramatic ways (Hänninen 2012: 21). Hence, although snowboarding evolved as an alternative to mainstream sports, it has, via its huge popularity, attracted a wide range of practitioners and evolved into a 'trendy' leisure activity. This in turn has made snowboarding an important commercial industry (Hänninen 2015: 109). Snowboarding has also been accepted as an Olympic sport, thus introducing it into the sphere of competitive sports (Dupont & Ojala 2015: 19). An example of an anthropological study on snowboarders is Hänninen's (2012) work on ideological forms of style in snowboarding, especially the forms of anarchy and nostalgia. She studied both Finnish and Scottish snowboarders and discovered that while anarchy enabled the expression of social criticism, nostalgia offered a way to connect snowboarding's ideological, and to some extent, mythical past to the present. Both anarchy and nostalgia served as means for the snowboarders to distinguish themselves and their group from others as well as the prevailing social structures.

Furthermore, ethnographic studies on lifestyle sports include Rodney Jones' (2011a) exploration of the processes of learning in a group of skateboarders in Hong Kong. He draws on the idea of "legitimate peripheral participation" by Lave and Wenger (1991), focusing on amateur videos that the

skateboarders film, design, edit and publish. In this way, the skateboarders participate in their social environment and, consequently, construct their identities as participants of a specific community. Jones (2011a: 596, 606) emphasizes that, by making videos, the skateboarders are active producers of their subcultures and can participate in their social worlds in more reflexive ways. In addition, through their use of digital technologies, they are able to engage in shared practices and construct their identities at the local and global levels (ibid: 604).

Among self-constituted communities of practice, Lucy Jones (2012) has studied Sapphic Stompers, a group of women identifying themselves as lesbians and sharing a passion for hiking in the countryside. Jones (2012: 145) discusses how the group members construct authenticity by engaging in shared practices and styles specific to their community and dis-identifying themselves from other lesbian identities that do not align with the values cherished in the Stompers' community. She also presents an evaluation of the concept of a CoP, addressing issues that have been debated in recent years, such as, how is it possible to gain legitimacy and access to a specific CoP if initially one is not familiar with the practices of the community or their underlying meanings (see Davies 2005: 567, Gee 2005: 214–215, Eckert & Wenger 2005: 584–585)? Jones (2012: 147) calls for an agentic view of legitimacy, outlining that in the Stompers' community, legitimacy is not awarded but an individual's right to join the community comes about by "firstly, their motivation to join the CoP and, secondly, a degree of commonality between an individual and the other Stompers". Thus, once a certain degree of commonality, or a shared interest, is established between the group members, participation and shared practices are constructed through the active production and projection of identities that match the values and broader social discourses of the CoP in question.

Overall, the perspectives offered by these earlier studies guided my understanding of the broader socio-cultural contexts and themes of relevance in this research. Accordingly, I view youth as a cultural category which, in the present instance, is understood via the CSiF members' possibilities for mutual engagement in youth-based lifestyle sports activities, traveling, and generally hanging out and having fun together (see Bucholtz 2002: 544). Following the definitions provided by Wheaton (2004: 11–12), I understand lifestyle sports as late-modern, transnational forms of sociality and participation that value individual and collective styles, experiences, freedom and creativity (see also Piispa 2015: 96). The religion of Christianity is considered a global identity which also finds local expression in the particular spaces of Christian lifestyle sports in Finland (see, e.g., Woodhead 2009). Finally, the use of digital environments is seen as a means to appropriate technology, within certain technical constraints, for one's own communicative and identificational purposes (Leppänen et al. 2017).

Finally, it is evident that members of (youth) communities of practice may find both physical and digital spaces meaningful in promoting shared interests, values and identities. Therefore, it is important to examine these spaces

together. Few studies of heteroglossic language use have encompassed both offline and online environments (but see, e.g., Stæhr 2014), or combined the perspectives of religion and lifestyle sports. Moreover, although language is arguably a central resource for constantly creating and modifying meanings in many social groups (see Pujolar 2001: 303), analyzing multimodal resources enhances understanding of how, for instance, religious ideas can be expressed in and intertwined with other cultural frames of reference.

### 1.1.2 In focus: Christian lifestyle sports enthusiasts in Finland

The community of practice that forms the focus of this study brings together Christians who are interested in a variety of lifestyle sports activities, such as snowboarding, newschool skiing, skateboarding, longboarding, hamboarding, climbing, parkour, windsurfing, wakeboarding, bmx-biking, and motocross. In addition to this diversity in their favored sports activities, they also come from different parts of Finland, and are affiliated with different local Christian congregations. In this research, I focused on selected digital and physical spaces of the CoP which contribute to understanding of the nature of the community but which nevertheless cannot offer a 'complete' picture. For instance, Hovland (2009: 145) emphasizes that connected sites should not be treated as pieces of a jigsaw puzzle since this might encourage one to "force the pieces into perfect connections to each other". This is also worth noting when embarking on a description and examination of a CoP's shared repertoire: while the different linguistic, semiotic and discursive resources studied give a versatile picture of how the shared repertoire is used in the different contexts of the community, they necessarily exclude certain uses of the repertoire.

The spaces of the community of interest include an Internet discussion forum at *www.godspeed.fi*, snowboarding camps organized by an association of Christian snowboarders in Finland<sup>1</sup> and the community's – and its individual members' – video-sharing channels. Since these spaces overlap considerably in their participants, activities and discourses, and because officially the community is organized as a snowboarding association, I created the acronym CSiF to refer to the CoP in this research. To summarize, in this research, the term CSiF refers to 1) a specific snowboarding association with a repertoire of organized activities, 2) a diverse range of social actors connected with Christian snowboarders in Finland (whether or not officially members of the snowboarding association), and 3) related digital spaces within the discursive field of Christian extreme/lifestyle sports in Finland.

Initially, I studied the *Godspeed* Internet discussion forum, which was dedicated to Christians interested in extreme sports in Finland. This network was established within and in relation to the CSiF community with the aim of extending the scope of their sports activities and thus including people interested in, for instance, climbing and motor sports. The *Godspeed* community

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<sup>1</sup> Officially, the snowboarding association is called *Gospel Boarders – kristityt lumilautailijat ry*.

aimed to unite Christians from different local Christian congregations and provide them with a space for networking. The users of the *Godspeed* Internet discussion forum did not generally specify their local congregations, but often simply stated that they were Christian believers. Nevertheless, the Christian events that were referenced in the forum discussions were organized by the free charismatic churches and the Evangelical-Lutheran church in Finland. In order to disseminate information and connect people enthusiastic about particular sports, the *Godspeed* forum included separate sections for current matters, general discussion, faith and various different sports. Compared with the large discussion forums which attract thousands of users (e.g., those studied by Kytölä 2013), this forum remained, throughout its approximately five years of existence, rather small, with 79 registered users during the data collection period (August 2006 - March 2008). Of the topics discussed in the forum, the section on 'current matters' was clearly the most popular (comprising 80 discussion threads out of the 205 threads included in the data) and contained discussions on different events that the community members themselves organized or in which they participated (e.g., Christian youth events or national snowboarding competitions). These discussions served the community's purpose of uniting like-minded people from different parts of Finland to engage in extreme sports, hanging out together, prayer and worship. Another section that generated discussion was dedicated to 'free topics' such as the forum users' self-presentations as well as threads about music and extreme sports videos. Other popular sections were 'Bible verses', 'buy and sell' ads and, of the individual sports, snowboarding and climbing. Each of these sections included around 15 discussion threads. Other sports that also generated discussion between forum users across Finland were different forms of biking (e.g., cross-country, dirt or bmx), inline skating and parkour. Based on the forum users' self-descriptions in one particular discussion thread, their reported ages ranged from 15 to 26, with most in their early 20s.

With respect to CSiF more generally, the individuals who organize and participate in the community's lifestyle sports activities are mainly young Finnish men and women. The age of the community members ranges from teenagers to young adults in their twenties and thirties. Nine focal participants<sup>2</sup> feature in the research articles produced as part of this dissertation. They include three women: Heta<sup>3</sup> (20-22 years old during her involvement in the data collection), Jasmin (20) and Alina (20). And six men: Ilari (22-24), Daniel (21), Mikael (24-26), Toni (36-38), Kasper (19) and Leevi (20-21). These participants were selected as they expressed interest in my work and were willing to be interviewed. In addition to the interviews, they also gave me

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<sup>2</sup> The community is relatively small and has a unique character in the Finnish context, and hence to protect the privacy of the participants, I do not outline their individual member profiles. As my aim is not to analyze individuals *per se* but to focus on the construction of meanings in specific contexts of the community, I consider a general description of their backgrounds sufficient for making interpretations of the practices and discourses prevalent in the community.

<sup>3</sup> All the participant names are pseudonyms.



permission to audio-record their casual conversations. Most of them have been involved in the community and organizing its activities for several years. Of the contexts studied in this research, they participated most actively in the community's camps. Leevi and Ilari were also involved in producing the community's videos. Apart from Toni, the other participants were not active in the *Godspeed* discussion forum but participated more in the other digital spaces, such as the community's *Facebook* groups and writing blogs for CSiF's website. In background, these participants were from the Southern, Central, Western and Southern-Western parts of Finland. Their church affiliations included the Evangelical-Lutheran Church (the largest church in Finland with 73.8 percent of the population as registered members in 2014 (Statistics Finland 2014)), Pentecostal church and the Free Church of Finland. Not all of the participants identified with a specific denomination or participated strictly in the activities of only one church. In addition, those belonging to the Evangelical-Lutheran church reported that they identified closely with a specific mission organization of the church. This versatility also concerned the religious backgrounds of their families. Some had grown up in devoted Christian families and their parents had facilitated their access to the community of Christian snowboarders while others came from families that were only nominally Christian. Moreover, four of the focal participants had studied in Bible schools or been involved in mission organizations abroad, while others had otherwise traveled abroad engaging in lifestyle sports activities while also visiting Christian missionary organizations.

CSiF has a strong international character, as the leading figures have established many connections with Christian groups and organizations abroad, mostly in the Nordic region, central Europe and California in the US. The community functions in different forms and constellations. Before and during my fieldwork period, they organized activities locally in certain cities and towns in Finland, including longboarding sessions in Helsinki, climbing activities in Jyväskylä, and Bible study groups (so called 'cell groups') in Helsinki, Tampere and Jyväskylä. On the national scale, they organized winter and summer camps annually at a specific ski and holiday resort in Finland that gathered participants both from Finland and abroad. In addition, the community members organized trips to ski resorts in Lapland, the northernmost region of Finland, and to locations outside Finland, including ski resorts in Sweden and Norway, and in the Alps. They also attended events arranged by other Christian groups or congregations. According to the organization, some 200 hundred people participate in CSiF's activities annually (not all of them officially registered as members of the snowboarding association). The community's activities are based on volunteer work, and thus the number of camps and other events that they organize in the course of summer and winter seasons depends on their resources with regard to people, sports equipment and funds. In general, the annual summer and winter camps attract the most participants and are perhaps the most accessible to newcomers. Other camps and events tend to be more locally or spontaneously organized, designed for

youth groups of a particular church, or if the destination is abroad, demand a higher budget from the participants.

In an interview, Toni, a core member and founder of the CSiF community, traces his interest in different sports to his childhood when he started performing tricks with a bicycle and later on, with skis and a snowboard. As he was born in the 1970s, he saw the advent of snowboarding in Finland in the late 1980s. After seeing people snowboarding for the first time, Toni made a snowboard for himself during woodwork lessons in school. According to him, snowboards were not yet available in sports stores in his home town. The self-manufacture of snowboards was, at the time, a common practice among other pioneer snowboarders in Finland (see Hänninen 2012: 19–20). More generally, this sort of ‘DIY ethos’ is typical of the cultural ideology of lifestyle sports (Wheaton 2013: 5). Toni was active in establishing his own crew of Christian snowboarders in 1993, which at the beginning consisted only of him and his best friend. Nevertheless, they officially founded the organization of Christian snowboarders in 1994, since when it has been part of the Finnish Snowboard Association. In time, the founding members of the organization were able to attract other Christians who were interested in snowboarding. For more than 10 years they functioned independently, as a sort of unique sports club in Finland. Finally, during the 2005 Snowboarding World Championships in Whistler Blackcomb, Canada, they came across members of *Eternal Riders*, an international Christian lifestyle sports community. After a further couple of years, they connected with *Lighthouse Global Churches*, another Christian network operating in resort locations on a global scale.

Therefore, from the beginning of the CSiF community, Christianity has been an important element in the mutual social relations of the snowboarders participating in the community’s activities. However, they do not adhere to any particular Christian denomination but use the term ‘inter-denominational’ (in Finnish *yhteiskristillinen*) to describe their community. Interestingly, Mikael, another central community member comments on the use of this term by saying that ‘inter-denominational’ is somewhat problematic since it is usually interpreted to include Protestants while excluding Catholics, Orthodox Christians or Anglicans. He continues that in this respect, the term ‘ecumenical’ would be more inclusive but then again, ecumenical activities are usually seen as either more politically oriented or purely administrative in nature (this view is supported by Kärkkäinen, 2002: 85, who states that “it is not the task of the ecumenical movement [...] to create unity between the churches, but rather to give form to the unity already created by God”). Overall, CSiF constructs its idea of a Christian community around the metaphor of *a family*. The use of this metaphor serves to promote the idea of a diversity of participants, some of whom come from different Christian churches, others who do not belong to any specific church and yet others who do not self-identify as Christians at all. According to Toni, some people have participated in their activities for many years without subscribing to the Christian faith. People may also participate in only one or two events, or be more actively involved for a limited period of

time. Furthermore, Leevi, a community member involved in filming and producing videos, stated that the idea of CSiF informs all the occasions when he and his friends decide to go snowboarding. Thus, the idea of the community is viewed in very flexible terms.

In their interaction, however, CSiF members construct hierarchy and legitimacy based on one's experiences as well as the time and length of involvement in the community. For instance, they make distinctions between those they consider as old-timers (even if these people no longer participate in the community), calling them by the Finnish term *vanha parta* or *vanha kettu* (literally 'old beard' or 'old fox'), and others who have joined the community later on. Some members are also granted a more 'pro' status through their achievements in different competitions, for instance, or more generally, through their knowledge about and involvement in the physical and digital spaces of extreme sports. At the same time, they also emphasize that there are no requirements regarding the participants' level of proficiency in snowboarding. Indeed, according to my observations at the snowboarding camps, some of the more experienced snowboarders are willing to dedicate a notable proportion of their time on the slope to instructing beginners.

Overall, my informants had taken different routes to joining the community. In some cases, their parents had brought them to camps when they were as young as 12 years old, while others had had to wait until they were 15–16 years old to obtain permission from their parents to join the camps. In addition, some of them had met CSiF representatives at Christian youth events and, later on, visited the community's website to get more information on their activities, while others had simply decided to join a trip to the Alps. Yet others had been invited by friends or relatives. In sum, the idea of the community as a family is viewed as a goal to strive for, as Mikael puts it in an interview. They understand family as something that connects people who do not always agree with each other but are willing to interact and exchange ideas. Thus, they desire to bring together a diversity of Christians while at the same time acknowledging the fact that not all views are shared by all who identify themselves as Christians.

With respect to the Christian doctrine, the community's central focus is on the person and message of Jesus Christ (see Stark 2011: 408–409). The community members also emphasize a personal relationship to God. The teachings held at the camps in which I participated mostly focused on God as the loving Father of humankind and the joy of being a Christian. For instance, in the first camp that I joined in Easter 2011, the teaching on Good Friday was based on chapter 13 in John's Gospel. Thus, as this passage includes the account of the last supper that Jesus shared with his disciples before his crucifixion, it was connected to the events of the church calendar. In this sense, they conformed to the traditional church practice. A further passage in John (16: 24) was also referenced: it records Jesus' words "Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete" (New International Version). In the context of the biblical message of receiving joy and their participation in a snowboarding

camp, they also discussed the enjoyment of nature that derives from snowboarding and other lifestyle sports (see also Hänninen 2012: 15–16 on the “pure joy” of snowboarding down the slopes).

On the whole, the participants of the community orient to what they share in the cultural and discursive frameworks of Christianity and lifestyle sports. In fact, according to Blommaert (2015: 23), ‘culture’ defined in simple communicative terms is “a degree of sharedness in assumptions, codes for meaningful communication, awareness of common purpose and objectives”. This view is useful in understanding how CSiF members create culture through local activities in which they set different voices in dialogue with each other. The shared assumptions and codes that seem to define the community members’ expression of both Christianity and snowboarding include a certain sense of freedom, playfulness in activities and attitude (a non-utilitarian ethic), enjoyment, creativity, a feeling of holistic integration and an orientation to future of possibilities (see Watson & Parker 2014: 18–19, Wheaton 2004: 11–12). For instance, when talking about their community’s activities, specific discourses of joy, positivity and fun are in continuous circulation. In their discourse practices, having fun has a wide-ranging meaning, comprising the activities of snowboarding, the establishment and maintenance of meaningful friendships, and their involvement in the community’s evangelizing work among snowboarders. Therefore, their understanding of ‘having fun’ also differs from the kinds of activities that are commonly associated with “the hedonistic party lifestyle” within the wider snowboarding culture (Thorpe 2012: 33, see also article 1).

By viewing the Christian faith as an integral part of their lives and the lifestyle sports activities in which they engage, they subscribe to the idea of being “missional” (Bielo 2011: 120–122). Thus, in order to achieve a shared vision of how to operate in the realm of lifestyle sports, CSiF members need to navigate many transcultural flows in late-modern Christianity. On a general note, the Christian snowboarders of 21st century Finland share some characteristics with the Jesus People movement which took place in the late 1960s in the United States (Eskridge 2013). For example, participants in the Jesus People movement embraced elements of popular culture (e.g., music and fashion) and adopted these in their religious lives and in their evangelical practices, thereby evolving from a countercultural movement into a mainstream expression of the contemporary American evangelical youth culture (Eskridge 2013: 145–146). Furthermore, CSiF incorporates certain elements characterizing the Emerging Church movement, which criticizes the modern church for maintaining inflexible institutionalized structures that prevent “spontaneous spirituality” (Hunt 2008: 289). In its emphasis on religion as “not doctrinal but lived practice” in contemporary late-modern culture (Marti & Ganiel 2014: 134), some of the ideas of this movement also match the lifestyle sports ethos of creativity and freedom of self-expression through non-regulated activities (Wheaton 2004: 12). According to Marti and Ganiel (*ibid.*), emerging Christians make “no distinction between secular and sacred spheres of life – for them everything, including the

mundane world of work – is sacred”. This idea applies to CSiF members’ appreciation of nature as God’s creation, which offers an environment for prayer and quiet contemplation while simultaneously engaging in lifestyle sports activities. Other cultural and ideological flows also shape the religious landscape of Western societies. Neo-charismatic movements, such as the New Apostolic Reformation, organized in the form of multiple networks, in particular, are currently gaining a lot of ground, e.g., in the global South (Oro 2014: 221). The ideas of the New Apostolic Reformation, through the transnational networks that CSiF is associated with, have also shaped some of the community members’ thinking about the nature of the Christian church as well as affected some of their religious practices. For instance, Toni emphasized in an interview that in his view, the governance of the church is too remote from the surrounding society. According to him, while it is neither possible nor reasonable to seek to engage every church member in serving their local congregation, a Christian church (founded on the authority of modern-day apostles and prophets) should nevertheless be able to equip and mobilize its members to act as Christians in their local environments. In addition, some of the community members who have attended a North American Bible school associated with this movement have introduced new ways of prayer and worship into the practices of the CSiF community (see Leppänen et al. 2014: 119).

Overall, as well as the variety of Christian denominations that CSiF members belong to, the various flows shaping the community members’ ideas about themselves as a Christian community and the nature of evangelism have most likely caused them to critically evaluate their views concerning the community’s practices. In the interviews that I conducted in February 2013, many community members reported that in general views on the role of religion differ across the community. In August 2013, after my fieldwork period, CSiF sent out a questionnaire to canvass the views of those who have participated in their activities. They were interested in participants’ views concerning the community’s snowboarding activities, camps, trips, services such as snowboard coaching, and issues related to the Christian character of the community (such as teaching, prayer and worship in the camps). A few months later, in December 2013, they published a policy statement on their website to the effect that, in the future, they would be focusing more on their role as a snowboarding organization, and would cut down on the religious activities in their camps and, instead, encourage participants to seek spiritual teaching from their local churches. In this way, they expressed their willingness to maintain a low threshold for joining the community and embrace diversity in its membership. Thus, in their aim to “represent inter-denominational Christianity as its best” they also communicated that they do not wish to have “doctrinal contradictions in a snowboarding organization”. This policy statement implies that, despite their willingness to embrace diversity, responding to the expectations of Christians coming from different congregational backgrounds and cultivating different expressions of Christianity in a single community had proven to be very challenging, if not unsurmountable. On this issue, it could be

argued that at this juncture in the community's existence their inter-denominational principle shifted in a more ecumenical direction (i.e., it became more oriented towards providing a form, rather than content, for the unity of Christians).

In conclusion, CSiF as a community of practice with a diversity of participants, practices, discourses, flows, spaces and cultural frameworks, presents an interesting case for a sociolinguistic and ethnographic research that aims to understand the ways of using language and other semiotic resources that social actors draw on to construct their participation in a specific community. Next, I outline the overall aim of this research and the specific research questions addressed in the individual articles.

## 1.2 Aim and research questions

In this research, I have drawn on theories and methodologies of sociolinguistics, social semiotics, discourse studies and ethnography to combine the 'social' with the 'linguistic' (Bell 2016: 397). My aim is to explore how members of a specific community of practice, Christian lifestyle sports enthusiasts in Finland, use their shared repertoire of heteroglossic and multimodal resources and strategies for social positioning to construct participation in the community.

The concept of a CoP enables me to focus on the construction of participation from two closely related perspectives. In the first, I examine CSiF members' mutual engagement in shared activities and in the second, the processes of (dis)identification in their situated contexts of communication. The activities and contexts studied in this dissertation are the community's Internet forum discussions, face-to-face conversations in snowboarding camps and production and posting of short films to online video-sharing platforms. I characterize the community's various communicative contexts as spaces of identification and view them as sites where CSiF members can engage in interactive and semiotic events together while at the same time positioning self and other in certain ways.

While the concept of a CoP serves as a general framework, "a midlevel category" (Wenger 1998: 124), for discovering and understanding the mechanisms through which the community members construct their participation, more precise analytic tools for examining various resources in the community members' repertoires are provided by concepts from the disciplines of sociolinguistics, social semiotics and discourse studies. These concepts include positioning, social-communicative style, indexicality and multimodal design. The following key question directs the analyses conducted in the research articles:

- How are heteroglossic and multimodal resources and discursive strategies for social positioning used to construct participation in the different communicative contexts of the community?

The construction of participation is analyzed in data gathered from ethnographic interviews, Internet discussion forum messages, face-to-face interactions and online videos. These analyses address the discursive construction and evaluation of the community's Christian mission, negotiation of translocal identities, means available for reflexive participation, and identifications represented in mediated performance. Thus, to address the use of specific resources for making meaning through the members' engagement in shared activities across the community's different communicative contexts, the individual research articles seek to answer the following analytic questions:

1. How do CSiF members position self and other with respect to their Christian mission within the snowboarding culture?
2. How are translocal identities negotiated through a social-communicative style drawing on resources of Finnish and English in digital communication?
3. How are heteroglossic linguistic and discursive resources used to construct reflexive participation in spoken interaction?
4. How are identifications constructed in mediated performance through the multimodal design of online videos?

In all four articles, social actors are seen to construct participation in their CoP in highly strategic and reflexive ways. However, while the focus is on social actors and their strategic ways of engaging in meaning-making practices, I did not concentrate on specific individuals or the organization of the community *per se* (see Duranti 1997: 314). Instead, the analyses included in the articles illustrate how specific discourses, voices and shared social understandings are communicated and negotiated through a repertoire of heteroglossic and multimodal resources.

In addition, while I framed the study of participation with the help of the concept of a CoP, which originally derives from a social theory of learning (Wenger 1998: 3), I did not analyze the community members' trajectories of learning or their processes of socialization into the community. Rather, my analytic interest was in the ways in which the CoP members construct meanings within specific social, cultural and ideological frameworks of youth culture, Christianity and lifestyle sports in the context of late modernity.

### **1.3 Structure of the dissertation**

This doctoral dissertation is composed of four original research articles and the present conclusive and evaluative part of the dissertation (the summary). This summary consists of five chapters: chapter 1 introduces the topic and aims of

the research; chapter 2 outlines the theoretical framework; chapter 3 presents the methodological choices and evaluates these from a research ethical viewpoint; chapter 4 discusses the key findings of the individual studies in relation to the overall research aim of this dissertation; and chapter 5 concludes with an evaluative discussion, including consideration of the implications of the present research, and suggestions for possible further research.

The research articles are appended at the end of this summary. They include three published articles in peer-reviewed journals and volumes and one manuscript currently under review. All form part of the present PhD project. Thus, each article contributes to the examination of how participation is constructed in the community of Christian lifestyle sports enthusiasts in Finland by focusing on different aspects of the community members' heteroglossic and multimodal repertoire and practices of identification.



## **2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This section includes a discussion of the theoretical orientations and key notions drawn on in the research articles and analyses of the use of language and other semiotic resources included in this research. Overall, the theoretical framework of this dissertation is based on poststructuralist and social constructivist thinking and anchored specifically in the sociolinguistics of multilingualism, multimodality, discourse studies and ethnography (Hymes 1972: 41, Hymes 1974: 196–197, Martin-Jones, Blackledge & Creese 2012: 1, Bell 2014: 9, Oberhuber & Krzyżanowski 2008: 197). In this section, I first outline the theoretical underpinnings of this research on the use of various linguistic, semiotic and discursive resources that constitute the CSiF members' shared repertoire in the community's different communicative contexts. Thus, I specify the notions of heteroglossia and multimodality along with the notions of discourses, voice and positioning. Following this, I focus on the issue of participation, which is defined by reference to the CoP framework. Specifically, I discuss the theoretical notions of identification, performance and translocality, all of which serve as useful interpretive lenses for understanding how participation is constructed in the different communicative contexts of the community of Christian lifestyle sports enthusiasts in Finland.

### **2.1 Construction of meanings by drawing on linguistic, semiotic and discursive resources**

With regard to the sociolinguistic context of this research, i.e., a particular youth community that is located in the fields of Christianity and lifestyle sports, I study the construction of the community members' participation in situated social events, activities and spaces, not just via the way of linguistic but also via other semiotic and discursive resources. In fact, Blommaert (2005: 3) defines discourse as comprising "all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural, and historical patterns and developments of

use". It is therefore useful to pay attention to how the community members mobilize a wide diversity of resources for use in their own situated activities as part of broader social contexts. Overall, by gathering ethnographic knowledge and by focusing in fine detail on the use of a range of resources, I have been able to access, analyze and interpret the ways in which language and other semiotic resources are modified to express specific socio-ideological meanings in and through the activities and practices of the community. More specifically, by way of drawing on and modifying resources in their shared repertoire, CSiF members engage in an ideological treatment of certain social phenomena in their CoP, such as their understandings of their Christian mission or lifestyles associated with alternative sports.

Verschueren (2012: 11) points out that ideological meanings are intrinsically embedded in our social realities and in the practices of any given community as the community members make assumptions about shared meanings and what they perceive as 'normal' (see also Jaworski & Coupland 2006: 473–474). Billig et al. (1988: 27) talk about 'lived ideology' in reference to the "common sense within a society" and 'intellectual ideology' which is "a system of political, religious or philosophical thinking". These two levels of ideology may sometimes be a source of conflict and in need of reconciliation in people's and communities' everyday lives. For instance, religious ideas based on sacred texts and the lived realities of individuals do not always match with each other, thus requiring adjustment between interpretation and real-life practices.

To address how the Christian lifestyle sports enthusiasts create meanings in relation to their socio-ideological realities, I draw on and apply the notion of heteroglossia, developed by Mikhail Bakhtin (1981), a Russian philosopher and a literary critic who lived during the Soviet era (1895–1975) (Vice 1997: 2). In articles 2 and 3, I view heteroglossia as an important resource for CSiF members in styling and being reflexive about one's identity and membership of the CoP. In addition, the use of different modes of semiotic resources employed in mediated performance along with the discursive strategies of social positioning provide further possibilities for reflexive identity work, to be examined here in processes of (dis)identification.

### **2.1.1 Multilingualism, boundaries and heteroglossia**

While regarding studies of code-switching, bilingualism and multilingualism as important starting points for examining linguistic diversity, and acknowledging studies such as those by Auer (1995, 1999), Lam (2004), Li Wei (2005), Androutsopoulos (2006), and Hinrichs (2006) as important sources of inspiration for my research project, the notion of heteroglossia provides the key tenets for the general philosophy of language applied in this work. Thus, I view language as inherently social in nature (Bakhtin 1981: 259, Hymes 1974: vii, Bell 2014: 2), and maintain that people have certain worldviews and intentions regarding their communicative practices (Jørgensen 2008: 162–163). In order to be able to analyze the manifold uses of language in different social contexts, I view multilingualism in terms of the specific linguistic and discursive resources

that make up the repertoires acquired gradually by social actors during their lifetime and as part of the communities they are involved in (Blommaert 2010: 103, Räisänen 2013: 64). More specifically, the repertoires of the CSiF members studied for this dissertation mainly consist of the resources of Finnish and English that are associated with the fields of youth culture, snowboarding, and Christianity.

Different language varieties, genres, literacies, vocabularies, accents and registers enter the lives of language users at different periods of time and through different people, communities and other social contexts. Hence, individuals' repertoires reflect their 'language competence' in terms of when, where, how, for which purposes and with whom specific resources have entered their repertoires. These resources can be based either on a single language, such as Finnish, and would thus conventionally be regarded as monolingual, or they can be based on more than one language, e.g., Finnish and English, and would thus be viewed as bi- or multilingual (see Blommaert 2010: 105). However, when one aims to study how linguistic resources are used, negotiated and understood in local communicative contexts, the focus necessarily shifts away from examining languages as bounded, easily countable entities and individuals as members of certain predefined speech communities with fixed norms for language use (Martin-Jones, Blackledge & Creese 2012: 4). In analyses that are based on the view of language as composed of specific resources, no benefits are gained, for instance, from drawing strict boundaries between languages based on national borders. Rather, the distinctions are studied in local contexts of use and through the social and ideological meanings that the social actors themselves assign to the use of specific resources (Otsuji & Pennycook 2010: 241, Makoni & Pennycook 2012).

With regard to linguistic boundaries both on individual and societal levels, Bakhtin (1981: 272) discusses the phenomena of centripetality and centrifugality. By these terms, he refers to the constant struggle in language between centripetal forces that strive to advance standardization and unification, and centrifugal forces that are instrumental in creating diversity. Heteroglossia is the manifestation and fruit of centrifugal forces (Bell 2014: 280). The notion of heteroglossia refers to the inherent diversity in language, drawing our attention to the social, historical and ideological aspects of language (Lähteenmäki 2010: 24–25). As such, it serves as a valuable theoretical lens for considering the actual language practices, including different language forms, discourses and socio-ideological voices, which social actors engage in and negotiate as a part of their everyday and community-based lives (see Blackledge & Creese 2014: 3–4). In comparison to notions such as language choice or code-switching, which generally treat specific languages or codes as separate categories in an *a priori* fashion, heteroglossia enables the analyst to focus on the social meanings created through a diversity of language forms both in monolingual and multilingual discourse (Bailey 2007: 258). Hence, with this approach, code-switching can be treated as "one particular manifestation of heteroglossia" (Pujolar 2001: 174).

Heteroglossia is therefore a productive notion for analyzing data collected from a community of practice in which different cultural, ideological and discursive contexts, voices and positions come together and are set in dialogue with each other. Using resources from different registers, such as expert vocabularies or textual sources in a specific interactive event may create tension-filled situations as these different resources “come with social and historical associations from prior usage” (Bailey 2012: 502). As the pre-existing meanings and associations that particular resources have are introduced into new contexts and juxtaposed with each other, the meanings may need to be negotiated and re-defined in situated social interaction. Thus, the idea of dialogue in language as “the ongoing process of communication” is central to Bakhtin’s thinking (Morson & Emerson 1990: 50). Dialogue is something that goes beyond any individual interactive event: it is characteristic of the nature of language and how people, before all else, *exist* by engaging in communication with each other.

Article 3 illustrates the dialogic relationship that social actors can have with societal issues by engaging in situated local interactions. In order to study the dialogized, heteroglossic language use as part of the Christian snowboarders’ engagement in specific interactive and metapragmatic events, I analyze aspects of indexical meaning. These aspects consist of indexical presupposition and indexical entailment which are related to the use of specific language resources in the community’s interaction (Silverstein 2003, 1993). While the Christian snowboarders engage in reflexive negotiations over meaning, they necessarily share certain presupposed indexical interpretations in the language resources that they employ. However, in the course of the interaction, they may also entail certain contextual parameters into their shared language resources to create new meanings. In other words, indexicality refers to “the connotational significance of signs”; thus, in order to understand the meanings of specific activities and social relations in certain communicative situations, it is necessary to consider more than the literal meaning of words in their actual contexts of use (Blommaert & Rampton 2011: 5). Pujolar (2001: 32), who utilizes the concept of heteroglossia in his sociolinguistic work on youth culture, comments on the relationship between the actual linguistic resources used in communication and their associations as these relate to the wider social contexts as follows:

Bakhtin gives us a clear indication of how we may be able to connect particular speech forms with particular cultural forms. This connection is not between particular social features and linguistic variables, but it is an indirect relation via the insertion of linguistic structures in particular social practices.

Indeed, this indirect relation can be fruitfully addressed by the processes of indexicality. It is thus important to keep in mind the complexity of the relationship between language and particular social phenomena (such as identity) when studying ‘hybrid’ or ‘multicultural’ groups (Auer 2005: 403, Otsuji & Pennycook 2010: 243, Ochs 1993: 289). In other words, there is no univocal relation, for instance, between a language variety and a certain type of identity. Blommaert (2013: 13) points out that it is, in fact, the task of

sociolinguistic analysis to demonstrate the complexity of language use and how language users are nevertheless able to arrive at shared understandings, despite the diverse origins that specific features of language may have. This analytic challenge is addressed in this research by focusing on many different aspects of the Christian snowboarders' sociolinguistic repertoires, including not only multilingual and heteroglossic language use, but also multimodal resources, and examining the ways in which the community members, by ways of using these diverse resources negotiate and co-construct meanings in the different spaces of their community.

Thus, a final note in this section concerns the use of the notion of heteroglossia in studies of online discourse and social media practices, often characterized by discursive and semiotic diversity (Leppänen et al. 2017). Noguerón-Liu and Warriner (2014: 194) combine notions of heteroglossia, multimodality and translanguaging to describe how "the various semiotic systems, language varieties, and registers in [multilingual] participants' repertoires shaped their participation in digital literacy practices". They consider the role of centripetal and centrifugal forces in aiming to understand the value that the research participants place on the use of standard and vernacular varieties of Spanish when producing new media contents. Androutsopoulos (2011) applies the notion of heteroglossia to Web 2.0 environments to analyze them as spaces for the articulation of heteroglossic relations and contrasts. He points out that heteroglossic language use is intentional in terms of the strategic use and placement of material across specific sites, but that heteroglossia may also be emergent due to the activities of multiple authors and, above all, the layered and composite structure of Web 2.0 sites. In addition, Leppänen (2012: 239) describes fan fiction stories posted on the Internet as "heteroglossia in action" and analyzes various aspects of languages, genres, modalities and intertextuality. She illustrates how the resources of linguistic and discursive heteroglossia can be used as key means for establishing and negotiating identifications, communality and orders of normativity within fanfiction writers' translocal spaces online.

### **2.1.2 Social-semiotic approach to multimodality**

Since this research focuses on studying participation in a community of practice in which value is placed on movement, specific equipment, style of clothing, symbols and above all, visual expression through producing video material, it is both useful and necessary to include multimodality in its theoretical frame of reference. Many scholars, such as Blommaert and Rampton (2011: 6) and Bell and Gibson (2011: 559), among others, have called for a need to include analyses of multimodality in sociolinguistic studies. In the framework adopted for this dissertation, language is viewed as part of a repertoire of semiotic resources which can be drawn on to convey meanings. In addition, multimodality is studied here in digital environments and, more specifically, the analytic focus is on examining the unfolding of meaning through various modes in the semiotic entity of an online video. In this way, the modes in question are studied as

contributing to the construction of meaning together and in relation to each other (Jewitt 2016: 73). Furthermore, given the social context of the Christian snowboarders' digital communication, I suggest that the online video is an important cultural tool used for the mediation of social action, as it allows the community members to represent themselves and to relate to their social environments (see Norris 2012: 115, Jones & Hafner 2012: 2). I also view the production and consumption of online videos as a shared practice through which CSiF members are able to reify their participation in the activities of their CoP (see Wenger 1998: 63).

On the question of combining the theoretical frames of multilingualism and multimodality, Lytra (2012: 523) points out that "[t]he multimodal social semiotic approach to language is [...] congruous with recent perspectives on multilingualism that view language as essentially social instead of neutral or ahistorical". Hence, the underlying views that unite the notion of heteroglossia and the approach of social semiotics highlight the social nature of communication and the practices of meaning-making, which in turn are based on past uses of language and other semiotic resources (see Jewitt 2016: 72). What is more, both perspectives emphasize the strategic and reflexive uses of specific resources. Consequently, it is important to pay attention not only to multimodal products, such as online video, but also to the social actors who engage in the activities of representing themselves through multimodal means. Within the framework of multimodality, I approach the reflexivity and intentionality of social actors by applying the concepts of design and performance (Kress 2010, Bauman 2000, Bell & Gibson 2011).

In particular, in article 4, where I focus on the multimodal ways in which the Christian snowboarding community constructs individual and communal identifications by strategically placed semiotic resources in online video, I draw on the social-semiotic approach to multimodality (Kress 2010, Jewitt 2009). According to Jewitt (2016: 72), a semiotic resource "can be thought of as the connection between representational resources and what people do with them". Indeed, this approach takes as its starting point the social actors involved and their situated use of semiotic resources, especially in terms of design (Kress 2010: 132). By design, social actors can realize their interests in material form and engage in producing specific knowledge and meanings that are relevant in their contexts of communication. Comparable to the idea of seeing languages in terms of resources, the focus on design suggests a deliberate attempt to move away from concepts such as 'competence', which are regarded as more static in nature and seen as focused on certain idealized representations and social conventions (Blommaert 2010: 102, Kress 2010: 6). Design is a suitable term for analyzing participation constructed via the use of online video as it enables examination of the semiotic potential of resources as they relate to the social actors' interests in the present and the effects that their actions may have in the future (Kress 2010: 6-7, van Leeuwen 2005: 5). In a similar vein, Jones (2011a: 605, 2011b: 333) highlights the ways in which skateboarders are able to imagine futures for themselves by engaging in the activities of editing and producing online videos.

Overall, the specific modes that are studied in relation to the CSiF's online videos are meaningful and bear communicative value in the context of this particular community. The community members employ, for instance, music, image, written language, movement and gesture as well as features of filmic design, such as framing and the use of different shots to construct certain individual and communal identifications with the Christian faith, youth culture and lifestyle sports. Jewitt (2016: 71) points out that a mode needs to be a "usable system of communication within a community". Therefore, in order to be able to understand the usefulness and significance of certain modes in a specific community, it is necessary to engage in observation of how the modes are used by the community members (see also Bateman & Schmidt 2012: 77–78). Different modes have varying meaning potential, affordances and limitations that need to be considered when selecting a given mode for a particular communicative task. In this way, the ethnographic approach to examining the practices of a community serves to discover the relevant ways of constructing meanings, including multimodal means.

### 2.1.3 Discourses, voice and positioning

With respect to the approach to discourse studies adopted in this dissertation, the use of discursive resources is seen as part of the CSiF members' communicative and heteroglossic repertoire. All four articles include a consideration of certain shared social and cultural discourses that are made visible in particular interactive and semiotic events. For instance, the community members' Christian faith is manifested in religious and biblical discourses, and particularly in terms of the articulation of their Christian mission. Similarly, the culture of lifestyle sports is elicited through discourses of expertise. The resources that are drawn on in relation to these discourses include religious or Christian registers, extreme sports vocabularies, youthful and playful styles and stylizations. By the means of these resources, CSiF members are able to construct specific, both individual and communal, positions and voices in their communicative contexts. As such, *discourses* refer to "socially available and conditioned" ways of using language, while the notion of *voice* enables the analysis of meanings given by individuals to their use of these socially available discourses (Pietikäinen & Dufva 2006: 206).

Indeed, Lähteenmäki (2010: 23) notes that Bakhtin's conceptualization of voice includes the idea of a unique subject position that is nevertheless articulated by socially shared resources. The instances of online discourse analyzed in article 2, messages posted by individual community members to the community's Internet discussion forum, exemplify how different voices may be articulated, modified and used for one's own purposes. I draw on the idea of socio-ideological voices by focusing on the differing meaning potential found in the use of the resources of Finnish and English. For instance, I discuss how these resources are used and adapted for the purposes of playful stylizations and the creation of solidarity, for the accentuation of the community's mission, and also when seeking to establish expertise. In article 3,

I include the concept of voice in the analytic framework of the study in a more elaborate manner. In particular, I focus on instances of double-voicing which serves to juxtapose and contrast different intentions and ideological points of view, and which, as a discourse phenomenon, provides a prime example of the dialogic nature of language (Bakhtin 1984: 184–185, Wortham 2001: 63–64). I discuss how the Christian snowboarders use humor and irony as means for introducing different, and sometimes conflicting, viewpoints and how, at various points during specific interactive events in one of their snowboarding camps they employ socially shared resources in their community. For instance, they use biblical references to consider their responses to certain social issues, such as the role of women in the contemporary church. Furthermore, with respect to other modal resources, article 4 includes the idea of voice embedded in the analytic framework provided by Baldry and Thibault (2006) for the analysis of multimodal texts. For instance, they draw on Bakhtin’s dialogism to describe the polyphonic (multi-voiced) character of different sounds and music used in films, and point out that, as the different sounds interact with each other and are used to create a relationship to the audience, they serve to voice certain social meanings and positionings (Baldry & Thibault 2006: 211).

Finally, discursive and social *positioning* is a concept used in analyzing the ways in which CSiF members articulate their understanding of themselves and others in reference to certain socio-cultural discourses and ideological voices that are relevant, influential and meaningful within their CoP. Thus, when applying positioning analysis (see Depperman 2015, De Fina 2013, Bamberg 1997, Wortham 2001) to interactions in interview situations with the community members in article 1, I focus on how they position self and other by way of using certain discursive strategies when describing the community’s Christian mission. These discursive strategies are outlined by Wortham (2001: 70–75) in his discussion of the analytic tools that can be employed when applying Bakhtin’s concepts of voicing and ventriloquation to the study of narratives. The ones that are used by the snowboarders for their communicative and identificational purposes include epistemic modalization, quotation, reference and evaluative indexicals. They draw on these strategies in order to position themselves in relation to certain discourses and voices, in this way engaging in processes of (dis)identification. For example, they dis-identify with the traditional evangelistic practices of preaching to the masses from a distance, and with the mainstream snowboarder culture by promoting a sober lifestyle, and instead, identify with an evangelism that focuses on visibility and the building of social relations.

## 2.2 Participation in a community of practice

In this research, participation is examined in the context of the notion of a community of practice. Originally, research on CoPs focused on “learning as social participation” (Wenger 1998: 4, see also Lave & Wenger 1991). This focus



refers to both community members' mutual engagement and the identities created and maintained in the process. With respect to language studies, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992: 464) have applied the concept of a CoP to studying gender identities. They define the concept as follows:

A community of practice is an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations - in short, practices - emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor. As a social construct, a community of practice is different from the traditional community, primarily because it is defined simultaneously by its membership and by the practice in which that membership engages.

Thus, compared to the more traditional notion of a 'speech community', for instance, the framework of a CoP can be considered more dynamic and better suited to the highly complex social environments in which many people live today (Blommaert & Rampton 2011: 4). Social actors who are associated with a specific CoP may regularly see each other face-to-face but online communication may be just as relevant in developing of ideas, shared repertoires and practices in the community (Davies 2005: 561). On the whole, I consider the CoP framework as one that provides individuals with significant socio-cultural spaces (which can be both physical and digital) for constructing participation in and through shared activities and processes of (dis)identification (see Brubaker & Cooper 2000). Meyerhoff and Strycharz (2013: 431) emphasize that when selecting the concept of a CoP as a framework for analyzing language practices in a particular group, the group needs to have a "shared, negotiated, and fairly specific enterprise". With respect to the CSiF community, I have defined their ways of engaging in the Christian mission as their joint enterprise. As discussed in article 1, for CSiF members, their Christian mission involves ways of having fun and creating visibility for the community as well as cultivating interpersonal relationships within and around the community.

In general, the use of shared linguistic resources to negotiate meaning is of particular interest in the field of sociolinguistics and is thus suited to the CoP framework (see, e.g., Holmes & Meyerhoff 1999: 176, Wenger 1998: 82-85). Nevertheless, Keating (2005: 108-109) states that the CoP model only accords language and discourse a peripheral role, and she therefore stresses the importance of acknowledging the centrality of language in understanding the practice and formation of social relations. It is therefore crucial to examine the situated uses of language if one is to make interpretations on how social actors construct meanings that are related to their community, its practices and embedded discourses and ideologies.

Furthermore, Davies (2005: 563-564) problematizes the constitutive criteria for identifying CoPs given their different sizes and ponders the limits for fruitfully studying mutual engagement in a specific CoP. Additionally, she criticizes the concept for not adequately addressing how it can be used to discover power relations, especially when seeking to find out how access to a community and issues of legitimacy are determined. In response, Eckert and

Wenger (2005: 588) emphasize the importance of not using the construct of a CoP as a “discovery procedure” but rather researching the practices of a community through ethnographic fieldwork (see also Jones 2012: 143). In other words, they want to foreground the empirical work that can be done within the CoP framework and not “prematurely build an analysis of how power works into the theory” (ibid.).

Gee (2005: 215) also finds CoP and especially the term ‘community’ problematic, since it ultimately places emphasis on membership, and thus poses the daunting task of defining who is in and who is out. He takes the field of linguistics as an example of a CoP and asks whether further CoPs should be identified based on disciplinary divisions (such as applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, historical linguistics, etc.) or in accordance with the individual practices which researchers from various different fields may engage in (studying specific linguistic problems, for instance). Gee (2005: 216) argues that when using the notion of a CoP it is necessary to start by defining the members of the community. He therefore suggests that it would be more useful to start by examining the spaces and semiotic signs used in those spaces instead of primarily focusing on specific groups of people.

With respect to the research articles included in this dissertation, I do, in fact, start by examining different spaces. I analyze how the participants of the community use these spaces, namely their Internet discussion forum, snowboarding camps and video-sharing sites for the purposes of constructing participation. This enables me to address the complexity of the community with regard to the variety of its communicative contexts and the versatility of the participants’ repertoires. However, in addition to sharing a communicative space and engaging in activities together, they need to have a certain sense of belonging to a solidary group that is distinct from other groups (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 20). I therefore maintain that participation in communities of practice includes the ways in which social actors use language to actively construct, negotiate and perform self- and other-identifications as part of their mutual engagement in interactions and activities under certain social, cultural and ideological conditions (see Rampton 2014: 274, Wenger 1998: 48). Consequently, membership and legitimacy in the community are also jointly constructed and negotiated (Jones 2012: 148). Overall, I draw on the construct of a CoP to develop an idea of spaces of identification that enables me to conceptualize ways of participation in the CSiF community.

In the following sections, I discuss the processes of identification as an important part of conceptualizing participation. I also discuss mediated performance in online videos as a specific practice for constructing identifications and for reifying participation in the CSiF community. Finally, I consider translocality as a phenomenon that relates to communicative connectivity across different cultures and contexts. The translocal character of the CSiF community affects the ways in which language resources are used and how the multiple spaces of the community are organized.

### 2.2.1 Building identifications

I approach the notion of identity by examining how CSiF members construct their individual and social identities in active processes of *identification* (Brubaker & Cooper 2000, Leppänen et al. 2017, Jenkins 2008). In his discussion on the definition of identity, Jenkins (2008: 5) uses the term identification and describes it as “something that one does”, thereby suggesting that identity is best seen as a process rather than a condition. Similarly, I find the concept of identification useful when studying how the CSiF members construct identities through mutual engagement in their shared activities. Identification is studied here especially from the perspective of how the participants of the study identify themselves as social actors within youth culture, and more specifically as lifestyle sports enthusiasts, Christians, messengers of the gospel and ultimately, as members of the CSiF community. What also matters is how the ‘other’ is defined and represented as opposed to oneself or one’s group (Coupland 2010: 244). Jordan (2005) points out that the reference to identification in sociolinguistics can be traced to the work of Hymes (1972, 1974) who draws on Kenneth Burke’s rhetorical thought on identification. Burke theorizes the role of identification in human social relations by locating in it “both division and the tendency to transcend division” (Jordan 2005: 269). This view then also contributes to the understanding of identification as a dynamic process by which social groups can both define and rework boundaries.

The approach to the notion of identity provided by Brubaker and Cooper (2000) is especially useful by virtue of the ways in which they critically discuss and deconstruct identity as a theoretical concept. They argue that most definitions of identity are too broad and all-encompassing for conducting the analytic work required of the concept. They therefore unpack the notion of identity into three clusters of terms: (1) *identification and categorization*, (2) *self-understanding and social location*, and (3) *commonality, connectedness and groupness*. Of these, the first cluster focuses on practices of identification that are socially and discursively structured and shared by the social actors in question. For instance, the social actors may have socially shared knowledge on specific categorical attributes, and thus divisions in the group may be based on, e.g., age, gender, language, or race. In Brubaker and Cooper’s (2000: 15) approach, this is called categorical identification. In addition, identifications can also be built relationally: by relational identification they refer to the processes of identifying oneself in a web of relations, such as kinship, friendship, or occupational relations. The second and third clusters focus more on providing analytical terms for examining the practical dimensions of identification as part of people’s everyday social realities, including the activities in which they engage. Thus, self-understanding refers to “particularistic understandings of self and social location”, which are always situated and momentary (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 17, see also Leppänen et al. 2017: 16). Finally, the terms commonality, connectedness and groupness can be employed to analyze the ways in which people form groups by sharing a certain categorical attribute, the relations they

have, and importantly, the meanings they assign to the shared sense of belonging together.

In the articles included in this dissertation, identity is approached by applying constructivist terms (Bell 2014: 306–307, Auer 2005: 403, Canagarajah 2004: 267). Articles 1 and 4 draw on the notion of identification as outlined by Brubaker and Cooper (2000) in their theoretical framework. In article 1, (dis)identification is used to explain and understand the ways in which the Christian snowboarders position themselves in their accounts of the community's evangelistic mission. In the analysis of the interview extracts, I also draw on the concept of 'othering' to discuss the process of marginalization by which "an individual or social group [is rendered] distant, alien or deviant" (Coupland 2010: 244). I particularly focus on the ways in which the boundaries between self and other are both established and blurred in making reference to broader social contexts, discourses and traditions. In article 4, identification serves in interpreting the effects of mediated performance carried out through the strategic placement of components in the multimodal design of the CoP's online videos. The discursive articulation of identificational meanings is examined both with respect to the relations that the Christian lifestyle sports enthusiasts aim at constructing (both within their group and with their audiences) and the categories in which they position themselves. In articles 2 and 3, the construction of identity is viewed especially in relation to multilingual and heteroglossic uses of language in specific interactive spaces occupied by the community. Article 2 examines the ways in which a heteroglossic, social-communicative style is drawn on to construct 'translocal identities' when the Internet discussion forum participants identify with "certain [global] cultures and lifestyles and align with their discourse practices" (p. 157). While not focusing on translocality, article 3 also examines how the socio-cultural and ideological frameworks of Christianity and snowboarding enable the community members to draw on their shared heteroglossic repertoire to negotiate social issues of relevance for them. In this way, they reflexively evaluate their identities as members of the community of Christian snowboarders (see, e.g., Lucy 1993).

Overall, I do not regard the terms 'identity' and 'identification' as mutually exclusive. Identity construction is examined as an active process that takes place in local communicative situations in which the community members interact with each other and aim to represent themselves to an audience. Hence, the term 'identification' is used to give emphasis to the processual nature of identity construction. This dissertation therefore does not treat identity as an *a priori* explanatory category for certain actions or phenomena, but takes up the challenge of unpacking the processes of identification (see Jenkins 2008: 15). The unpacking of identification is done by focusing on the ways in which specific linguistic, semiotic and discursive means are used in the CSiF community. A useful comprehensive understanding of identity is offered by Bauman (2000: 1):

identity is an emergent construction, the situated outcome of a rhetorical and interpretive process in which interactants make situationally motivated selections

from socially constituted repertoires of identificational and affiliational resources and craft these semiotic resources into identity claims for presentation to others.

The communicative contexts that are studied in this dissertation research and in which the social actors make “situationally motivated selections from socially constituted repertoires” (ibid.) are viewed as specific spaces of identification. These spaces include the physical and digital environments of the community, which are connected through Christian lifestyle sports in general and the specific discourses and activities of the community. The spaces are constructed through the practices engaged in by the community members and hence, provide affordances for specific activities directed at creating solidarity and belonging as well as for resources for self-expression and representation (see Giampapa 2004: 195, Lytra 2014: 260). Moreover, within these spaces (characterized more concretely in chapter 3) the community members are able to create and negotiate their identities in terms of their interests, personal life histories and experiences, as well as shared lifestyles, values and worldviews. Overall, this interactive and discursive work is done in a broader socio-cultural and ideological context by way of defining the CoP’s boundaries and relations to other relevant spaces and the participants and prominent discourses that belong to those spaces (Li Wei 2011: 1222-1223, Heller 2007: 2).

### **2.2.2 (Re)mediating performance**

Performance as a sociolinguistic concept can be usefully linked to study of the processes and practices involved in the construction of social identity (Bauman 2011: 713). In this research, the concept of performance is examined in article 4 with specific reference to the mediated performances in which the members of the Christian snowboarders engage through their practice of filming sports and editing the filmed material into videos to be posted online. According to Bauman (2000: 1), in performance, “the act of expression is put on display, objectified, marked out to a degree from its discursive surroundings and opened up to interpretive scrutiny and evaluation by an audience”. On this reading, elements of performance can also be found in the data analyzed in the three other articles. For example, instances of reported speech in interviews, stylizations in forum messages and the humorous, double-voiced treatment of the Bible by participants in a snowboarding camp can also be characterized as performances.

Nevertheless, exposing participants’ performance to evaluation by an audience is specifically enabled by the medium of online video, which I consider a particular cultural tool in the community of Christian snowboarders. Cultural tools are “carriers of social structures, histories, and ideologies in as much as they manifest certain patterns of affordances and constraints concerning the actions that can be taken through their use” (Jones & Norris 2005b: 50). I study performance in online videos as a specific practice in the community by which, drawing on certain affordances and imposing certain constraints, the participants are able to represent themselves to an audience:

they strategically draw on multimodal resources and new technologies to express their individual and communal identifications with their values, lifestyles, cultures and ideologies. Thus, while online videos serve as cultural tools that capture the community's mediated performances, they at the same time "reify something of that practice in a congealed form" (Wenger 1998: 59).

However, in characterizing the online videos studied in article 4 as mediated performances (Bauman 2011: 716, Bell & Gibson 2011: 558), my aim was to draw attention not only to the product or the medium, videos distributed over the Internet, but also to the social actors themselves who mediate action through their movement, gaze, appearance and the use of material objects, as well as their interaction with each other, their physical settings and their audience (Scollon 2001: 3, Jones & Norris 2005a: 9, Thurlow & Jaworski 2014: 466). Moreover, I use the term *mediatized performance* to talk about the technological aspects involved in the design of a video, such as the editing of the filmed footage by selecting and combining different shots and camera angles into one sequence as well as adding soundtrack or narrative elements to the video<sup>4</sup>. In this way, the filmed material is turned into a new media product, or a "mediatized object" (Agha 2011: 167), albeit by amateur producers. Through the process of mediatization, the snowboarders' everyday activities are elevated and specifically designed for an audience, thus bearing resemblance to staged performances (see Bell & Gibson 2011: 557-558, Androutsopoulos 2014: 11).

As a matter of fact, the term *remediation* might better capture the process by which everyday activities are continued and transformed by technological means for presentation in "new contexts of social visibility" (Vivienne & Burgess 2013: 282, see also Thurlow & Jaworski 2014: 469, Bauman 2011: 717, Bolter & Grusin 1999). Thus, once posted online, the edited video of one's longboarding can be seen to remediate the longboarder's performance to a wider audience. This social visibility also serves the CSiF community's evangelical mission. The analysis of the community members' articulations of their mission in article 1 illustrates that 'being visible', a strategy that relies on certain shared codes of communication, is an important means by which the community members can draw positive attention to their gospel message. As visibility and mediated performance serve to construct identifications with lifestyle sports cultures in general, CSiF members may find online video a powerful means for transcending divisions in social relations (see Jordan 2005: 268, Burke 1969: 21-22).

Finally, I will add a critical note on the use of the concept of 'performance' in studies in the field of religion and in relation to social actors' self-identification as Christians (or representatives of other religions). This is closely bound up with research ethics and how issues of authenticity are discussed: religious actors may not agree with the description of their activities as performance. Mooney (2013: 338) points out that "the terms of our discipline

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<sup>4</sup> Androutsopoulos (2016: 295-296) uses the phrase "techniques of staging" to refer to the process of editing textual or audio-visual material into a media product.

may well be received as an insult to certain religions, if only because ‘performance’ suggests artifice in its normal usage”. This may, of course, equally apply to the use of a social constructionist approach in the field of Humanities in general. In my research, I use the term ‘performance’ to arrive at an understanding of the CSiF members’ creative activities through reflexive modes of communication, such as online video, by which social actors “exhibit a particular attention to and skills in the delivery of a message” and in this way, also expose their activities to be evaluated by others (Duranti 1997: 16, see also Bauman & Briggs 1990: 73).

### 2.2.3 Translocality and space

In this section, I describe how translocality characterizes the CSiF community and particularly the spaces in which the community members engage in their shared activities and processes of (dis)identification. I have already briefly discussed the concept of ‘spaces of identification’ which I use to describe the communicative contexts of the CSiF community. I have pointed out that CSiF members enter these spaces due to their shared interests, lifestyles and worldviews, and, during specific interactive and semiotic events, negotiate individual and communal identifications with broader socio-ideological discourses and contexts. Hence, in this section, my aim is to discuss how translocality is a key component in understanding the indexical links that CSiF members create – in their own spaces and through their heteroglossic and multimodal repertoire – to more global cultural and ideological contexts.

Overall, issues related to globalization, mobility, locality and different forms of connectivity are central in defining the concept of translocality. The vast accessibility to global cultural flows is characteristically present in contemporary lifestyle-related communities of practice, and the spaces in which individuals interact and gather together are diverse (Blommaert & Rampton 2011: 9–10, Arnaut 2016: 54). The role of digital technologies is crucial in enabling the movement of cultural flows across different contexts and communities (Kytölä 2016: 373, Leppänen et al. 2009: 1080). The Christian snowboarders in Finland also have many opportunities to find points of connection with different cultures and ideologies: they are familiar with different websites, blogs, films, games, as well as with other Christian youth communities sharing their interests in lifestyle sports. Indeed, Hepp (2009), while anchoring his discussion on translocality to media cultures, states that using ‘trans’ as a prefix guides the researcher’s focus to questions of connectivity. From a sociolinguistic perspective, my aim has been to examine how language and other semiotic resources are used to create translocal connections across different contexts. Different styles, stylizations, varieties and crossings can mediate between various spaces, often producing circulations, appropriations and re-creations of specific linguistic and multimodal material at the local level (Pennycook 2007: 8, Alim 2009: 106, Leppänen et al. 2009: 1082, Leppänen et al. 2014, Kytölä & Androutsopoulos 2012: 188–191, Coupland 2007: 3, Rampton 1999: 498–499).

Therefore, in this dissertation research, I use the concept of translocality to describe the communicative connectivity of cultures, ideologies and 'ways of speaking' that CSiF members articulate in the contexts of their CoP. Article 2 focuses specifically on the heteroglossic linguistic and discursive resources that participants in the community's Internet discussion forum draw on to style their identities as young Christians who share an interest in extreme sports. A sense of translocality is created in this online community by the ways its members draw on linguistic and discursive materials from different contexts and rework them to suit their local communicative purposes, whether at the level of spellings of words or of intended meanings. Translocality also manifests in the ways in which the forum users draw on specific registers and cultural knowledge: they make references to the cultures of particular extreme sports and to the global community of Christians. Additionally, they draw on youth cultural expressions circulating in other youth or sub-cultures, such as global hip hop communities (see Westinen 2014). In general, the discourse of commercialism, the Bible as a textual source, and creative and playful uses of language were found to be fruitful sites for the emergence of translocality.

Although translocality does not play a central role in the conceptual frameworks of the three other research articles included in this dissertation, I nevertheless discuss the translocal nature of the community insofar as this informs the activities, global connections and the various cultural flows in the community. In addition to the descriptions included in the articles, one specific point deserves to be emphasized here. According to Hepp (2009: para 10), media cultures "transgress the local without being necessarily focused on territoriality as a reference point of their meaning articulation." This is an apt description of global lifestyle sports cultures in general and the kind of Christian community studied in this dissertation. When the Finnish Christian snowboarders aim to create connections, whether in terms of discursive meanings or actual social relations, the fact of their being from Finland is not their primary source of identification, whereas sharing a worldview based on Christian values and ideas, or subscribing to certain lifestyles typical of snowboarders, have high value in their efforts to find commonality and connectedness (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 20).

In fact, in the context of the changing forms of the nation-state, Appadurai (1996: 178) characterizes locality as relational and contextual, suggesting a combination of "the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts" as its main components. Jacquemet (2005: 265) uses the term 'transidiomatic practices' to describe how, in various transnational settings, multilingual talk, the use of electronic media and interactions with people in both physically shared and distant environments co-exist and intertwine in people's everyday lives. Arnaut (2016: 54) also points out how "people operate in multiple layers of identification" in superdiverse communities and contexts. This is supported by Blommaert and Rampton (2011: 9) who argue that



[t]he contexts in which people communicate are partly local and emergent, continuously readjusted to the contingencies of action unfolding from one moment to the next, but they are also infused with information, resources, expectations and experiences that originate in, circulate through, and/or are destined for networks and processes that can be very different in their reach and duration [...].

Ultimately, the idea of translocality affects the ways in which the research field is conceptualized. According to Huttunen (2010: 39–40), the field is best viewed as a space that is formed based on social relationships rather than as a concrete place. More specifically, engagement in shared practices through social relations serves as a basis for the construction of a community's spaces (Eckert 2010: 163). In the case of Christian snowboarders in Finland, they create their own communicative spaces by discursive means. In so doing, CSiF members seek to articulate their positions in the worlds of both global Christianity and lifestyle sports, and especially with an eye to their intersecting social meanings. This point is addressed in the next chapter (chapter 3), which focuses on the methodological issues that arise from employing an ethnographic approach that aims to draw together different communicative contexts.

### 2.3 Summary of the central themes in the theoretical framework

In this section, I summarize the themes that unify the different approaches included in the theoretical framework used in this research. The first theme is related to the view of language as contextulized and socio-ideological: the notions of heteroglossia and indexicality include *a historical dimension*, which deserves to be considered when making use of these notions for analytic purposes. According to Bakhtin (1981: 293–294, 345), the words that we use are always partly someone else's and thus, we continuously respond to previous discourse which is replete with other people's intentions (see also Scollon 2001: 8). When our aim is to understand how meanings are created, the histories as well as specific trajectories of language resources and their entextualization processes – how specific instances of language use have been decontextualized, i.e. lifted out of their contexts, and recontextualized in new communicative settings – must be taken into account (Bauman & Briggs 1990: 73–75, Leppänen et al. 2014: 115). In this way, it is possible to interpret the different, and sometimes competing, ideological points of view embedded in language use in specific social situations (Blackledge & Creese 2014: 5). Similarly, the concept of a cultural tool also includes consideration of the sociocultural histories of such tools (Jones & Norris 2005b: 50). Taking into account the historical continuum of how specific cultural tools have been used and modified according to the social actors' communicative purposes may give important insights into the meanings and values that are embedded in the practices of a community.

Second, as the main analytic focus of this research is on the use of linguistic, semiotic and discursive resources in the construction of participation, it is also necessary to pay due attention to the activities of the *social actors*. In the

context of a social-semiotic approach to multimodality, this translates into a focus on “understanding modes in action” rather than outlining which modes are generally used, e.g., by members of a given community (Jewitt 2009: 34). Kress (2010: 132) points out that the interests of social actors guide the ways in which semiotic resources are used in the processes of design, which in turn contribute to the shaping of meaning. Thus, individuals have a choice over how they use the semiotic resources available to them and in fact, “[i]n the neo-liberal capitalist market, individuals are assumed to take and have responsibility for their actions” since we are no longer offered a fixed set of commonly accepted, normative models for action (Kress 2010: 134). This emphasis is also present in the frameworks of performance and identification (see, e.g., Bauman 2000: 4). Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 14) state that a focus on identification “invites us to specify the agents that do the identifying”. They also pay attention to the fact that our contemporary settings provide diverse possibilities for communication and the identification of self and other.

The third and final theme, concerning the view of identification as a process corresponds to Bakhtin’s understanding of communication as *an unfinalizable process* (Morson & Emerson 1990: 90). Unfinalizability allows continuous potential for meaning and creativity as utterances can be further contextualized and connected with new voices in dialogue (Wortham 2001: 43). Moreover, Lähteenmäki (2010: 22) points out that in Bakhtin’s work “the uniqueness and unrepeatability of the self is seen not only in terms of its concrete historicity and spatio-temporality but identified with a particular ideological position which is then semiotically expressed”. Thus, there is a dynamic relationship between the unfinalizable, dialogic nature of communication and the unique moments during which individuals engage in communicative activities to materialize meaning and make their own voice heard. In this dissertation research, I regard the messages and videos posted online and the spoken interaction and interviews at the Christian snowboarders’ camp sites as specific moments during the life cycle of their community of practice. In these moments, the community members use publicly available resources to create and negotiate meanings as well as to express their ideological positions by appropriating social voices for their individual and communal purposes (Lähteenmäki 2010: 22–23, Pietikäinen & Dufva 2006: 209). These ways of using language and other semiotic means may then gradually turn into more established practices within the community (see Li Wei 2011: 1224). The communicative contexts studied here function as spaces in which CSiF members can draw on various resources and engage in their shared activities, thus constructing identifications and ultimately, participation in the community in dialogue with the socio-cultural and ideological contexts in which they operate.

### 3 METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodological framework of this research. I discuss how ethnography, sociolinguistics, social semiotics and discourse studies are combined in the overall research design. I present the process of data collection and explain how the data were selected for analysis. I also review the ways in which specific theoretical and analytical concepts have been applied in individual articles. Finally, I consider my methodological choices from the perspective of research ethics and my own position as a researcher.

With respect to the rationale behind the use of a multidisciplinary framework, I have sought to bring together approaches that can shed light on how participation is constructed in a community of practice by paying close attention to the use of language and other semiotic resources. Ethnography, which has its roots in anthropology, includes the understanding that language is embedded in social life and thus is a situated resource (Blommaert & Dong 2010: 7-8). Thus, due to the situatedness of the research object, ethnographers engage in fieldwork at specific field sites. The work of gathering ethnographic information in the field, i.e. 'data', is usually carried out by participant observation, taking fieldnotes, making recordings and conducting interviews. The theoretical framework adopted by the researcher guides the process of data collection in the field, including, e.g., what is being observed and what data collection methods are to be used (Davies 2008: 46). More generally, ethnographic research is characterized by reflexivity, a feature that has enabled it to evolve in many important ways from its initial foci on and attempts to objectively describe distant and exotic cultures. The written accounts of these cultures have subsequently come to be critically reviewed as particular literary representations of the cultural phenomena described (see Clifford 1986: 4). This involves seeing the ethnographer as part of the research process and inevitably having an effect on the communities or social environments being studied (Davies 2008: 8).

In situating my exploration of the CSiF community within the framework of a CoP, I have focused primarily on the community members' shared activities and their use of a shared repertoire of heteroglossic and multimodal resources. Their mutual engagement allows the snowboarders to jointly

construct ways of doing things, using language and understanding their group memberships, shared values and goals. The activities studied in this research include Internet forum discussions, the production of online videos and face-to-face conversations (both informal interactions and ethnographic interviews) in CSiF's snowboarding and summer camps. Consequently, within the contours of these activities, specific interactive and semiotic events were selected as material for the detailed analyses of the use of heteroglossic and multimodal resources and the analysis of discursive strategies of positioning self and other.

Specific events were analyzed and reported in separate research articles and as such, the articles represent individual *case studies* of this research conducted in the CSiF community. Case studies are typically characterized by purposive and theoretical sampling, meaning that cases are selected in accordance with specific foci and the overall aims of the research. The cases selected should also contribute to the generalizability of the studies in terms of exploring the "general principles, processes and relationships that [the existing] theories and ideas normally see at work in the worlds they refer to" (Rampton 2006: 387, see also Silverman 2001: 250-252). Furthermore, in his discussion of the generalizability of case studies of sociolinguistic style, Coupland (2007: 28) points out that case studies can generalize "what is stylistically possible" rather than "what people typically do".

Hence, with respect to the individual articles and case studies included in this dissertation, the adoption of the CoP framework directed the data collection procedure, the focus being the participants' *mutual engagement* around a *joint enterprise*. The foci of the articles have developed in a gradual manner, one after another, through the ethnographic process of observing and participating in the activities as well as identifying important practices of the community. First, the participants' mutual engagement in shared activities is explored in articles 2 and 3. These studies include theoretical and purposive sampling of the linguistic and discursive phenomena studied. The data for these articles were collected in order to analyze multilingual language practices in the CSiF community, with special reference to the theoretical notion of heteroglossia which allows a comprehensive analysis of socially meaningful language forms. The contexts studied include both the online discussions and face-to-face interaction. Second, in addition to the participants' mutual engagement, articles 1 and 4 focus specifically on the community's joint enterprise, and as such include analyses of meanings articulated in relation to their shared Christian mission. Hence, these studies include theoretical and purposive sampling of the community members' accounts and practices of spreading the gospel within their lifestyle sports culture. From a theoretical perspective, the data analyzed in articles 1 and 4 were selected to investigate how identifications with Christianity and lifestyle sports are constructed in interview talk and through multimodal resources, respectively.

In sum, the theories and methods of analysis were selected to reveal how the participants engage in the activities and practices of their CoP through their shared repertoire. This enabled me to study the variety of possibilities that CSiF

members have for the construction of participation in their community in their local contexts as well as to engage in a more general discussion on the theoretical and social issues related to youth communities of practice in late modernity.

### 3.1 Connective ethnography

Questions about how to define a 'field' in the present-day globalized and technologically mediated world have led ethnographers to move away from studying single field sites to exploring multiple, different localities that, nevertheless, are related to each other. For example, an approach termed 'multi-sited ethnography' focuses on several sites of activity that are researched by following the trajectories of people, social phenomena, ideas or material objects (Marcus 1995, see also chapters in Falzon 2009), whereas 'blended' approaches to ethnography aim to address and collect data from both physical and digital research fields (Androutsopoulos 2013: 241, Varis 2016). As a case in point, discourse-centred online ethnography (DCOE) has been developed within language-focused studies of computer-mediated communication as an approach that allows the researcher to move beyond log data, i.e. "what is observable on the screen", to include social actors' knowledge and interpretations of their own discourse practices online (Androutsopoulos 2008: 2). This approach draws on ethnographic methods of observation and the interviewing of carefully selected participants to understand discourses, activities and relations in online environments. I followed the guidelines of DCOE in article 2 to contextualize and situate the linguistic and discursive phenomena that I studied in Internet forum discussions as well as to create contacts with the online community members. Later, these contacts helped me to access the community's offline spaces and thus, further develop the ethnographic perspective of the research. As I have moved between the online and offline spaces, I have been able to see that they are all located within the discursive boundaries of the community but offer different affordances for the construction of participation.

Consequently, a methodological framework of 'connective ethnography' (Hine 2000: 62, see also Leander & McKim 2003: 212) provides an understanding that allows the digital and physical contexts of the CSiF community, as well as the data gathered from them, to be seen not as bounded and separated from each other but as connected by their participants, activities, discourses, and the socio-cultural and ideological frameworks of Christianity, lifestyle sports and youth culture. A connective ethnography, then, aims to question and study the boundaries between online and offline worlds. Moreover, since the field site is not primarily conceptualized as a specific (physical or digital) location, it is possible to concentrate on flow and connectivity as the organizing principle (Hine 2000: 64).

Importantly, Hine (2000: 62) points out that a connective ethnography may be usefully employed in studies utilizing space-based approaches. It provides a

framework for exploring the links between different spaces, and especially how these links are defined and understood by individuals or members of a particular group. This in turn, requires that the ethnographer adopts an active role in researching the dynamics of activities and interactions in the spaces of interest (see also Blommaert & Rampton 2011: 10). As discussed earlier, I treat the online and offline forms of the CSiF community as particular spaces of identification within a specific field of discourse, that of Christian lifestyle sports (see Leander & McKim 2003: 218, Androutsopoulos 2008: 5, Varis 2016: 60). The spaces are constructed by activities and practices that are meaningful for the participants as individuals and as members of their community of practice. As the task I had set was to study the relevant communicative contexts of the community, it was important to gain an understanding of where and when CSiF's activities take place and who participates in these activities. However, for the ethnographic fieldwork and data collection, my purpose was not to follow specific individuals and their everyday activities across the online and offline spaces *per se* (as for instance in the online ethnographic research conducted by Stæhr (2014: 29-33) on adolescents in Copenhagen), but it was primarily to find out how participation was constructed through the use of heteroglossic and multimodal resources in the community's different communicative contexts. Hence, ethnography, as a theoretical and methodological approach, provided me with perspectives and tools for observing and identifying the contexts, the points of connection between them and what aspects of their community-related lives the participants oriented to and how they defined the boundaries of their community (see Eckert 2010: 164).

For instance, I examined the relevant connections in digital settings through the contents of the community's websites, e-mail newsletters and forum discussions, and their public *Facebook* groups and video sharing sites. In this way, I was able to, first, find out about the camps that CSiF organized. When I attended the camps and thus extended the data collection to offline contexts, it became clear that filming their activities and posting videos online was an important social practice in the community. Finally, based on knowledge that I had been able to accumulate by observing and participating in different activities, I was able to direct my attention to and ask questions about how these different activities contributed to the community's Christian mission which, given the CoP framework, I regarded as their shared endeavor.

Nevertheless, although I combined data from different communicative contexts of the community, it is worth pointing out that their analyses can shed light only on a certain portion of the community's activities. Other contexts in the community where negotiations of social meanings take place include, for instance, worship and Bible study sessions, activities on the slopes and administrative meetings of their snowboarding association. While including more contexts in the study might have broadened the spectrum of viewpoints on the community's social and discursive spaces, the ethnographic fieldwork as a whole helped to establish connections and relations between the different types of data, and thus contextualize the interactive and semiotic events

analyzed. For example, the ethnographic interviews enabled me, together with the community members, to conceptualize and evaluate how CSiF operated as a community of practice within the wider frameworks of youth culture, Christianity and lifestyle sports. Furthermore, the information that the participants provided (both online and offline) on specific locales, people, products and activities gave valuable insights into the ways in which they constructed a sense of connectedness to communities and cultures outside of their immediate local contexts, thus helping to conceptualize their community in terms of translocality (Kytölä 2016: 379). Overall, the different data sets proved to be useful in arriving at consistency of interpretation across data collected in different contexts (Holmes 2014: 191).

### **3.1.1 Process of data collection**

In this section, I describe the trajectory of the data collection with respect to the individual data sets included in, and excluded from, this research project. In general terms, the data collection process in this research project reflects an interest in certain sociolinguistic and semiotic phenomena: the uses of heteroglossic and multimodal resources by young Finnish people, specifically members of CSiF, the Christian snowboarders in Finland. My attempt to understand *how* the specific resources are used in this community involved collecting ‘naturally occurring’ uses of language and other semiotic resources from the community’s different communicative contexts. Furthermore, interviews with the community members were analyzed as primary data in one article to learn how they positioned themselves with respect to the community’s joint enterprise. Overall, the data collected from these contexts provided versatile material for understanding how language is intricately intertwined with the social life of the community.

#### **3.1.1.1 Internet forum discussions**

The Internet discussion forum data were collected during the years 2006–2008. At the time of the data collection, the online forum was part of a website at *www.godspeed.fi* dedicated to building a network of Christians who share an interest in extreme sports. The purpose of the network was to encourage new people to join and support them in their faith, as they live their lives as Christians within their chosen extreme sports cultures. In addition to the discussion forum, the website included information on the different extreme and action sports practiced, the people involved, and events, services and products. I came across the website and the related discussion forum in October 2006 when searching for material on themes of bilingual, Finnish-English, language use and Christian youth cultures for analysis in my MA thesis. Thus, originally, the first part of the discussion forum data was collected for my MA thesis in which I analyzed practices of Finnish-English code-switching and language mixing with the aim of understanding the ways in which community- and identity-related meanings were constructed through language use (Peuronen 2008). In the present research, I complemented the original corpus

with new discussion threads. The discussion forum data thus finally included 205 threads, which represent all the threads that were initiated from the launching of the forum in August 2006 up to March 2008 (excluding a few information posts by the forum administrators). Since the forum was aimed at a very particular audience, it remained small throughout its existence. The discussion forum data were saved by a program for copying websites (*HTTrack*). Throughout the data collection period, I regularly observed how different discussions evolved and paid particular attention to the ways in which various language resources were used (e.g., greetings and leave-takings, extreme sports vocabulary, biblical and religious registers, different Finnish dialects). When collecting data from and related to the forum, I included both levels of discourse-centred online ethnography (Androutsopoulos 2008) by contacting the forum administrator who was also the contact person for the *Godspeed* network. Later on, in June 2009, I interviewed another member of the community on issues related to the *Godspeed* network. This interview was ethnographic in nature as we met in a recreational area by a lake on which a group of people were playing kayak polo. There were also others (some of them members of the community) playing beach volley. Thus, on this occasion and also later on, I was able to have brief informal conversations with different people involved in the network.

Since 2013, the discussion forum has ceased to exist as it had, already by that time, remained inactive for a couple of years. One possible reason for why the forum came to an end was the community members' growing engagement in other social media, such as *Facebook*. At roughly the same time, the Christian snowboarders in Finland website was renewed and a convergent, a web 2.0-type of social media environment was created (Androutsopoulos 2011: 281). This included individual profiles with a befriend function, private messaging, photo and video sharing albums and a web discussion forum. Many of the same people who had been involved in *Godspeed* were also actively organizing the community's snowboarding activities and developing their online visibility. Therefore, this development probably reflects the dynamic ways in which the life span of online communities can fluctuate in different digital environments. Eventually, the *Godspeed* website as a whole was transformed into an online store for sports equipment and clothes.

### 3.1.1.2 Interviews and interactions in the camps

Since the analysis of the community's language practices online had yielded interesting results, I was eager to continue the research project by collecting material (interviews and interactions) from face-to-face settings as well. I had learned about snowboarding and the extreme sports camps organized by the group of Christian snowboarders in Finland from their own website, postings to their email list and from the website of *Godspeed*. In fact, I was able to negotiate access to the community's camps through people I had contacted when studying the *Godspeed* forum (see also section 3.3.1). I participated in four camps altogether (although I visited one of them for only one day). The daily program in all of these camps was very similar: the mornings included breakfast, followed by so



called 'soaking' time intended for quiet prayer, contemplation and Bible reading while listening to songs of worship. The days were spent engaging in different lifestyle sports activities, and the evenings consisted of dinner, a joint program, and hanging out together (see Figure 1 below). Overall, the camp program was very informal, and could be described as a group of friends or acquaintances spending a day together by engaging in their favorite activities on the slope, street or lake, cooking, chatting, playing games, listening to music and watching films. Moreover, as the members share the Christian faith, they also pray together and organize Bible teaching sessions. All the camps in which I participated were organized at the same location, at a well-known ski and holiday resort in Finland. Thus, participation in the camps offered me a perspective on one specific space of the community, both in its physical location and in the activities and discourses engaged in by the camp participants.

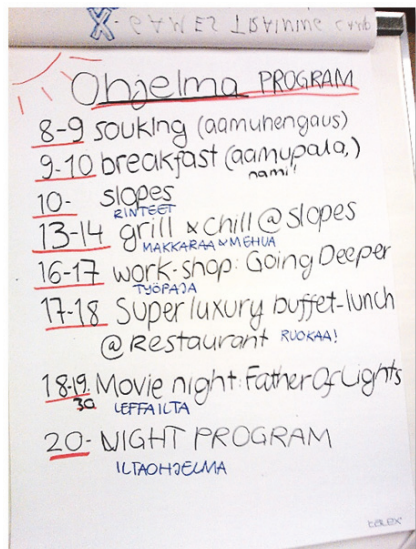


FIGURE 1 A day's program in a snowboarding camp, February 2013.

The first snowboarding camp in which I participated took place in April 2011. It was an exceptionally good place to start collecting the 'offline' data. There were only around 20 participants in the camp and it lasted for five days, from Thursday to Monday. Thus, the camp turned out to be a very intensive communal experience. The CSiF members had rented four different cabins: three of them were occupied by male participants and one by five young women including myself. One of the men's cabins served as the 'base' where the evenings were spent together. During the camp, I conducted one individual interview and three group interviews. Altogether, I interviewed eight participants (four women, four men). The interviews were semi-structured and their length varied from roughly 30 to 75 minutes. As these were among the first interviews that I conducted, I asked questions about the young people's

experiences on entering the community, the importance of the community in their lives, the different sports that they were interested in, and their preferences for music and clothes. In every interview, I also introduced the issue of language, usually by referencing the use of English in the vocabulary of extreme sports. On a more general level, we also talked about the community's history, the different activities that they organize and how they see the community's relationship to the church.

Furthermore, I made audio recordings of naturally occurring interactions on three different evenings in one of the cabins (the length of the recordings varied from roughly 35 minutes to 80 minutes), and video recordings on one evening when the participants were engaged in longboarding and snowskating (approximately 40 minutes in total). While the video recordings are more action-oriented, the audio recordings include casual conversations on issues related to the participants' future plans regarding their jobs and education, their travels, practices at their local congregations, interpretations of the Bible, Finnish politics, cars and motor cycles, lifestyle sports equipment and tricks, and extreme sports films. During the evenings, they also watched extreme sports films and online videos of street evangelism and faith-healing on *YouTube* and commented on them. On a general note, since the interviews and the naturally occurring interactions were both recorded on-site in the field, their configurations sometimes overlapped: the interviews included casual conversations when people entered the cabin while I was conducting an interview, for instance, or sometimes during the informal recordings the camp participants spontaneously interviewed each other on their stories of entering the community.

I participated in my second camp a few months later, in July 2011. Compared to the snowboarding camp, this extreme sports summer camp was bigger in the number of participants, activities and locations involved. The camp was also much more dispersed and therefore more challenging for data collection. More than 50 participants were present and many different sports (such as wakeboarding, windsurfing, skateboarding, longboarding, unicycling, and motocross) were available for them to engage in. The camp lasted for five days, from Wednesday to Sunday, and I was able to stay for four of these. I shared cabin with five other young women who I did not know beforehand. However, I met and talked with many of the same participants from the previous camp, and thus re-established contacts with some the community members.

With regard to the data collection, owing to the less intimate nature of the camp, I was only able to conduct two individual interviews (approx. 30 minutes each) and record only two informal conversations (each approx. 30-40 minutes) in this camp. Nevertheless, these data, especially when accompanied with ethnographic observations, my participation and many informal conversations with the camp participants, contributed to my accumulating my knowledge on the community's activities, practices and discourses. I noted the variety of different sports and listened to stories told by people engaged in different extreme sports activities and gradually came to understand the role of the Christian faith in their lives. In addition, participation in this camp gave me a

better understanding of the local and global networks of the community. Whereas in the previous camp the participants were very local in their places of residence, this summer camp also included participants from abroad. One of them, a young Canadian male, associated with this group through a North American Bible school, gave a few Bible study lessons. From the perspective of my research design, these two camps in 2011 served as important avenues for gaining access to people and activities in the community, gathering ethnographic knowledge in face-to-face settings and understanding how camps were organized and actualized on both the smaller and bigger scale, and in two different seasons, winter and summer. Owing to this knowledge and the contacts that I had created, I was able to focus on specific issues in my subsequent analyses: the meanings constructed in the online videos and the discursive articulations of the community's missionary purpose.

The third camp that I participated in took place in February 2012. This camp lasted for three days, from Friday to Sunday, but I was present only on Saturday as my primary goal was to interview Leevi who was in charge of producing the community's online videos. Interestingly, on their website, this camp was being advertised as providing "almost real-time" video material on the community's activities. They uploaded a short video to the website after each day, and thus I was also able to view the video made on Friday before joining the camp as well as the last video update from Sunday after the camp. In the interview, we talked about the purpose of producing videos about the community, the practicalities of making the videos, their production quality, the audiences for whom they were being produced, and understandings of the community online and offline. In addition, I followed how the filmed material was edited into a video documenting the community members' snowboarding activities and other events taking place during the evening program. Leevi explained how he picked specific background music and started to compile the filmed material based on the rhythm of the music. In addition to snowboarding and other activities, they had interviewed some of the community members on the slope. Leevi included clips of the interviews in the video he was editing, to make it more appealing. The length of the interview was roughly 35 minutes. Moreover, this fieldwork day proved to be very successful as I met and had conversations with several other community members. This enabled me to continue and strengthen the contacts that I had made during the previous camps.

The fourth camp took place in February 2013. It lasted for three days, from Friday to Sunday. I stayed at the camp during all three days and shared a small hotel room with five other young women. During this camp, I interviewed five camp participants whom I had contacted beforehand. Four of them I had already interviewed in the 2011 snowboarding camp. Since the character of the community is based on Christianity, my aim in conducting the interviews was to arrive at an understanding of the Christian snowboarders' views of their evangelical mission, i.e., the spreading of the gospel. As 'Dreams' was the theme of this camp, it was convenient to initiate conversations about the participants' individual aspirations for the future of the community, their

understandings of the purpose of the different events and activities organized by the community as well as the actual means used to spread the gospel. As in the previous interviews that I had conducted, I enquired about their views on the inter-denominational principle of the community and the possible benefits and challenges this type of communal framework may entail. The interviews took place in a variety of settings at the camp: at the breakfast or dinner table, in a cafeteria on the slope, and in the shared 'hang-out' space in the hotel where we stayed. In addition to the interviews, being a participant in this camp was fruitful in facilitating access to stories of evangelism. Two of the young women with whom I shared the hotel room described how they got a chance to share the gospel with people in a nearby restaurant where a Finnish male singer was performing a gig on the Saturday evening. Also present in the camp were visitors from Norway, who held Bible study lessons and engaged in 'treasure hunts', an evangelical practice where one asks God to reveal prophetic knowledge on a person or persons to seek out and share the gospel with. Accounts such as these were helpful in contextualizing the views and evangelical practices in the community.

After collecting the recordings of the interviews and other interactions, I transcribed them (the conventions used to transcribe the spoken language data are explained in sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2). The data extracts selected for individual articles were translated from Finnish to English<sup>5</sup>.

### 3.1.1.3 Online videos

Right from the beginning of my fieldwork at the CSiF's camps, it was clear that videos and films of extreme sports played a significant role in the activities of this community. In addition to watching international documentary films on Christian surfers, skateboarders or bmx-riders (such as *Livin' It* (2004), *Heart of a Soul Surfer* (2007)), some of the community members were enthusiastic about documenting their own activities on the slope or street. They had video equipment suitable for filming sports and were therefore able to attach cameras to their board, helmet, hand or foot. In the snowboarding camps in which I participated, they usually filmed both on the slopes and during the evening program. The filmed material was collated, edited and produced into short films depicting the activities of the community. Finally, the finished products were posted online to their *Vimeo* account or uploaded to their website. Usually, they also watched the film together at the camp site right after the film had been put together and commented on various aspects of the video and more generally on the events that had taken place during the day. In making the short films and posting them online, the snowboarders explained that they were meant not only for those who were present at a particular camp but also for those who were not there but might become interested in their community's activities in the future.

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<sup>5</sup> Apart from article 1, the research articles appended to this dissertation include the original data excerpts in Finnish and their English translations. In article 1, owing to limitations of space and its focus on discursive strategies (and not forms of language *per se*), only English translations are given.

Since films and videos were an important means of constructing identifications with Christianity and lifestyle sports, I decided to analyze the community's self-made online videos. To study the meaning-making practices related to the videos, I regularly followed the community's website and *Vimeo* channel, collected a corpus of 26 online videos and on two occasions, interviewed Leevi, a CSiF member who was actively involved in filming and producing videos for the community. The interviews were ethnographic in that I was able to talk to him at the snowboarding camps. I also had a chance to follow how Leevi engaged in the process of editing the filmed material into a finished video to be posted online. Moreover, I discussed the purposes of video-making in the community in interviews with the other community members. These views contributed to the overall picture I gained of the role online videos played in the community.

#### **3.1.1.4 Participant observation, fieldnotes and other materials**

While sociolinguistics as a field of research is strongly oriented to observing practices of language use as an integral part of the social lives of communities and their members, ethnography offers a methodological approach for engaging in participant observation (Levon 2013: 69). I began my research by observing language use in a specific online context, a discussion forum meant for Christians interested in extreme sports in Finland. I paid close attention to the ways in which resources of English and Finnish were drawn on in order to create interactional and community- and identity-related meanings. While focusing on language use, I also paid attention to the topics of discussion and the participants themselves and their interactional goals. In the subsequent phases of my research, I engaged in participant observation in face-to-face contexts in camps organized by the community members. In these settings, in addition to language use, I initially directed my attention to everything that took place, taking notice of how certain material objects, such as snowboards and skateboards were handled, what films the camp participants watched, and what songs of worship they sang. As I gained more familiarity with the different contexts of the community, the participants and the discourses they engaged in, I was able to concentrate on the meaning-making practices that appeared to be salient in this community. This process led me to maintain contact with certain individuals, interview them on specific topics and also to focus on online video as an important cultural tool in the community.

The fieldnotes served as a textual record of the observations that I made on-site in the camps, after each interview and on the community's online environments and other related sites of computer-mediated discourse. The fieldnotes include descriptions of *what* I witnessed in the field and *how* I reacted to it (Blommaert & Dong 2010: 37). More specifically, I documented the layout of the community's physical places, made lists of relevant online communities and websites, recorded characterizations of, and my immediate reflections on, activities engaged in by the community members (whether online or offline) and produced descriptions of the CSiF members' sociolinguistic repertoires. I made notes on the community members' reactions to my research project, the

expressions they used and the sayings that they circulated or that included the use of humor or irony, references to discourses of popular culture (well-known advertisements or popular songs) and uses of biblical references adapted to their local communicative contexts and specific identificational purposes. My fieldnotes also record my initial interpretations or sometimes confusion regarding the discourse practices of the community. Thus, I adopted the technique of using metacommentary “to understand how certain elements of repertoires become meaningful in interaction” (Creese, Kaur Takhi and Blackledge 2015: 266).

Moreover, as is typical in ethnographic research, I collected many other materials which served as background information and helped to contextualize the primary data analyzed in the research articles (Blommaert & Dong 2010: 58–59). These included the community’s newsletters circulated through email, letters sent to the camp participants, camp advertisements and information given in the community’s *Facebook* groups, messages posted to these *Facebook* groups before and after the camps, informal conversations with the community members, and photographs taken on-site at the camps. I also collected some media artefacts, such as newspaper articles and broadcasts about the community on a Christian TV channel, along with newspaper articles on themes related to lifestyle sports culture and Christian youth culture more generally.

### 3.1.2 Data selection and omissions

In order to summarize the data selected for analysis, the following table outlines the data used in the individual articles included in this dissertation.

TABLE 1 Overview of the data in each article

Article	Data	Participants	Setting
1	Interviews (N=4)	5 community members	Snowboarding camp (February 2013)
2	Internet forum discussion threads (N=205) Interview (N=1)	79 forum participants One community member	www.godspeed.fi (2006–2008) A recreational area by a lakeside (June 2009)
3	Audio and video recordings of interactions and activities Interviews (N=4)	11 community members 8 community members	Snowboarding camp (April 2011)
4	Online videos (N=26) Interviews (N=2)	The video-maker	YouTube and Vimeo channels (2011–2014) Snowboarding camp (April 2011) and snowboarding camp (February 2012)

In addition to the primary data analyzed in the articles, I collected many other materials for potential analysis, that ended up serving a contextualizing role. However, their contribution to my ethnographic knowledge during the research process was significant. These data include the interviews and recordings made in the 2011 summer camp, interviews with two members of another Christian youth group, namely organizers of a skateboarding church in Finland and online videos which their skateboarding crew had produced and posted online, mission statements collected from websites of Christian lifestyle sports worldwide, and one extensive discussion thread on an Internet discussion forum dedicated to Finnish skateboarding. The discussion thread focused specifically on issues concerning the Christian religion and skateboarding (the thread had started with references to popular Christian skateboarders but in the end, turned into a debate on the theory of evolution versus creationism).

### 3.2 Linguistic, semiotic and discursive resources-in-use

In its methodological foci on language and multimodality, this dissertation research is situated at the intersection of sociolinguistics, social semiotics and discourse studies. As such, it is guided by a motivation to find out about the ways in which specific linguistic, semiotic and discursive resources are used in certain communicative contexts and social situations (Holmes 2014: 178, Hymes 1963: 7, Wodak 2008: 3). An important concept that informs the situated, micro-level analyses included in this dissertation research is *repertoire*. This concept refers to “the complexes of resources people actually possess and deploy”, and not to abstract ideas of language use (Blommaert 2010: 102). Moreover, the notion of a community of practice serves as a contextual framework for examining the uses of the different resources in the community members’ shared repertoire (Wenger 1998: 82).

Since the social realities of the CSiF community take form in both face-to-face settings and online environments, giving different conditions for mobilizing the community’s repertoire, I have employed an analytic toolkit which draws on a variety of concepts and methods. In each article, I examine specific aspects of the community’s sociolinguistic, social-semiotic and discursive repertoire. Among the resources that constitute this repertoire are language varieties, lexicons and registers, along with modes, voices and positions (Blommaert 2010: 102, Kress 2010: 79, Bakhtin 1981: 262–263, Wortham 2001: 70). These resources form the objects of analysis in the individual studies. More specifically, I analyze the creative, strategic and reflexive uses of these resources, e.g., the ways of styling one’s language use by making situationally appropriate linguistic, semiotic and discursive choices (Bell 2014: 294–295). Thus, I employ an interpretive research design rather than a pattern-seeking approach (Coupland 2007: 27, Li Wei 2011: 1224, Gal 2016: 456). For example, Li Wei (2011: 1224) argues that instead of merely seeking patterns of language use,

the study of spontaneous moments of interaction and performance can help to discover original, creative uses of language that may become important reference points in later interactions and as such, function as the origins of a style (see also Eckert 1996). He therefore also points out that, in relation to studies of multilingualism, we should see speakers as active agents and focus on their creative and critical practices in specific social contexts. Hence, it is possible for language users to engage in interactions, activities and practices to not only react, but also to have an influence on broader social structures.

In this research, I drew on specific analytical concepts to analyze the situated uses of heteroglossic and multimodal resources as well as discursive strategies for social positioning by members of the CSiF community. I used the selected concepts to conduct detailed analyses of the interactive and semiotic events in which CSiF members mobilize their shared resources. This enabled me to interpret how they create and negotiate meanings locally and in relation to other social contexts. First, I drew on the concept of positioning to analyze the processes of identification in which CSiF members engage in interaction and through which they evaluate “social types established elsewhere and presupposed in the focal speech event” (Wortham & Rhodes 2015: 161). Second, when examining the online activities taking place in the community’s Internet discussion forum, the concept of a shared social-communicative style was used to access the purposeful ways in which the participants drew on their knowledge about “how to relate constellations of features to social groups, milieus, life-worlds, etc.” (Auer 2007: 13). Third, indexicality was found to be a useful analytic tool for discovering the intended meanings of specific features: it can be used to analyze the presupposed meaning of any linguistic items and the entailment of new contextual meanings in their situated use. Fourth, when analyzing co-occurring modes in multimodal entities, the concept of design enabled the discovering of meaning in the unfolding of juxtaposed elements. Finally, accumulated ethnographic knowledge across situations was necessary for understanding how the shared resources in the CSiF community were adapted in and through communicative practices. Thus, the contexts of communication were investigated rather than assumed (Blommaert & Rampton 2011: 10). In the following sections, I outline the methods of analysis used in studying the different ways in which CSiF members construct participation in their community.

### **3.2.1 Positioning analysis**

The contextual background for the different communicative settings investigated in this research is laid out in article 1 by focusing on the relevant discursive strategies in the community members’ repertoire, namely specific ways of positioning self and other within the socio-cultural and ideological frameworks of snowboarding and Christianity (Wortham 2001, Deppermann 2015). In this article, I analyze ethnographic interviews with a focus on the snowboarders’ articulations and evaluation of their Christian mission. Conducting an analysis of the interviews was a deliberate choice which enabled



me to treat the interviews as primary data and examine them as interactive events in which the research participants manage “a complex set of ideologies and identity positionings” (Bucholtz & Hall 2008: 416). Thus, I considered interviews, conducted at the camp site with participants I already knew from prior encounters, as suitable in finding out the CSiF members’ own articulations of the goals of their community. In the three other articles, I have also used interview data, but these are drawn on to provide further evidence for the findings based on the analyses of heteroglossic and multimodal resources-in-use and not as material for analysis *per se*.

With respect to the research design in article 1, I participated in my fourth snowboarding camp with the plan of interviewing five CSiF members on the issue of the community’s Christian mission. The participants agreed to be interviewed through *Facebook* messages that we exchanged before the camp. The interviews conducted in the camp were semi-structured: I had a list of themes and questions that I had outlined beforehand. These included, as phrased in article 1 (p. 5) “the participants’ understanding of the community’s goals in terms of their Christian mission, individual aspirations and vision for the community’s future, the purpose of the different activities (e.g., camps), ways of spreading the gospel, and whether they [saw] any challenges presented by the community’s inter-denominational foundation”. During the interviews, my aim was to enter into a dialogue with the participants and encourage them to talk freely (Blommaert & Dong 2010: 44). I oriented to the interviews as mutual engagements, and thus also analyzed my own role in the interaction.

After the camp, I listened to and transcribed the recorded interviews. In the transcripts, which can offer only a certain kind of representation of the spoken interaction (see, e.g., Bucholtz 2000), my aim was to record utterances as they were spoken, including the use of regional dialects, fillers, hesitations and any longer pauses, laughter, animated voice and interruptions. I considered this level of accuracy sufficient for exploring the ways in which the participants articulated their responses to my interview questions. Analyzing the interviews also included identifying and classifying specific themes. This had already taken place during the interviews, immediately after them (or as soon as I had an opportunity to record my reactions in the fieldnotes) and finally in a more structured manner after the transcription of the interviews. Since the amount of the material was manageable, I did not use a specific computer program developed for a qualitative analysis (such as *Atlas.ti*) but relied on word processing software (*Microsoft Word*) to go through the material and identify the themes that emerged across the interviews. Specifically, the themes which emerged during the interviews included: having fun, visibility, social relations, communal experiences, traditions of Christian missionary work, spiritual callings, and snowboarder lifestyles. These themes helped me to direct my attention to the ways of using language by which the community members constructed and evaluated different discursive social positions within youth culture, snowboarding and Christianity. In particular, they emphasized the importance of interpersonal relations both within the community and to ‘others’

outside of their community. The positioning analysis enabled me to pay attention to the participants' local understandings of self and other which emerge in interaction as well as to the processual nature of identity (De Fina 2013: 41–42). What is more, positioning analysis offers a 'middle ground' between talk-in-interaction approaches that view identity as a strictly local construct between the participants of an interaction and more macro-oriented approaches which usually see identities as "already given in the social world and merely manifested in discourse" (ibid: 45).

Hence, in article 1, I used the interview data to analyze interactive events during which the community members evaluated their joint enterprise by actively positioning self and other with respect to the wider social contexts and discourses surrounding the community. The extracts given in the article are representative of the themes identified in the interviews, the five interviewees and their individual perspectives on the Christian mission of the community, and the wider social contexts and discourses. Specifically, I utilized the analytic tools provided by Wortham (2001) to examine how self and other were positioned in processes of identification and dis-identification. I also describe a process of 'othering' by which the CSiF members are able to make distinctions between themselves and others, sometimes assigning themselves the more marginal position (Coupland 2010: 244). The tools listed by Wortham (2001: 70) include reference and predication, metapragmatic descriptors, quotation, evaluative indexicals and epistemic modalization. Using these tools to study the interview extracts made it possible to analyze both the discursive strategies taken up in interaction and to pay attention to the larger social discourses enacted, negotiated and challenged through their use. As discussed and illustrated in article 1, CSiF members do not adopt Christian or snowboarder identities as featured in the social discourses they reference in their interview accounts, but actively engage in evaluating and challenging certain "normative expectations and social types" (Deppermann 2015: 376). This enables them to enter into processes of (dis)identification and position themselves as members of their community of practice.

### 3.2.2 Analysis of heteroglossia

The use of heteroglossic linguistic and discursive resources were studied for articles 2 and 3, and included both digitally mediated communicative events and spoken interaction. Therefore, the analyses of heteroglossia were also adapted to the different contexts studied. In the computer-mediated communication, I specifically analyze the ways in which the *Godspeed* forum members use resources of English alongside their mainly Finnish postings. I conceptualize the use of different linguistic and discursive resources both in Finnish and English as forming a shared social-communicative style in this online community (Auer 2007: 12). Thus, the notion of style refers to the way in which heteroglossic resources are drawn on to create *ways of speaking* about certain topics, and with certain goals of interaction, in the context of the online discussions studied. The situation factors included in Herring's (2007: 17)

'faceted classification scheme' for computer-mediated discourse proved to be useful in interpreting what is going on in these discussions. I identified specific online activities and categorized the forum sections and individual discussion threads (or portions of them) according to these activities. I named the categories of activities as follows: 'getting to know each other', 'informing on upcoming events', 'describing past events', 'sharing and constructing expertise' and 'sharing experiences, feelings and visions' (see also Peuronen 2008). Thus, the purpose of specifying the different categories was to arrive at an understanding of the topics discussed and the forum users' interactional goals. Within these categories, then, I examined how the forum users, by mobilizing heteroglossic resources in their linguistic and discursive repertoires, constructed local and translocal identities as members of the online community and as social actors within youth cultures, lifestyle sports and Christianity. Hence, in the analysis of heteroglossia in computer-mediated communication, I paid attention to the ways in which resources of Finnish and English were used and modified locally in the context of this specific Internet discussion forum. I analyzed, e.g., creative spelling practices in greeting formulae and the use of standard/non-standard forms illustrative of certain registers. The interpretations I made were therefore based on evaluating the meanings that are created through specific language practices in the situated context of use and in relation to the wider socio-ideological frameworks of the community. The data extracts selected for article 2 consisted of three instances of postings to the forum that were representative of different online activities, forum sections, users and different linguistic and discursive resources-in-use.

The decision to analyze data collected from face-to-face contexts included the idea of continuing to study heteroglossia, but in a different discursive space of the community. In article 3, I conceptualize heteroglossia (Bakhtin 1981) as "socially indexical resources from different languages, registers or professional jargons" (p. 298). Therefore, when analyzing spoken interaction in one of the snowboarding camps, I focus specifically on the social indexicality (Ochs 1992, Silverstein 1993, 2003) of the camp participants' heteroglossic resources, including different lexicons, registers and textual sources. Focusing on indexicality permits the study of "the temporal, spatial, and social context of the linguistic act" in the creation of social meanings (Jaffe 2016: 88). Thus, like the forum messages studied in article 2, I anchor my analysis in the local communicative context of the community.

After collecting the data in the snowboarding camp, I listened to and made rough transcripts of the recorded interactive events. As the analysis progressed, I listened to the recordings several times, continually elaborating the transcripts. I transcribed the speech of all the participants in the interactions, including the use of regional dialects, pauses, fillers, hesitations, laughter, overlapping speech and animated voice. The extracts included in the article were transcribed in a more detailed manner, including rising and falling intonation, emphasis and speech that is louder or more rapid than the surrounding talk. Since many participants were involved in the interactive

events in which the negotiations of meaning took place, the transcripts needed to be fairly detailed to capture the dynamics of the interaction.

The interactive events that I analyze can be described as metapragmatic activities in which the participants, through their language use, indicate appropriate contexts of use for certain resources (Johnstone, Andrus & Danielson 2006: 80). In particular, I examine how, during their metapragmatic activities, the CSiF members entail new meanings into their shared, presupposed knowledge. These interactive events were selected for detailed analysis since they clearly established 'critical moments' during which the participants negotiated their understandings of the nature of the community in the social and discursive space offered by the snowboarding camp. As such, the events can also be characterized as 'telling cases' (Mitchell 1984, as cited in Rampton, Maybin & Roberts 2015: 16, see also Lytra, Volk & Gregory 2016: 9) of the ways in which the community members in their mutual engagement make visible and negotiate the presupposed meanings of the resources in their shared repertoire.

Moreover, while referring to and negotiating the meanings of specific resources, they draw on socio-ideological voices that may sometimes be in contradiction to each other. The CSiF members thus use their community's space to set certain voices and value systems in dialogue with each other. Thus, by analyzing the interactions in which these voices were evoked it was possible to discover and illustrate how the community members engaged in reflexive construction of participation in their community. The community of practice is a useful framework for studying co-articulation of different voices since, as pointed out by Dodsworth (2014: 270), it "is built on the belief that within a community, opposing ideologies coexist". Furthermore, the concept of heteroglossia includes the idea of dialogue reaching beyond individual interactive events, and hence, by engaging in interactions in their local contexts, CSiF members are able to enter into dialogue with many social and ideological issues of consequence for them.

### **3.2.3 Analysis of multimodality**

Studying the use of a shared repertoire of resources in the CSiF community also involved paying attention to how meanings are created by multimodal resources in digital environments. Therefore, article 4 includes an investigation of online videos produced by the community members. In general, researchers in sociolinguistics and discourse studies, among other fields, have extended their focus to non-verbal aspects of interaction and communication (Wodak 2008: 3-4). Jewitt (2016: 75) also emphasizes that studying digital environments requires researchers "to look beyond language". My ethnographic fieldwork allowed me to see the importance of video-making practices in the community, especially as these pertain to their joint enterprise as Christian snowboarders.

In collecting the video corpus, my aim was to gain an understanding of the different ways in which both the community as a whole and its individual members represent themselves through the medium of an online video. In

general, the analytical process undertaken in this article resembles the process of multimodal analysis outlined by Jewitt (2016: 75–83) who distinguishes the following seven steps: collecting, viewing, sampling and transcribing data, analyzing individual modes and analyzing across modes, and finally, drawing links to social theories.

After familiarizing myself with the video material produced by the CSiF members, I focused on a few videos that provided interesting material from the point of view of self-representation and performance. At this stage, I also viewed online videos produced by members of another similar group, namely a Christian skateboarding crew in Finland. I wrote a preliminary analysis in which I compared the video-making practices in the CSiF community to this group of Christian skateboarders in Finland. However, I subsequently narrowed my analytic lens to include only the videos produced by members of CSiF. My corpus included a representative selection of 26 videos from the year 2011 onwards, which marks the year of my participation in the first snowboarding camp. To gain a comprehensive view of the different aspects of the video corpus collected for this article, I wrote a description of each video in which I specified the setting, activities, participants, and outlined the different modes incorporated in the multimodal design of the videos. These videos feature different board sports both in winter and summer (such as snowboarding, longboarding, freeboarding and wakeboarding), other communal activities (e.g., traveling, hanging out together, Bible study lessons) and some videos also include CSiF members interviewing each other. For the most part, the community's videos are documentary narratives of members' travels abroad and their camps in Finland. Individuals' own videos in the corpus document their riding on streets, roads and slopes while doing and learning tricks and testing new equipment (both cameras and boards).

I was especially interested in how the videos combined elements from the community's various cultural frameworks. I selected two videos for a detailed multimodal analysis and, again, considered these as 'telling cases' of how meanings created by multimodal means unfold in online videos produced in the CSiF community. Both videos were produced and posted online by Leevi, the member of the community who was the most actively involved in making online videos, and whom I interviewed. One of the videos, which he himself had filmed (while longboarding), he had posted on his own *Vimeo* and *YouTube* channels, and the other, which had been filmed in a snowboarding camp, contained filmed material contributed by more than one snowboarder, and was published on the community's *Vimeo* channel.

I made multimodal transcripts of these two videos, paying attention to the different phases in their construction (a method adapted from Baldry & Thibault 2006). The activities shown in the videos had to be viewed closely in order to separate these different phases. In the first video, the phases were differentiated by changes in the camera angle, as the video was composed of a single continuous shot. In the second video, transition points between the different phases occurred between shots. After identifying the different phases,

I attended to the ways in which the video-maker utilized modes in the design of the videos. This enabled me to focus on the temporal unfolding across modes of different semiotic resources. In particular, I analyzed how individual and communal identifications were constructed through the strategic choices made as part of a mediated and mediatized performance. Hence, the framework of the sociolinguistics of performance (Bauman & Briggs 1990, Bell & Gibson 2011) together with a social-semiotic approach to multimodality, especially with respect to the design of the video (Kress 2010, Jewitt 2009) provided a useful perspective for studying meanings articulated through the use of co-occurring semiotic resources. In particular, this perspective enabled me to see how the video functioned as a cultural tool to advance the community's Christian mission. Finally, as in articles 2 and 3, reflexivity and intentionality in the use of specific resources as part of the community's practices were highlighted in the analysis of multimodality.

### **3.3 Ethical considerations**

In this section, I discuss the work done for this dissertation from the perspective of research ethics. I explain the gradual process of collecting data, observing and participating in the different activities of the CSiF community, in both the digital and physical settings. Overall, the ethnographic approach was continuously adapted in accordance with the aims of the different phases of the research. Issues concerning my participation in the community as a researcher and the methods of data collection and analysis were therefore deliberated and developed at different stages throughout the research process.

#### **3.3.1 The role of a researcher in multiple fieldwork sites**

Since the research reported here involves many different contexts of language use and forms of participation, entering each of these fields required consideration of ethical practices. Furthermore, as the people studied represent an informal, non-institutional youth community, it was necessary to reflect on and negotiate my role in a case-by-case manner. As described earlier in this chapter, my involvement with the community began by coming across one of their Internet discussion forums, and at a later date, contacting individual members of the community, and finally, participating in camps organized by the community members. Thus, during the research process, I moved from an observer to a peripheral participant in a community of practice (Wenger 1998: 100).

At the first stage of my research, I engaged in systematic observation of practices of language use in an Internet discussion forum at the domain [www.godspeed.fi](http://www.godspeed.fi). My aim was to analyze instances of code-switching and language mixing between Finnish and English for the purposes of my MA thesis (Peuronen 2008). Studies that have used data from Internet discussion

forums have generally included varying degrees of contact with the users and participation on the part of the researcher in the discussions and activities observed (Steinmetz 2012: 34). As a researcher, I did not take part in the forum discussions, but was in contact with the forum administrator by email. I introduced him to my research project, explaining its aims and my plans for using data collected from the forum. The administrator's response was positive and encouraging. He also spontaneously offered his reflections on the nature of their language use: he was surprised that anyone should see anything out of the ordinary in the ways in which the community members alternated between Finnish and English in their posts. In addition to the forum administrator, I also informally talked about my research topic to friends and acquaintances who were involved either in the church, or directly with the specific community in question, to gain some idea of the reactions that my research might provoke among the community members (Stern 2009: 96).

When I decided to continue my project and develop it into a doctoral dissertation, I began to establish more contacts with the forum users. Hence, at this point, I adopted a more ethnographic approach to studying language in the context of the Internet forum in question. I used the "the friend of a friend" method (Levon 2013: 72) and contacted prospective participants through an acquaintance at my university who knew some of the community members. Consequently, I was in contact with them by email, *Facebook* or by phone. Through these exchanges, I interviewed one community member who was well placed to outline the history and background of the Internet forum that I was studying.

In the following phases of the research, I planned to conduct more interviews and make recordings of face-to-face interactions. This meant a shift in my analytic focus from online forms of discourse and participation to the realization of these phenomena in physical settings as well. Before participating in my first snowboarding camp, I was in contact with the CSiF leaders, one of whom was the forum administrator I had contacted earlier. I enquired from them about the possibility of joining the camp and conducting interviews and recordings on-site at the camp. Their responses were positive; they were willing to provide information on the camps and welcomed me to participate. Prior to the first camp, I sent a message to the snowboarders' web discussion forum to inform the snowboarders about my participation, my research topic and aims. I also informed them about my wish to find volunteers for interviews. At the camp site, I had an opportunity to present my plans for research when we gathered in one of the cabins and took turns in introducing ourselves to each other. It turned out that many of those present had seen my message in the forum and were willing to be interviewed. They also granted me permission to record their informal interactions. As a newcomer, I did not stand out too prominently as there were at least three other people (among the 20 participants) who were at the Christian snowboarders' camp for the first time. In general, according to my own observations (as well as the interviewees' accounts), there were always newcomers in a camp. I described my research endeavor to every

new person I met at any of the camp sites (i.e. people I talked to and got to know to some extent). This was a similar practice to Lucy Jones (2012: 52-53) who conducted an ethnographic research among members of a community of practice who shared an interest in walks or hikes in the countryside and who identified themselves as lesbians.

The move from online to offline environments involved various intricate issues for me as a participant. Compared to the online environment, it was easier to be visible as a researcher, but building a relationship with the community members forced me to consider my participant role in terms of my gender, age and geographical location, and to some extent, my nationality (see Westinen 2014: 115-116, for a discussion on these aspects in defining one's researcher position). In gender, the majority of the research participants were male. This might have had some effect on the nature of the rapport I was able to create with the participants; being a woman, it was sometimes easier to socialize with the female participants but then again, gender did not seem to make much of a difference when talking with the male and female participants in the interview situations. In age, I was 5-10 years older than many of the key participants included in my research and again, 8 years younger than Toni, the oldest participant and the founder of the CSiF community. I do not think that my age affected my relationship with the participants in any significant way. They were used to people of different ages taking part in their community's activities and as far as I was concerned, they were mainly interested in knowing how old a person is to be doing a PhD. The geographical location of my home town was important in building a sense of connectedness with the camp participants who came from the same area. They were usually interested in knowing if we had any common acquaintances. In addition, not residing in Helsinki affected my possibilities of greater involvement in the activities of the community, as they organized, e.g., longboarding sessions in the summer time in the Helsinki area. In nationality, I shared a similar background and linguistic resources with many of the community members and, apart from one, all the interviews were carried out in Finnish. The one interview was conducted in English with a non-Finnish participant in the 2011 summer camp. Moreover, some of the community members had grown up in bilingual families and thus had somewhat different experiences of growing up in Finland than their average Finnish peers.

Finally, and most importantly, my sociocultural location with respect to Christianity and lifestyle sports defined my participant role in finding common ground both ideologically and in practice (see Bucholtz & Skapoulli 2009: 5-6, Blommaert & Dong 2010: 49-50). It was relatively easy for me to negotiate access to the community, as I was able to say that I share their Christian faith. Although not a member of the online community, I considered myself among the Christian youth for whom the website and the related discussion forum was intended. During the face-to-face interactions, it was not difficult to follow the camp participants' reasoning on issues related to certain church practices, ways of reading and interpreting the Bible, or practices of evangelism. Thus, as



Rampton et al. (2015: 16) assert, “the researcher’s own cultural and interpretive capacities are crucial in making sense of the complex intricacies of situated everyday activity among the people being studied”, I felt that I had enough experience and knowledge of the sociocultural contexts of both charismatic and protestant Christianity to interpret the activities of this specific group. Nevertheless, I found the charismatic emphasis that the community members laid on the power of healing prayer and miracles surprising and somewhat perplexing. The way in which talk about the power of healing prayer was connected with injuries caused by engaging in extreme sports was something completely new to me. In my fieldnotes, I recorded my wonderings about the logic of voluntarily engaging in risky sports and then praying to God to heal the injuries this had resulted in. However, Wheaton (2013: 5) points out that, as is typical the case with social actors in late modernity in general, lifestyle sports enthusiasts engage in reflexive risk management. For the CSiF members, this also involved relying on healing prayer. In some respects, I was not, at the time, able to locate the kind of Christianity that I witnessed, and it was only after my fieldwork that I learned about the New Apostolic Reformation and, at that point, understood how this community drew on some of the elements and discourses circulating in this global, and also quite controversial, movement.

My position in the snowboarding culture I can only describe as that of a novice. This means that I already knew how to snowboard and I had tried it a few times. Nevertheless, at the CSiF’s camps I opted for skis, which I am more familiar with, as I wanted to keep up with them on the slope. I did not see this as a major hindrance, although not snowboarding or being otherwise more ‘into’ the culture necessarily positioned me on the periphery of the community. While it is arguably beneficial to have knowledge and experience of the kind of lifestyle sports one is studying (Dupont & Ojala 2015: 16), I nevertheless welcomed my peripheral position since it enabled me to ask many questions about the world of extreme or lifestyle sports in general. In fact, Wheaton (2013: 14) points out that constructing strong binary oppositions of insider and outsider with respect to the researcher’s position relies on essentialist understandings of identity, something that most researchers do not ascribe to when describing their informants.

### **3.3.2 Procedures for handling the data and reporting the results**

In this section, I describe how I handled and stored the data collected from different communicative contexts and how I presented the data extracts in the research articles. In general, all the data collected for this dissertation are stored in secured computer drives and locked office spaces.

For data collected from online environments, such as Internet discussions forums, a researcher often needs to consider the ethical uses of the material on a case-by-case basis (Varis 2016, Association of Internet Researchers 2012). It is of paramount importance to reflect on how best to protect the identities of the users of a specific online space. At the same time, online actors can also be viewed as ‘artists’ who deserve credit for their work (Kytölä 2013: 73,

Sveningsson 2004: 53). User identities can be protected by the use of various levels of disguise (Bruckman 2002: 229–230, Kytölä 2013: 73–74). Following the guidelines outlined by Bruckman (*ibid.*), I used light disguise: I named the group in question but did not refer to the discussants' pseudonyms (nicknames). I also used verbatim quotes which made it possible to trace the discussions in their online context. In this way, the method that I applied was a compromise between protecting the identities of the users whose words were quoted in the published articles and giving due credit to the creators of the online platform which had given rise to the ways of using language and discourses that I elected to study. This way of treating the data was also consistent with the object of my study in article 2, i.e., language use as a means of expressing social identities. Thus, I conceptualized the forum users' language practices as a joint endeavor in the context of this specific online environment, and similarly to Herring (1996: 159), who studied messages posted to *ListServ* discussion groups, I considered individuals' language use secondary to examination of the language practices in the group as a whole.

Furthermore, making decisions on whose permission to ask and how to protect the identities of forum users involves consideration of where a particular discussion forum is located on the continuum of public/private discourse and the sensitivity of the issues dealt with (Arpo 2005: 65, Androutsopoulos 2013: 247). Although a specific site of computer-mediated communication may be publicly available technically, its users may regard it as socially and culturally exclusive (Kytölä 2013: 69, Sveningsson Elm 2009: 77). In the case of the *Godspeed* discussion forum, in my initial decision to inform only the forum administrator about my research interest and to find out for myself what the average response to this type of study might be, I viewed the online discussions as public both technically and socio-culturally. This view was shared by the forum users I talked to at the later stage of my study. In retrospect, to obtain a more comprehensive and informed view, more contacts with different users could have been created at the outset of the research. Nevertheless, on my evaluation, the forum posts were mainly aimed at a public audience (although one with specific interests) while the topics varied from exchanging information on upcoming events and specific sports equipment to sharing Bible verses, stories of evangelistic mission trips and generally, one's ideas of being a Christian who participates in extreme sports. Hence, some posts touched on more sensitive issues, with the users sharing intimate aspects of their identity and religious life. I took these considerations into account when selecting the discussion forum material to be included in the published research articles (in article 2 and in Leppänen et al. 2009).

For the spoken language data that I collected, the key participants I interviewed and whose interactions I recorded signed an informed consent. Others, who, for example, happened to sit at the same table where I was conducting an interview were apprised of the presence of a recording device and the topic of the research. Some of them decided to remain silent, while others wanted to contribute to answering the questions that I was presenting to

my interviewee(s). In the consent form, I explained that my purpose in conducting the research project was to gather knowledge about how language is used to create meanings that are related to community and a youth culture. I also stated that I hoped to extend knowledge on different cultural groups in Finland, particularly from the point of view of language use. Furthermore, I specified that I would store the recorded material solely in my own archives, and thus, had made the decision not to offer the material for inclusion in any other research archives (e.g., the Finnish Social Science Data Archive). From an ethical point of view, this seemed the correct procedure, since the group has a unique character in Finland and is thus easily recognizable. Furthermore, the religious character of the group possibly also renders its members more vulnerable, albeit they treat their faith very openly, and through their sports and other activities, aim to be visible as Christians. In transcribing the recorded spoken data, at all times, I used pseudonyms to refer to the informants. In addition, I did not use the real, official name of the CSiF community in the research articles, although, in this case, using a pseudonym offers only a low level of disguise since there is no match to the community of Christian snowboarders in Finland. This decision was linked to the fact that I was not examining a specific snowboarding organization *per se*, but rather my focus was on the meaning-making practices in the discursive field of Christian lifestyle sports. Apart from two individuals, all the CSiF members who participated in this research were over 18 years old. The two underage participants were soon to be 18 (either the same or the following year) and thus, as they were over 15, I regarded them as able to decide for themselves whether to participate in this research project (see also Tani 2010: 59). Nevertheless, only one of them participated in both an interview and the recorded interactions. The other one took only a minor role in the recorded interactions. The instances of quoted speech in the research articles all come from the adult participants (although not by way of discrediting the younger participants, I should mention that the one underage interview participant offered very profound insights on what it means to be a Christian snowboarder).

Finally, using online videos as data can present ethical challenges. The videos have usually been posted onto an online video-sharing platform and are thus publicly available. However, when analyzed as part of a larger research project, as in the case of this dissertation, they can take on different meanings than when watched by the occasional Internet user. For the videos analyzed in article 4, I received a permission from the video-maker to use them as material to be analyzed and presented in the article. During the interview that I conducted with him on producing online videos, I explained to him the aims of my analysis. I also gave him the opportunity to read and comment on the article before it was published. In addition, I contacted other community members who were visible and possibly recognizable in the second video. They all granted me permission to append the original video and related screen captures to the article. Two of the snowboarders, who are clearly visible in the video, were in their early teens at the time of filming. However, when I contacted and

received permission from them, three years had already elapsed since the video was first posted online. Thus, I considered that, at that point, their temporal perspective was long enough for them to be able to evaluate whether they wanted that particular video to be used in other contexts. When compiling the video corpus as a whole, I did not seek permission for the inclusion of each individual video. Based on my interactions with the video-maker and other community members who were actively involved in the video-making processes, I considered their positive reactions to my study of their video-making practices sufficient for the purposes of including the videos in the corpus that I compiled for the study reported in article 4.

In general, during the processes of writing the research articles, I established the practice of contacting the research participants and sending them draft and final versions of the articles. This was my attempt to enable them to have control over how their discourses and semiotic products were recontextualized (Bauman & Briggs 1990: 78). I invited them to comment on any issue they thought that would be important from their perspective. They rarely provided any comments on the research report itself, an issue that could be considered in need of further development (e.g., it might be worthwhile contemplating how to introduce the articles to the informants in the most relevant and accessible way).

## 4 KEY FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH ARTICLES

In this chapter, I summarize and discuss the findings of the four research articles included in this dissertation. In each article summary, I discuss the field in which the study is placed, my research aims, the theoretical and methodological starting points and specifically, how the results of each study contribute to the overall aims of the dissertation. The articles are ordered as follows: article 1 (which I have written the last) describes the ideological basis of the community and shows how the community members conceptualize their joint enterprise as Christian snowboarders. Articles 2, 3 and 4 investigate different aspects and contexts of the community's heteroglossic and multimodal repertoire. I conclude the chapter by discussing the main findings with reference to understanding CSiF as a community of practice located within the fields of youth culture, Christianity and lifestyle sports.

### 4.1 Article 1: Positioning self and other

Peuronen, Saija (Submitted to *Journal of Contemporary Religion*). Snowboarders as late-modern missionaries: Positioning self and other within a Christian lifestyle sports community.

Article 1 focuses on the articulations of Christianity and the community's evangelistic mission within the snowboarding culture. The data consist of interviews conducted in a snowboarding camp in February 2013 (4 semi-structured, ethnographic interviews with 5 key members of the community). Unlike the other three articles, each of which focuses on linguistic, semiotic and discursive resources-in-use, the data analyzed in this article come from recorded talk about specific issues related to the community. Moreover, and in contrast to the other data sets, the topics of discussion in the interviews were initiated by me as the researcher. Issues covered during the interviews included the participants' understanding of the community's goals in light of their

Christian mission, individual aspirations and their vision for the future of the community, the purpose of the different activities (e.g., camps), their understanding of the ways of spreading the gospel, and the community's inter-denominational basis (whether they considered it an advantage or a challenge). In sum, this article focuses on the ways in which these young people position themselves and others with respect to the sociocultural and ideological frameworks of Christianity and lifestyle sports.

Theoretically and methodologically, article 1 combines the perspectives of discursive social positioning and ethnography. In preparing and carrying out the interviews, these frameworks enabled me to take into account the discourses and activities of the community as I had already observed them during ethnographic fieldwork in prior events and through personal communications (see Oberhuber & Krzyżanowski 2008: 192). Furthermore, in analyzing the ways in which the community members adopt different positions in the interviews, I utilized the analytical tools provided by Wortham (2001).

The findings of this article show that the Christian snowboarders position self and other primarily through discursive strategies of epistemic modalization, quotation, reference and the use of evaluative indexicals. First, the community members use these strategies to engage in a complex process of othering, meaning that they construct discursive positions of self and other, placing themselves in a privileged epistemological position when evaluating the activities and lifestyles of other snowboarders. At the same time, they also position themselves as on the margins of both snowboarders and Christian youth workers, thus also constructing for themselves the position of 'other'. Second, in terms of communicating their Christian values, the CSiF members negotiate their transcultural practices within the contexts of snowboarding and their Christian mission. They establish visibility and having fun as culturally appropriate ways of identifying with specific Christian values (such as showing respect towards anyone they encounter, drawing positive attention through their activities, promotion of a sober lifestyle in their get-togethers). Finally, the analysis shows how these Christian snowboarders discursively construct their community as a space for cultivating social relations, giving and receiving support and guidance in spiritual matters and ultimately, sharing the gospel. All interviewees emphasized the importance of interpersonal relations in their missionary practices: they knowingly dis-identify themselves with the (traditional) discourses of the one-to-many type of public evangelism and instead, identify with their own spiritual calling. They do this by adopting communal and individual positions that will help them to find "new ways of doing religion and being religious" (Mooney 2013: 337).

More generally, as the community members engage in the discourses and practices of evangelism within the snowboarding culture, they strive to set themselves apart from the popular view of a Christian missionary as someone who seeks to impose their beliefs on others. As argued by Bielo (2011: 137), engagement in a Christian evangelical mission necessitates taking on a modern subject position. Consequently, being a participant in a Christian youth group

in the late-modern era may seem a contradictory position. The discursive strategies that the community members drew on in the interview situation served as meaningful ways for them to conceptualize their spiritual mission, and their individual spiritual calling in particular. By being reflexive about how they position themselves within the snowboarding culture and with respect to their Christian identities, they were, in fact, considering the question “Who am I?” amongst a set of possibly contradictory worldviews (Bamberg 1997: 337).

As members of a late-modern community of practice, the Christian snowboarders’ activities, discourses and understandings of the cultures that they represent are affected by many transcultural flows (Pennycook 2007). With reference to the overall aim of studying participation in this dissertation, article 1 discusses the ways in which these young people aim to act as transcultural agents in their community: they seek, first, to find common ground between the different Christian denominations or movements to which they belong and then to communicate their communal position to others. The findings of the study reported in this article show that the CSiF members interviewed adopt resistance both to certain Christian traditions and to specific lifestyle-related practices in youth cultures. In particular, they dis-identify themselves from the traditional discourses of duty in terms of evangelism on the one hand, and from alcohol-driven youth activities and lifestyles on the other. Hence, they resist conformity to practices that do not match their community’s values or their individual spiritual callings.

## 4.2 Article 2: Translocal identities

Peuronen, Saija (2011). “Ride hard, live forever”: Translocal identities in an online community of extreme sports Christians. In Crispin Thurlow & Kristine Mroczek (eds.), *Digital discourse: Language in the new media*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 154–176.

This article is located within the fields of new media sociolinguistics (Thurlow & Mroczek 2011: xix), computer-mediated discourse analysis (CMDA) (Herring 2001, 2004) and online ethnography (Androutsopoulos 2008, Kytölä & Androutsopoulos 2012). During the time when this study was being carried out and reported, sociolinguistic studies of computer-mediated communication (CMC) were changing in important ways. For instance, rather than continuing to focus on the structural features of new media language (e.g., spelling, orthography or innovative word formations) and the technological particularities of different synchronous or asynchronous formats, CMC researchers started to argue for the need to investigate the diversity of social meanings and situated performances of identity across different online contexts (Thurlow & Mroczek 2011: xx–xxii, Androutsopoulos 2006, Georgakopoulou 2006). In her ground-breaking work on computer-mediated discourse analysis, Herring (2004: 340) emphasized that the framework of CMDA allows the study

of macro-level phenomena through a language-focused approach. More recently, Androutsopoulos (2011: 280) has called for an even more nuanced understanding of “users’ social activities with language” which would not rely only on the frequency of certain type of language use but would also acknowledge the significance of unique instances of strategically used linguistic and semiotic material. He outlines the benefits of using the concept of heteroglossia in studying linguistic diversity in current social media environments (see also Leppänen et al. 2009, Leppänen 2012).

Article 2 is my attempt to address this changing focus of new media sociolinguistics. I investigate the situated and contextualized uses of language by members of an online community, namely Finnish Christians who share an enthusiasm for various lifestyle and extreme sports. More specifically, as I define my aim in the article, I examine “the ways in which identity is negotiated through the use of a social-communicative style consisting of a variety of resources from two particular languages, Finnish and English” (p. 155). The concept of heteroglossia allows me to pay attention to the co-articulation and mixing of different linguistic and discursive resources provided by the two languages. Moreover, heteroglossia has been found to be useful in studies of multilingualism since, in comparison with approaches that focus on instances of code-switching, it takes into account both monolingual and multilingual uses of language (Bailey 2007: 258, 2012: 504, see also Leppänen 2012). By paying attention to heteroglossia in their language use, I was able to analyze the community members’ expressions of their identity positions as these pertain to the youth cultures that they are affiliated with, discourses of commercialism in extreme sports, and the Christian values that they aim to promote.

The data for the analysis, online discussion threads (N=205), were collected from the community’s online discussion forum, *Godspeed*, during 2006–2008. Herring’s (2007) faceted classification scheme for computer-mediated discourse and Androutsopoulos’s (2008) discourse-centred online ethnography provided me with methods for making observations of the discussions and their categorization into different online activities, and hence conducting the initial analyses. In article 2, I analyze three illustrative cases of online communication in the forum. In these particular posts, the users engage in such activities as informing readers about upcoming events, outlining their visions and co-constructing expertise. These case analyses show that while the posts are crafted to meet specific communicative goals, different registers and styles of Finnish and English serve as important creative resources for the community members’ identity work. In general, Finnish and English are used as heteroglossic resources that enable the forum members to construct different identity positions in their shared socio-cultural frameworks. When constructing identity positions in relation to youthful playfulness and expertise in extreme sports, a ‘localized’ style of writing English is used, whereas when referring to the community’s Christian evangelistic mission, the writers adopt a more formal register of English. Colloquial Finnish, in turn, is a local resource which enables the playful use of Finnish dialects, and the recontextualization and



modification of 'global English'. Again, when quoting biblical texts and talking about their mission, a more serious tone and a formal religious register of Finnish is used. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that although certain topics may guide the level of formality in language use, the boundaries are not clear-cut (Eckert 2003: 46). For instance, references to Christianity may also prompt playful use of language, such as in the first example analyzed in this article, where the phrase *siijah sisters and bröthers* ("see yah sisters and brothers!") is used when addressing others, at the same time evoking intimacy, solidarity, youth culture, and membership of a religious group (p. 162–163, see also Androutsopoulos 2011: 292–293 on analyzing heteroglossic relations in digital media environments). In conclusion, the heteroglossic resources stemming from the various uses of Finnish and English together form a social-communicative style in this online context (Auer 2007: 12). By way of adopting this heteroglossic style, and adapting it according to their individual communicative purposes, the forum users are able to construct meanings related to their community membership, expertise in extreme sports and shared Christian mission. Their social-communicative style also contributes to their sense of shared community and serves to position them as distinct from other groups.

The theoretical contributions of this study concern the notion of *translocality* (Leppänen et al. 2009, Kytölä 2016) as a component of user identities and the interactive online space. According to Alim (2009: 110), the operation of 'translocal style communities' is based on "stylistic commonalities and contrasts that pay equal attention to the local and global". As young people in a society such as Finland, where a high value is placed on one's language and technological skills (Kaarakainen & Kivinen 2015), the members of this particular community are able to navigate digital environments and search, find and share with others materials that are related to their interests. I use the notion of translocality to explain how the community members, through their heteroglossic language use, draw on global discourses and communicative styles (both of the global religion of Christianity and of the originally North-American extreme sports). In this way, they build connections to different cultures, practices, values and locales, while at the same time maintaining a strong sense of their own local community of practice. Overall, since the community members' language use is composed of heterogeneous linguistic and discursive forms as well as multiple socio-cultural voices, I view the heteroglossia of their discourse as an important manifestation of their translocal identities constructed in the specific digital context of their community.

### 4.3 Article 3: Heteroglossia and reflexive participation

Peuronen, Saija (2013). Heteroglossia as a resource for reflexive participation in a community of Christian snowboarders in Finland. *Journal of Sociolinguistics* 17 (3): 297–323.

The third article continues with the topic of heteroglossic language use among CSiF members. In this article, I describe the group members as snowboarders, since the data for this study were gathered in one of the community's snowboarding camps, held in April 2011. I use audio and video recordings of the snowboarders' naturally-occurring interactions and activities, as well as interviews conducted with them, to study how they articulate the relevance of both Christianity and the snowboarding culture in their lives. The excerpts of interaction that I analyze in this paper focus on metapragmatic activities: by way of evaluating and interpreting the use of certain resources, the snowboarders reflect on how their shared faith and interest in sports unite them, and how issues of gender equality should be understood by the church. They also negotiate their (supposedly) shared knowledge and expertise in snowboarding vocabulary. Hence, I have termed these activities, during which the community members engage in reflection on and the evaluation of different understandings and values, as forms of reflexive participation.

In examining how the socio-cultural and ideological frameworks of Christianity and the snowboarding culture are drawn on to construct participation in this community, I worked with the theoretical concept of heteroglossia elaborated by Bakhtin (1981). In addition to the Internet discussion forum studied, I found this concept useful when analyzing the diverse language forms used by the Christian snowboarders in their face-to-face settings. I focused on the ways in which they use extreme sports lexical registers, biblical registers or the use of religious language more generally as well as different, and sometimes even conflicting, socio-cultural and ideological voices that the snowboarders draw on and manage to articulate together. Therefore, to build on the findings of article 2, which show that heteroglossic language resources can be strategically used to convey various identity-related meanings, article 3 reinforces the potential of the concept of heteroglossia in studies of language and youth cultural communities.

While the main focus in article 2 is on the use of the resources of Finnish and English and their divergent functions, article 3 considers the meaning potential of different linguistic resources more extensively, paying particular attention to the social, cultural and ideological voices, value systems and identity positions that become associated with specific linguistic repertoires. Thus, in this article, I adopt a more theoretically-oriented approach to heteroglossia, and I also argue for the benefits of using the notion of indexicality (Silverstein 2003, 1993, Ochs 1992) as an analytical concept in seeking to capture some of the complexities related to meaning-making practices in the lives of young people in late-modern societies. The concept of indexicality offers a way to investigate situational, historical and social references in the community members' speech and how they interpret these in specific interactive situations. The linguistic resources that the snowboarders draw on have certain presupposed meanings based on the shared associations that are typically connected with these resources. Nevertheless, the same resources may also gain new meanings and added value during interactions

through the speakers' specific interactive goals. For instance, I discuss a communicative event where the participants refer to an extreme sports-related term, 'newschool' and modify a biblical citation to integrate a religious voice into the expression and in this way, strengthen their sense of community. On the whole, studying heteroglossia in a face-to-face context (in addition to the online context studied in article 2), gave me a new perspective on and a deeper understanding of how linguistic resources are adopted, modified and put to use in this particular CoP.

The analyses in article 3 illustrate the importance of the role of humor and playfulness in the community's interactions. Li Wei (2011: 1226, 1230) discusses the importance of language and having "fun with words" in youth culture. In addition to the playful way of deploying linguistic elements in their online communication, the Christian snowboarders use humor as a way to incorporate several different voices into their interactions. Humor enables them to express certain views but they are at the same time able to distance themselves from these views. It thus enables the discussion and treatment of controversial viewpoints. For instance, as illustrated in this article, humor functioned as a way for the community members to cite very conservative views on the role of women in the church and thus evaluate their responses to these views.

Altogether, through heteroglossia and the resources provided by humor, the snowboarders are able both to negotiate the practices of the community and relate them to wider societal issues. During their local interactions, they situate themselves as active agents in the community by defining their positions, voice, and values. Collins-Mayo (2010: 1) points out that, in the case of religion in our late-modern societies, young people occupy a leading role in the introduction of cultural and social change. This idea reflects Bakhtin's (1981: 272) notion of centripetal and centrifugal forces in society by which he refers to the struggle between normativity and diversity in language use. Heteroglossia is an expression of the creative, centrifugal forces, and the young people in the Christian snowboarding community, through their language use, find ways of reconciling and interpreting the discourses of the Bible, their own opinions and the views encouraged by the late-modern society in which they live.

#### **4.4 Article 4: Identifications through multimodal design**

Peuronen, Saija (2014). Identifications through multimodal design: An analysis of the mediated performance of Christian lifestyle sports in online video. In Jukka Tyrkkö & Sirpa Leppänen (eds.), *VARIENG eSeries*, volume 15: Texts and Discourses of New Media. Helsinki: University of Helsinki. [online].  
<http://www.helsinki.fi/varieng/series/volumes/15/peuronen/>

In the fourth article, I continue with a micro-level analysis of practices in the CSiF community and, in addition to written and spoken language, direct my attention to other multimodal resources that the community members have at

their disposal. In particular, I adopt a social-semiotic approach to multimodality (Jewitt 2009) and focus on mediated and mediatized aspects of performance in two short videos that have been produced and posted online by an active member of the community. This snowboarder is actively involved in developing the community's online visibility. I analyze how the co-occurrence of different modes in the design of the online videos contributes to the construction of various identifications with both religion and lifestyle sports. Posting videos online is an important activity in light of the community's joint enterprise, i.e. engaging in Christian missionary work within the culture of lifestyle sports.

Article 4 contributes to the overall findings of this dissertation and examination of participation by taking into account the multimodality of the community's activities and ways of constructing individual and communal identifications. This research thus responds to the call for the adoption of a more holistic perspective in conducting studies on language, performance and representation in the field of sociolinguistics (Kytölä 2013: 141–142, Leppänen et al. 2014, Kress 2010: 5, Blommaert & Rampton 2011). For instance, Bell and Gibson (2011: 559) emphasize the importance of paying attention to “all the modalities involved in a particular performance, not just to language”. In this way, it is possible to analyze the many different activities and practices that may be relevant for the participants of a certain community of practice. In the CSiF community, online video, as a material object, serves to give concrete form to the community's ways of participation, and thus helps to represent the community to others.

The material analyzed in this article comes from a collection of online videos featuring different board sports activities (for instance, snowboarding, longboarding and wakeboarding). Out of a corpus of 26 videos, I focus on two videos in which I examine the “situated use of modal resources” (Jewitt 2009: 30), paying special attention to the co-occurrence of different modes in the design of the videos. In particular, I analyze how aspects of framing and the use of different shots enable the representation of personal points of view and social relations, and how the careful embedding of a music soundtrack creates a rhythm for the actions performed in the videos. In addition, by recontextualizing Christian imagery and language in the videos and by their handling of their cultural objects (boards, cameras) the snowboarders are able to convey information about their cultural practices and religious worldview while at the same time constructing their individual and communal identities.

The findings of article 4 illustrate that online video can be used as a cultural tool (Norris 2012, Jones & Norris 2005b, Scollon 2001) for achieving the goals of this specific CoP. The concept of a cultural tool has been developed within the framework of mediated discourse analysis (MDA). Although I have not otherwise utilized the MDA framework in this dissertation, I adopted this specific concept for its relevance in understanding social actors' creative engagement with new media technologies. Cultural tools mediate meanings between social actors and their socio-cultural environments, and individuals

can also modify and shape them according to their own purposes. The goals of the CSiF community include, for instance, having fun and cultivating friendships as well as sharing their Christian faith. Online video is well-adapted for conveying meanings related to these goals. Since the community operates at the intersection of youth culture and lifestyle sports, having fun is a central value for them: the findings of the interviews in article 1 also illustrate how the snowboarders emphasize having fun as an important aspect of what they do. Moreover, as a Christian community, the members use online video to invite others to identify themselves with the Christian way of life. For instance, they associate Christian symbols, lexical items and songs with artifacts and activities of board sports. The inclusion of Christian imagery and discourses heightens the ideological meanings and the reflexivity of their message, and thus they are able to align their video-making practices with their joint enterprise, the evangelistic mission of the community.

#### **4.5 Summary of the findings**

This section summarizes the findings of the research articles, particularly with reference to CSiF as a community of practice in the late-modern contexts of youth culture, religion and lifestyle sports. Overall, the findings of this research serve to illustrate that understanding of how participation is constructed in communities of practice can be enhanced by including a variety of communicative spaces, both physical and digital, in the research design. From a sociolinguistic and social-semiotic perspective, this has required the development of an analytic toolkit that includes methods which can address heteroglossic and multimodal uses of language and other semiotic resources. Most importantly, the concepts of social-communicative style, indexicality and design have permitted analyses of the ways in which various different resources in the community members' shared repertoire are meaningfully combined in the course of specific interactive and semiotic events. Furthermore, an analysis of discursive social positioning contributes to studying the processes of identification involved in understanding participation in a CoP.

Combining the findings of the four research articles included in this dissertation demonstrates that CSiF members, in their situated communicative contexts, use language and other semiotic resources to construct, negotiate and adapt many social meanings. These meanings relate, in particular, to their lived realities as young people and Christians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Finland who participate in the late-modern lifestyle sports cultures. The social contexts of Christianity and lifestyle sports, which are brought together in their CoP, set certain norms and expectations regarding the community members' articulation of their ideas, beliefs and values. This does not mean, however, that the communicative spaces that CSiF members create for themselves inhibits the creative and playful uses of resources. Hence, the findings of this study

illustrate that CSiF members use their shared repertoire of linguistic, semiotic and discursive resources to construct participation that is defined by

- a) a sense of groupness which makes them distinct from other groups but nevertheless connected to global cultures, practices and styles;
- b) multimodal and transcultural practices related to their joint enterprise, the community's Christian mission, in which they engage amidst many transcultural flows and by drawing on various semiotic means;
- c) the negotiation of expertise in the culture of lifestyle sports in the community's local contexts especially concerning their expert knowledge of terminology, sports equipment and video-making practices; and
- d) the interpretation and recontextualization of the Bible and other semiotic material linked with Christianity in the framework of lifestyle sports

Specifically, these findings point to the *reflexivity of translocal actions and practices*, including interactions, activities and ways of representation. Thus, this research illustrates how evaluations and the reflexive positioning of self and other permeate young people's individual and community-related lives across both offline and online worlds. In their communicative practices across these spaces, CSiF members identify and dis-identify themselves with the dominant socio-ideological discourses of, e.g., Christian missionary evangelism or the alcohol-driven party lifestyle often associated with snowboarding culture. In this way, they are able to construct solidarity within their own group and differentiate themselves from others. However, the findings also show that in their individual and communal identification with the religion of Christianity and in their joint endeavor of spreading the gospel, the community members orient to shared expressive resources in youth culture and lifestyle sports, thus placing value on creating and cultivating interpersonal relations with each other and other social actors in their related cultural frameworks. Translocality therefore emerges through the use of resources that have the potential to create meaningful connections between the different socio-cultural and ideological frameworks of their community. These include, for instance, playful youth styles, vocabularies and expressions derived from English, 'refashioning' of biblical texts and imagery, and the embodied, visual and material nature of lifestyle sports. Consequently, this dissertation contributes to understanding of the "necessarily mobile positionality of youth identities in the complex sociocultural field of late modernity" (Bucholtz & Skapoulli 2009: 4). Overall, the analyses of the heteroglossic and multimodal repertoire in the CSiF community show the dynamics of distinction and connectedness across the spaces of identification. Since the spaces are created outside of institutional contexts, such as churches or competitive sports, CSiF members can rework traditions, cultural stereotypes and engage in issues and activities which they find enjoyable and meaningful in their lives.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this concluding chapter, I discuss and elaborate further the main findings of the research articles vis-à-vis the key research aim presented in the introductory chapter of this dissertation. In addition, I evaluate the research design of this research, present suggestions for future studies and discuss the implications of this particular endeavor. Finally, I conclude by considering the ways in which this work developed as a sociolinguistic and ethnographic research project.

In accordance with the sociolinguistic paradigm, this doctoral research project analyzes the social nature of language and the linguistic nature of human social contexts (Bell 2016: 391, Hymes 1974: 195). By way of investigating a particular community of practice whose members can be characterized as Christian lifestyle sports enthusiasts in Finland, this research addresses a largely unexamined combination of contexts, all of which serve as important sources of identification for the participants of the community. Previous sociolinguistic studies have also focused on youth cultural expressions either in faith-related or sports-related communities. One such example is provided by Tetreault (2009) who focused on Muslim French youth and their linguistic performance of their parental and cultural origins. An example of a sociolinguistic study conducted in a sports context is the work by Madsen (2015: 9), who studied how young people constructed social hierarchies, peer-practices and processes of inclusion and exclusion in a martial arts club. In comparison, this dissertation focuses on the intertwining of expressions of youth culture, Christianity and lifestyle sports as the community members use their communicative repertoires to participate in meaningful activities, construct identifications with their faith and lifestyles, and create and maintain social relations.

The key aim of this dissertation was phrased in the introduction as follows: *How are heteroglossic and multimodal resources and discursive strategies for social positioning used to construct participation in the different communicative contexts of the community?* This aim was approached by focusing on mutual engagement in shared activities and processes of (dis)identification at the local level of interactive and semiotic events in the CSiF community. The four research

articles included in this dissertation analyze and discuss specific aspects of these phenomena. They do so by incorporating analyses of the discursive social positioning of self and other in interviews, analyses of linguistic and discursive heteroglossia both in computer-mediated communication and spoken interaction, and multimodality and mediated performance in online videos. All these analyses followed an interpretive research design in which specific notions were operationalized to examine situated practices and processes of (dis)identification in contexts of late modernity, religion and lifestyle sports cultures. The notions of heteroglossia, (mediated) performance and translocality served as key interpretive notions. Below, I outline the main findings of this research on the basis of these three terms.

The notion of heteroglossia, viewed in terms of a diversity of language resources embedded in their social, historical and ideological contexts of use, is useful in investigating *how* these different resources were used to construct meanings in the CSiF community. Hence, as heteroglossic resources carry indexical meanings, i.e. conventionalized associations between form and social meaning (Jaffe 2016: 86), they have the potential to set different social, ideological and cultural voices in dialogue with each other. In article 3, I illustrate how CSiF members engage in these negotiations and contrast certain socio-ideological voices with their everyday realities, thus creating new meanings through their “lived ideology” (Billig et al. 1988: 28). Indexicality therefore provides a useful analytic tool for analyzing the ways in which meanings are created and modified during the course of the community members’ interactions. By engaging in this interactive work, the CSiF members are able to construct participation in a highly reflexive manner. In article 1, the use of ‘evaluative indexicals’ (Wortham 2001) functions to voice certain stereotypical views of Christianity and the snowboarding culture, thus also serving to dis-identify oneself from the “normative expectations and social types” (Deppermann 2015: 376). In article 2, the term social-communicative style works to illustrate how heteroglossic resources are combined to negotiate solidarity, expertise and the community’s shared Christian mission. In article 4, the use of multimodal design is shown to have similar potential for creating meanings as new and sometimes unexpected associations are made through the conjoining of different modes and a variety of semiotic signs.

Furthermore, the analysis of mediated performance in article 4 illustrates how linguistic and semiotic resources are drawn on by CSiF members for purposes of representation and identification. The concept of performance enables consideration of how the “act of expression is put on display” and presented to an audience (Bauman 2000: 1). The online video provides the community members with a specific medium for the performance of individual and communal identifications by multimodal means in digital environments. However, performance is not limited only to video-making practices but it serves an important communicative mode in other contexts as well. In general, both reported speech and stylization are means commonly used when engaging in performance (Bell 2014: 306). The interviews analyzed in article 1 included



quotation as one discursive strategy for positioning self and other. Thus, at certain moments during the interaction, the CSiF members spontaneously performed the voices of the 'other' through reported speech. By these performances the community members positioned themselves as knowledgeable about snowboarding cultures in general while at the same time positioning themselves in the margin due to their identities as Christian snowboarders, thus seeing themselves as 'other'. Moreover, article 3 illustrates how during an interactive event between some of the CSiF members, one of the participants breaks into a performance and reads the Apostle Paul's words from the Bible concerning the role of women in the church. The other participants find his performance very amusing, and thus the findings of the article suggest that humor serves as an important resource for dealing with gender equality and the social organization of the church. In addition to reported speech, the stylized elements of online discourse in the community's Internet discussion forum, analyzed in article 2, include aspects of performance by drawing attention to artful ways of using language (see Bauman 2011: 710). Hence, by embracing strategic ways of using language, the notions of heteroglossia and performance both render visible the reflexive nature of language (see Lucy 1993).

In order to interpret the use of the different resources in the specific communicative contexts of the community, the concept of translocality is drawn on as it facilitates understanding of the "sense of *connectedness* between locales where both the local and the global are meaningful parameters for social and cultural activities" (Kytölä 2016: 371, original emphasis). Translocality therefore refers to the appreciation of local cultural environments while at the same time including an orientation to places, people and discourses that are outside of one's immediate daily contexts. As I point out in article 2, the sense of connectedness in translocal communities may be created through shared identifications with specific cultures, lifestyles, and worldviews. Hence, in this dissertation, I characterize the different contexts in which the community and its participants operate as 'spaces of identification'. By this term, I have aimed to capture the multidimensional nature of CSiF as a late-modern community of practice. I have also used this term in an attempt to illustrate how practices of meaning-making take place in various discursive environments. I understand the communicative spaces of the CSiF community to be meaningful for individuals through the specific identity positions they share as they enter these spaces as well as the identifications that the individuals construct for themselves and others while engaging in shared activities and interactions in these spaces.

A research design, based on the methodology of 'connected ethnography' (Hine 2000, Leander & McKim 2003) in combination with the concept of a community of practice allowed me to zoom into the use of particular linguistic, semiotic and discursive resources, participants, communicative spaces, activities and finally, the interactive and semiotic events in the CSiF community. Consequently, the findings of this dissertation research suggest that studying

the local interactions and representations *across* different spaces of a CoP is crucial in learning to understand the processes of identification the social actors engage in. For instance, as I familiarized myself with the field of Christian lifestyle sports locally in Finland and translocally across different online sites, I was able to make sense of the important locations, people, communities, practices, discourses and terminologies in the field. This knowledge gave me a wider perspective on the field and helped to establish the links between the different spaces that were meaningful for CSiF members. Ultimately, the methodology of connective ethnography also enabled me to direct my attention to the key participants who were active members of the community and had specific roles in the community's activities.

Finally, although combining different theoretical and methodological perspectives enabled me to focus on various spaces of the community and include different types of data and analytic foci, the multi-disciplinary character of the dissertation also posed challenges in terms of adequately addressing the broader socio-cultural frameworks studied. In comparison to cultural studies of lifestyle sports, I have not described and considered the cultural history of snowboarding to the same extent as, for instance, different lifestyle sports are discussed in Wheaton (2004). Additionally, I have not focused on Christianity from the point of view of an organized religion but rather treated it as an important source of identification for the CSiF members. Although fuller consideration of the cultural, historical and institutional aspects of Christianity and snowboarding and other lifestyle sports would likely have given me an even more nuanced view of the different discourses surrounding the community, I made an informed decision to regard the local contexts of the CoP as the starting point for the detailed analyses of language and other semiotic resources. Therefore, I adopted the view according to which it is important to aim at understanding the meanings created locally in a specific community and not to let the literature or larger socio-cultural structures direct interpretations at the outset of the study (Rampton 2014: 274, Bucholtz & Skapoulli 2009: 6). Had I considered these larger structures as my starting points, it might have entailed viewing the CSiF members a somewhat curious mixture of representatives of the dominant religious affiliation in Finland and as advocates of an alternative, snowboarder/skateboarder identity, which is generally characterized by a search for authenticity and striving to challenge middle-class values (see, e.g., Dupont & Ojala 2015: 16). Although this description could yield valuable ideas about what to look for in a snowboarding or a Christian community, focusing initially on the research participants' local positionings of self and other is likely to yield a more fine-grained picture of the community members' values, identifications and ways of participation. In sum, while adopting a social constructivist approach, it seems reasonable to maintain a balance between "the extent to which it may be claimed that individuals construct or create society and, conversely, the degree to which social structures may be said to impress or socialize individuals" (Sealey & Carter 2004: 6, see also Bell 2016: 400, Levon 2013: 70).

## 5.1 Future directions

For this dissertation, I investigated discursive strategies and heteroglossic language use and conducted a multimodal analysis of “semiotic mediation” (Jones 2011a: 593, Agha 2011: 164). These different analyses formed separate research articles, each with its own data set. In the future, it might be fruitful to expand the foci of the individual studies by including more than one type of data. For example, the notion of heteroglossia and the idea of “tension-filled interaction” (Bakhtin 1981: 279, Blackledge & Creese 2014: 7) could be applied, in addition to spoken interaction, to the ways in which different modes are used in the community. This would facilitate examination of whether, and if so how, different modes “produce aspects of meaning that are contradictory or in tension” (Jewitt 2016: 73). An analysis of multimodality could then focus not only on how separate modes are synchronized to form a meaningful composition but also how the meaning potential of the different modes may induce certain ideological contradictions in a specific community. The longboarding video analyzed in article 4 provides examples of these sorts of contradictions. For instance, I analyze the longboarder’s board from the viewpoint of the “conjoining of discourses” in a semiotic object (Kress 2010: 113). The reveal of the print on the underside of the longboard showing an image of Christ standing on a skateboard accompanied by the caption “Jesus, I roll with Thee” establishes a dramatic and unexpected moment in the film. Introducing a heteroglossic perspective could serve to initiate further discussion on the possible ideological tensions between values in the skate- or longboarding culture and those represented by the person of Jesus. Another possibility for studying contradictions in this specific short film is presented by the use made of different fonts and alphabets, which serve as semiotic resources in the written mode of language. In the analysis presented in article 4, in which my overall aim was to consider how the multimodal design of an online video contributes to the processes of meaning-making, I end up overlooking some of the intricacies in the use of the semiotic resources *within* the modes. For instance, I did not discuss how, right at the beginning of the video, Leevi, the video-maker, introduces his Greek nickname written in the Greek alphabet and stylized with a graphically appealing font (while also providing an English gloss for the name), thereby creating a meaningful contrast between his self-representation as an artist and producer of the film and the presentation of the more general information on the video in English, written using more prosaic font. Thus, drawing on both heteroglossia and social semiotics in the same analysis would yield a more versatile picture of how social actors employ modes and semiotic resources to construct meanings and engage in processes of identification.

In addition, the kind of ethnographic approach adopted in this research for studying contemporary youth culture, in which different spaces for interaction and activities were investigated, would benefit greatly from

collaborative work. This would allow the multiple perspectives on the various contexts studied to be integrated. For example, Gregory et al. (2012), in a team of researchers, produced field narratives concerning a variety of faith settings, for which purpose they used a specific online platform accessible by all the members of their research team. They report that the field narratives helped them to make observations from both insider and outsider perspectives and engage in a dialogical process of interpretation of practices in specific places of worship, their larger socio-historical contexts and the inner emotions of the researchers (ibid.: 201, see also Madsen et al. 2016, and Creese et al. 2015, on linguistic ethnographic work conducted in research teams). Indeed, compared to an individual researcher drawing links between meaning-making practices across different sites, a team of ethnographers focusing on connected spaces in digital and face-to-face environments would be better positioned to produce multiple viewpoints and critical interpretations of certain cultural contexts.

On religion as a field of study, Cadge, Levitt and Smilde (2011) have suggested that religious expression 'outside of congregations' constitutes an important area of religious life that deserves further research. Therefore, in addition to exploring participation in the CSiF community, it could be valuable to expand this work by focusing on other communities of practice whose members are united by their faith or a shared worldview. For instance, other youth groups, workplaces, political parties or charity organizations would be interesting environments in which to locate and study expressions of religion (see, e.g., Salonen 2015 on studying religion in the context of food banks in Finland).

Furthermore, to be able to do justice to the complex, translocal and global dimensions that characterize late-modern communities of practice, further methodological options are required. For example, in this dissertation research it could have been useful to record community members' activities and interactions on the snowboarding slopes. When at the snowboarding and summer camps of the CSiF community, I joined the community members in their activities on the slopes and elsewhere, sometimes filming their sports activities and, later, making fieldnotes on my observations. However, as I was filming longboarding or windsurfing with an ordinary video camera, I was only able to capture a glimpse of everything that was going on between the participants. Thus, wearing self-recording equipment would enable better access to both talk and movement. Again, the handling of traditional self-recording equipment could be cumbersome, or even dangerous, for the research participants when engaging in action sports (see, for instance, Madsen 2015: 16, on the impracticability of wearing recording equipment during taekwondo practice). Of course, many snowboarders and other lifestyle sports athletes have their own camera equipment and are used to handling it while practicing their sports. The use of wearable digital video cameras (such as GoPro™ action cameras), which are attached to parts of one's body, could therefore offer a feasible option for data collection techniques (see Evers 2016: 148, on using this technology in his video-based ethnographic study of surfers).

Finally, the role of institutions, such as the church or different sports associations, could be a fruitful topic in sociolinguistic studies of communities of practice. One possibility would be to examine the flows, circulations and trajectories of discourses related to institutions, organizations and authorities, e.g., Christian missionary work or the principles of the Finnish Snowboard Association in the case of the CSiF community. This focus could deepen understanding of the changing status of the church in the religious life of individuals and communities in contemporary, 'post-secular society' (Moberg & Granholm 2012: 98) For instance, Lindh (2016: 198) analyzed how individuals may oppose or avoid the power of religious institutions by constructing an "inter-Christian identification" through participation in the activities of several different churches or establishing their own home-groups. Similarly, such a focus would provide empirical evidence on whether, and if so how, the proclaimed egalitarian objectives of many sports associations, such as 'the Spirit of the Game' in ultimate frisbee referred to by Thornton (2004: 176), can be detected in the interactions and other social practices of members of lifestyle sports communities. The examination of institutional discourses could also be linked to considerations of legitimacy and possible 'gate-keeping' practices in a CoP (Davies 2005: 571). For instance, although the CSiF members emphasize that one does not have to be a particularly skillful snowboarder to participate in their activities, they nevertheless value expressive styles in clothing and movement, tolerant attitudes (especially towards the diversity of Christian denominations and different religious practices), good language skills and experience of traveling abroad. One important way of gaining legitimacy is also through skills and knowledge that contribute to the promotion of the community's image (such as filming and making videos). Thus, they evaluate self and other based on their styles, attitudes, knowledge and expertise. Studying the ways in which legitimacy and different forms of membership are constructed could include foci on the use of language and other semiotic resources as well as embodiment and cultural artefacts (e.g., skateboards or the Bible), and could thus offer perspectives not only on institutional discourses, but also on the materialization and visualization of youth culture, religion and lifestyle sports.

## 5.2 Implications

In societal and cultural terms, this study complements existing knowledge on youth cultures in Finland. In addition to research projects carried out at the intersection of youth and religion, or youth and lifestyle sports, this study presents both Christianity and lifestyle sports as important dimensions of social life which young Finns may find relevant in conceptualizing their lives in late-modern social settings. For instance, the ethos of lifestyle sports connected with a deeply-felt religious conviction that permeates all aspects of one's life (Marti & Ganiel 2014: 134) may translate into an engagement in transcultural activities

with the purpose of the transmission of religion, in this case presentation of the Christian message to members of other lifestyle sports communities. While considering the role of institutions and collective structures in the transmission of religion in late modernity, Guest (2009: 658) points out that the kinds of 'neo-tribes' (Maffesoli 1996) which "represent attempts to use resources of postmodernity in the construction of communities based around interest, protest, or enthusiasm" may potentially play an important role in the reproduction of religious values. CSiF members' resources for transcultural action predominantly lie in their knowledge and experiences both as active snowboarders and as practicing Christians. Therefore, as discussed in article 1, they emphasize ways of having fun, being visible and show an eagerness to offer other snowboarders a spiritual community. In fact, by adopting the role of transcultural agents, CSiF members align with the original idea of the first missionaries (such as the Apostle Paul) who transcended cultural differences by enabling "Greeks to become Christians and remain within their own cultural framework" (Robert 2009: 14).

Another aspect of this dissertation that concerns Finnish society is the use of English and other language resources, which in turn illustrates present-day globalization processes (see Blommaert 2010). In a nation-wide survey carried out by Leppänen et al. (2011) on the role of English in Finland, three different social groups of Finns were identified based on their self-perceptions of their knowledge and use of English: 'have-nots', 'haves' and 'have-it-alls'. My observations indicate that the focal participants of this study belong to the group of 'have-it-alls', i.e., they meet the criteria of having studied English for more than ten years, speak, write and understand English well, and use English frequently. In the Finnish education system, pupils normally start learning English in the third grade at the age of nine and continue studying it throughout compulsory and upper secondary education (Leppänen et al. 2011). By observing the CSiF participants at the snowboarding camps and their engagement in social media, it was clear that they found English a convenient means of communication. Often, English provided an important communicative resource among other language resources. Specifically, this research contributes to the literature on the actual uses and purposes of various language resources in digital and face-to-face contexts in relation to individuals' communicative and interpersonal goals.

Thus, with regard to the theoretical framework of this research, and particularly the concept of a community of practice, I believe that sociolinguistic studies, such as this one, can contribute importantly to understanding of the "shared repertoire" of a CoP (Wenger 1998: 82). This can be done by analyzing in fine detail the ways in which social actors produce shared meanings and how in cases of conflicts or contradictions of meaning, they negotiate their communicative tasks, enter processes of identification and construct participation by reflexive means. Therefore, analyses of the metapragmatics of language use in situated interactions allows us to conceptualize language as

practice, “a central organizing activity of social life” (Pennycook 2010: 2, see also Keating 2005: 108–109).

A broader question relating to communities of practice concerns the concept of a ‘community’. As discussed in the introduction (section 1.1), late modernity as a period characterized by the altering traditional boundaries poses challenges for conceptualizing community as bounded groups of people who share a similar background, locality and language repertoires. In his discussion on religion in late modernity, Neville (2002: 144) views digital communication as a defining characteristic of the late-modern period. Sanjek (2016: 10) also points out that in ethnography “both how we conduct fieldwork and what we study now involve digital dimensions that must be embraced”. Clearly, people who participate in activity cultures, such as lifestyle sports, cannot escape the pervasiveness of social media (see Thorpe, Forthcoming). The study of multimodality and mediated performance included in this research can be seen to contribute to the conceptualization of the different spaces in which people organize their social realities as part of their community lives. As a case in point, the medium of online video is increasingly important in acquiring digital literacy skills and carrying out different projects of self-actualization (Lange 2014: 9). In particular, representatives of expressive sports cultures, such as skateboarders, engage in learning processes by way of filming and producing videos to be posted online and thus, facilitate their socialization into their local communities and the wider sports cultures (Jones 2011a). This has also implications for the conceptualization of authenticity in late modernity. Indeed, according to Coupland (2003: 427), “late-modern social arrangements are likely to make the quest for authenticity more rather than less necessary”. Therefore, it is important to recognize both digital and face-to-face environments as consequential to many people’s engagement in and socialization into communities of practice.

### 5.3 Conclusion

I conclude this dissertation by considering and revisiting the development and maturation of the research themes and foci, which enabled me to arrive at an understanding of the diversity of meaning-making practices that contribute to the construction of participation in the CSiF community. Initially, the framework of bilingualism and specifically the focus on “English in Finland” (see Leppänen et al. 2008, Pahta & Taavitsainen 2011), provided me with tools for considering the ways in which resources of Finnish and English were used in messages posted on *Godspeed*, the Internet discussion forum meant for Christians interested in extreme sports. When I subsequently extended my focus to include the construction of social meanings across both bilingual and monolingual discourse (not just instances of language alternation), I was able to pay attention to the various ways in which language functions as a social practice (Bailey 2007: 262). This led me to adopt the concept of heteroglossia by

Bakhtin (1981) in order to analyze the linguistic and discursive diversity in CSiF members' language use in online communication and face-to-face interaction. In so doing, I followed the general tendency in the field of multilingualism research to shift from a focus on languages as separate and fixed entities to consideration of the meaning potential of diverse language resources and repertoires in indexing particular social meanings (Pennycook 2016: 206).

Since I embraced the view of language as inherently social and heteroglossic in nature, I also started to pay more attention to social actors in their meaning-making practices. This process coincided with the plan to extend my fieldwork to include offline as well as online settings. Thus, through my participation in the CSiF community's snowboarding and summer camps, a conceptual shift from 'text to subjects' also took place (see Whiteman 2012: 81). This shift helped me to conceptualize the online world not as something extraordinary but as a natural part of young people's lives and, especially with regard to lifestyle sports, an indispensable medium for representing oneself and one's crew (see Jones 2011a). Consequently, it was necessary to include multimodality in the theoretical and methodological framework of the dissertation to be able to examine how sonic and visual elements as well as material artefacts were used to create mediated performances of Christian lifestyle sports activities. Overall, the analyses of the use of language, semiotic resources and discursive strategies included in this research contribute to an understanding of online and offline environments as intertwined social spaces in a community of practice. These spaces, with their own affordances and constraints, enable social actors to engage in processes of identification and dis-identification.

The ethnographic framework applied in this research included different degrees and intervals of observation and involvement in the community's digital and physical spaces (cf. Duranti 1997: 102 on high and low involvement in activities one is studying). The moving back and forth between the fieldwork, transcription, analysis, consulting the participants and the fieldnotes, reading and writing provided a versatile picture of the relevant contexts, issues and endeavors of the community. Thus, combining the ethnographic knowledge acquired concerning the socio-cultural and discursive field of Christian lifestyle sports and the insights communicated by the focal research participants enabled me to interpret how the community members constructed participation through their mutual engagement in shared activities. In particular, the findings of this research illustrate the reflexive nature of CSiF members' translocal communicative activities and practices and their ways of identifying and dis-identifying with certain values, lifestyles and traditions. The investigation of the context of Christian lifestyle sports, and especially the CSiF community, with the focus on the use of their heteroglossic and multimodal resources across the connected spaces of identification, aptly illustrates the possibilities for communicating, representing and interpreting the meanings that create our social worlds.



## TIIVISTELMÄ (FINNISH SUMMARY)

### **Heteroglossiset ja multimodaaliset resurssit käytössä: Osallistuminen ja identifioitumisen tilat kristittyjen elämäntapaurheilijoiden yhteisössä**

Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastelen, miten osallistumista rakennetaan kielellisten, semioottisten ja diskursiivisten resurssien avulla yhdessä suomalaisessa nuori-soyhteisössä. Yhteisön jäseniä yhdistävät kristillinen maailmankatsomus ja kiinnostus erilaisia elämäntapalajeja kohtaan. Heidän harrastamiinsa lajeihin kuuluvat esimerkiksi lumilautailu, newschool-hiihto, (mäki)rullalautailu, kiipeily, parkour, purjehdus, vesilautailu, bmx-pyöräily ja motocross. Virallisesti yhteisö on järjestäytynyt lumilautailuseuraksi ja siksi usein käytänkin termiä (lumi)lautailija kuvatessani yhteisön jäseniä. Yhteisön tavoitteena on luoda verkosto, jonka jäsenillä on yhteiset kiinnostuksen kohteet ja arvot ja tällä tavoin rakentaa ystävyysuhteita, pitää hauskaa ja etsiä tapoja jakaa evankeliumin sanomaa. Yhteisön toimintaan osallistuu eri puolelta Suomea ja eri kristillisistä seurakunnista tulevia ihmisiä.

Työni on luonteeltaan laadullinen tutkimus ja sen teoreettisessa ja metodologisessa viitekehyksessä yhdistyvät sosiolinguistiikka, sosiaalinen semiotiikka, diskurssintutkimus ja etnografia. Tutkimusaineisto on kerätty vuosien 2006–2014 välillä. Etnografisen kenttätutkimuksen aloitin tarkastelemalla ja keräämällä aineistoa internetistä toimivalta Godspeed-keskustelufoorumilta, joka oli suunnattu kristityille extreme-lajien harrastajille Suomessa. Keskityin erityisesti siihen, miten foorumin keskusteluissa hyödynnettiin suomen ja englannin kielten resursseja identiteetteihin liittyvien merkitysten luomisessa. Tutkimukseni seuraavissa vaiheissa laajensin kenttätutkimusta: yhteisön digitaalisen ympäristön tarkastelun lisäksi keräsin aineistoa kasvokkain vuorovaikutustilanteissa lumilautailuleireillä. Osallistuin yhteensä neljälle yhteisön järjestämälle leirille, tein osallistuvaa havainnointia, kenttämuistiinpanoja, haastatteluja, tallensin vapaamuotoisia keskusteluja sekä videoin yhteisön jäsenten lajiaktiiviteetteja. Näiden aineistojen avulla analysoin kristittyjen lautailijoiden käyttämiä monimuotoisia kielellisiä ja diskursiivisia resursseja. Keskityin erityisesti siihen, miten sekä kristinuskoon että elämäntapalajeihin liittyvät kulttuuriset viitekehykset ja sosio-ideologiset äänet raamittavat refleksiivistä puhetta yhteisöön osallistumisesta sekä yhteisön jäsenten yhdessä luomaa tulkintaa kristillisestä missiossaan. Lisäksi keräsin yhteisön tuottamia ja verkossa julkaisemia videoita, joita analysoimalla minun oli mahdollista ottaa huomioon, miten multimodaalisuutta hyödynnetään yhteisön evankelioimistyössä. Kaiken kaikkiaan käytän työssäni metaforaa ”identifioitumisen tilat” luonnehtimaan konkreettisia ja diskursiivisesti rakennettuja konteksteja ja viestinnällisiä tilanteita, joiden aikana yhteisön jäsenet toimivat yhdessä samalla asemoiden itseään ja toisia tietyllä tavalla.

Tarkastelemalla näitä toisiinsa kytkeytyviä tiloja ja niistä kerättyjä aineistoja pyrin tulkitsemaan yhteisön moniulotteista luonnetta myöhäismodernille ajalle tyypillisissä pirstoutuneissa vuorovaikutusympäristöissä, joille on omi-

naista perinteisten rajojen muokkautuminen, ihmisten ja heidän kielellisten resurssiansa liikkuvuus sekä yleisesti ottaen digitaalisen kommunikaation kasvava rooli yksilöiden ja yhteisöjen elämässä (Giddens 1991, Blommaert 2010). Pyrkimykseni ei ole tarjota aukotonta kuvaa tutkimastani yhteisöstä tai sen jäsenten kielellisistä resursseista. Kielen ja muiden semioottisten resurssien käyttöä analysoimalla on kuitenkin mahdollista todeta, että yhteisöä luonnehtii translokaalisuus, jolla tarkoitetaan yhtäaikaista orientoitumista sekä omaan paikkaan että globaaleihin konteksteihin. Näin ollen paikan merkitys määräytyy ennen kaikkea suhteessa toisiin paikkoihin, globaaleihin tyyliin ja eri viestinnän muotoihin (Leppänen et al. 2009, Alim 2009, Kytölä 2016). Translokaalisuus tarjoaa toimivan tulkinnallisen kehyksen pyrkiessäni ymmärtämään yhteisön kommunikaatioon liittyviä käytänteitä. Viime aikaisessa sosiolingvistiksessä tutkimuksessa onkin korostettu, että myöhäismodernin ajan yhteisöjen tutkimus vaatii huomion siirtämistä konkreettisten paikkojen tai etnisyyden tarkastelusta jaettujen käsitysten analysointiin (Li Wei 2014: 476–477).

Oppimisen tutkimuksen parissa kehitetty toimintayhteisön malli (*community of practice*) antaa välineet eritellä jaettujen käsitysten rakentumista esimerkiksi erilaisissa työhön, kouluun, perheeseen tai vapaa-ajan harrastuksiin liittyvissä ryhmissä (Lave & Wenger 1991). Wengerin (1998: 73) määritelmän mukaan toimintayhteisöt rakentuvat sen jäsenten keskinäisen toiminnan varaan heidän pyrkiessään toteuttamaan yhteistä tavoitetta jaettujen resurssien avulla. Tutkimukseni keskiössä oleva ilmiö, osallistuminen, ymmärretään tässä viitekehyksessä sosiaalisten toimijoiden aktiivisena osallistumisena yhteisön käytänteisiin sekä samaan aikaan toiminnan kautta tapahtuvana, yhteisöön liittyvien identiteettien rakentamisena. Toisin sanoen toimintayhteisön käsite mahdollistaa osallistumisen tutkimisen kahdesta kiinteästi toisiinsa liittyvästä näkökulmasta: yhteisön jäsenten välisessä, eri viestinnällisissä konteksteissa tapahtuvassa toiminnassa ja osana tähän toimintaan liittyviä identifikaatioprosesseja. Käytän työssäni termiä 'identifikaatio' painottaakseni kielenkäytön kautta tapahtuvan identiteettityön prosessinomaista luonnetta. Analysoin erityisesti, miten kristityt lautailijat rakentavat osallistumista toimintayhteisöönsä heteroglossisten ja multimodaalisten resurssien avulla. Heteroglossian käsite viittaa kielen monimuotoisuuteen: eri varieteetteihin, diskursseihin ja sosioideologisiin ääniin. Multimodaalisuus taas käsittää eri moodeja tai viestintäkanavia, kuten puhutun tai kirjoitetun kielen sekä kuvan ja äänen, jotka antavat erilaisia mahdollisuuksia merkitysten ilmaisemiseen semioottisten resurssien avulla.

Väitöstyöni koostuu neljästä eri artikkelista. Näissä artikkeleissa käytän analyysini työvälineinä erityisesti kielellisen ja diskursiivisen heteroglossian, indeksisyyden, viestinnällisen tyylin, multimodaalisen suunnittelun ja tiettyjen diskursiivisten strategioiden käsitteitä. Koko työni päätutkimuskysymys on: *Miten heteroglossisia ja multimodaalisia resursseja sekä diskursiivisia sosiaalisen asemonnin strategioita käytetään osallistumisen rakentamiseen yhteisön eri kommunikatiivisissa konteksteissa?*

Voidakseni analysoida, miten kristityt lautailijat käyttävät tarkastelun kohteena olevia resursseja yhteisissä aktiviteeteissaan sekä miten näiden aktiviteettien aikana sosiaalisia kategorioita ja suhteita määritellään sekä miten niistä neuvotellaan, työhön sisältyvät artikkelit vastaavat seuraaviin kysymyksiin: 1) Millä tavoin kristityt lautailijat asemoivat itseään ja toisia suhteessa kristilliseen missioonsa lumilautailukulttuurin parissa? 2) Miten translokaaleista identiteeteistä neuvotellaan suomen ja englannin kielen resursseista koostuvan viestinnällisen tyylin avulla verkkokeskusteluissa? 3) Miten heteroglossisia kielellisiä ja diskursiivisia resursseja käytetään refleksiivisen osallistumisen rakentamiseen kasvokkaisessa vuorovaikutuksessa? 4) Miten identifikaatioita rakennetaan välitteisissä performansseissa verkkovideoiden multimodaalisen suunnittelun kautta?

**Ensimmäisessä artikkelissa** analysoin, miten yhteisön jäsenet arvioivat kristillistä missiotaan lumilautailukulttuurin parissa ja miten he näin ollen asemoivat itseään ja toisia kristinuskoon ja elämäntapaurheiluun liittyvien sosiokulttuuristen ja ideologisten viitekehysten sisällä. Artikkelin aineisto koostuu neljästä haastattelusta, jotka tein helmikuussa 2013 yhteisön lumilautailuleirillä. Haastatteluihin osallistui viisi yhteisön toiminnassa aktiivisesti mukana olevaa nuorta. Haastattelut olivat puolistrukturoituja ja aihealueiltaan ne pureutuivat osallistujien ajatuksiin yhteisön kristillisestä missiosta sekä tavoista jakaa evankeliumin sanomaa, heidän näkemyksiinsä yhteisön tulevaisuudesta ja heidän omista unelmistaan, eri aktiviteettien roolista yhteisössä (esimerkkinä leirit) ja yhteisön yhteiskristillisestä pohjasta (mitkä ovat sen edut ja haitat). Sosiaalisen asemoinnin analyysin työvälineinä käytin Worthamin (2001) hahmottamia diskursiivisia strategioita.

Artikkelin tulokset osoittavat, että kristityt lautailijat käyttävät episteemisen modaalisuuden, lainaamisen, viittaamisen ja arvioivien indeksien strategioita asemoidessaan itseään ja toisia. He käyttävät näitä strategioita hyvin monitahoisissa toiseuttamisen prosesseissa. Haastatteleman kristityt lautailijat arvioivat lumilautailukulttuuria ja muita lumilautailijoita asettamalla itsensä muita korkeampaan epistemologiseen asemaan. Samalla he myös asemoivat itsensä marginaaliin suhteessa sekä lumilautailijoihin että kristillisen nuorisotyön tekijöihin. Puhuessaan kristillisestä missiostaan yhteisön jäsenet neuvottelevat tietystä transkulttuurisista käytänteistä. He painottavat erityisesti näkyvyyttä ja hauskanpitoa kulttuurisesti hyväksyttävänä tapoina identifioitua tiettyihin kristillisiin arvoihin. He myös rakentavat diskursiivisesti yhteisöään tilana, jossa huolehditaan sosiaalisista suhteista, vastavuoroisesti tuetaan ja ohjataan toisia hengellisissä asioissa ja yleisesti ottaen viedään evankeliumia eteenpäin. Kaikki haastateltavat painottivat sosiaalisten suhteiden tärkeyttä evankelioinnissa. He halusivat hyvin tietoisella tavalla erottautua perinteisistä, julkisen evankelionnin tyyleistä ja sen sijaan identifioituivat lähetystyöhön oman hengellisen kutsumuksensa kautta.

Jälkmodernin ajan toimintayhteisön jäsenenä kristittyjen lumilautailijoiden toimintaa, diskursseja ja ymmärrystä omista kulttuurisista viitekehyksistä sävyttävät monet transkulttuuriset virtaukset (Pennycook 2007). Olenkin artik-

kelissa viitannut lumilautailijoihin transkulttuurisina toimijoina, jotka pyrkivät löytämään yhteistä maaperää edustamiensa eri kristillisten seurakuntien välillä ja siten välittämään yhteisen viestinsä muille. Artikkelin tulokset osoittavat, että yhteisön jäsenet eivät halua sitoutua tiettyihin evankeliointiin liittyviin perinteisiin eivätkä myöskään päihteidenkäyttöön liittyviin käytänteisiin lautailukulttuurissa. He siis vastustavat sellaisia perinteitä ja käytänteitä, jotka eivät sovi yhteen yhteisön arvojen tai sen jäsenten hengellisten kutsumusten kanssa.

**Toinen artikkeli** keskittyy verkkokeskusteluihin yhteisön ylläpitämällä Godspeed -keskustelufoorumilla. Aineisto on kerätty vuosien 2006 ja 2008 välisenä aikana. Artikkelin sijoittuu uuden median sosiolingvistiikan tutkimuskentälle ja tarkastelen heteroglossian käsitteen avulla, miten englannin ja suomen kielen resursseja hyödynnetään identiteettien ilmaisussa. Heteroglossia antaa käsitteenä mahdollisuuden tutkia monipuolisesti tilanteisen kielenkäytön resursseja niiden sosiaalisessa ja historiallisessa kontekstissa. Hyödynsin myös tietokonevälitteisen kommunikaation teorioita ja metodeja, erityisesti Herringin (2007) luomaa luokittelumallia sekä Androutsopouloksen (2008) kehittämää verkko-etnografian lähestymistapaa, jotka auttoivat minua havainnoimaan keskusteluja ja jaottelemaan niitä eri aktiviteetteihin. Tutkin kolmea eri viestintätilannetta, joissa olivat edustettuina eri aktiviteetit ja foorumin käyttäjät. Näissä tilanteissa foorumin käyttäjät informoivat tulevasta tapahtumista, hahmottelivat yhteisöön liittyvää visiotaan ja pyrkivät rakentamaan asiantuntijuuttaan.

Analyysin tulokset osoittavat, että samalla kun foorumille lähetetyt viestit on suunniteltu täyttämään tietyt viestinnälliset tavoitteet, eri suomen ja englannin kielen rekisterit ja tyylit ovat tärkeitä resursseja yhteisön jäsenten identiteettityössä. He esimerkiksi muokkaavat englannin kielen kirjoitustyyliä nuorekkaan leikillisyyden keinona sekä ilmaistessaan extreme-urheiluun liittyvää asiantuntijuutta, kun taas muodollisempaa englannin kielen rekisteriä käytetään viitattaessa kristilliseen evankelioimistyöhön. Puhekielinen suomi on paikallinen resurssi, jota voidaan käyttää murteilla leikittelyyn sekä ”globaalien englannin” uudelleen kontekstualisointiin. Lainatessaan Raamatun jakeita ja puhuesaan lähetystyöstä yhteisön jäsenet käyttävät vakavampaa sävyä ja muodollisempaa uskonnollista rekisteriä. On kuitenkin tärkeää pitää mielessä, että vaikka tietyt aihealueet voivat ohjata kielen muodollisuuden astetta, tiukat rajanvedot eivät ole mahdollisia (Eckert 2003: 46). Tutkimassani aineistossa myös uskonnollisia merkityksiä luotiin leikittelevän kielenkäytön avulla. Kaiken kaikkiaan englannin ja suomen kielen resurssit luovat yhdessä sosiaalisen ja viestinnällisen tyylin Godspeedin keskustelufoorumilla. Tämä heteroglossisen tyylin avulla foorumin jäsenet luovat kokemuksen jaetusta yhteisöstä ja asemoivat itsensä muista ryhmistä erillisenä yhteisönä. – Translokaalisuuden käsite puolestaan jäsentää, miten yhteisön jäsenet hyödyntävät globaaleja diskursseja ja viestinnällisiä tyylejä, jotka liittyvät maailmanlaajuisesti jaettuun kristinuskoon ja alun perin Pohjois-Amerikasta lähtöisin oleviin extreme-urheilun lajikulttuureihin. Tällä tavoin he luovat heteroglossisen viestintätyylinsä avulla yhteyksiä eri kulttuureihin, käytänteisiin, arvoihin ja paikkoihin samalla ylläpitäen käsitystä omasta paikallisesta toimintayhteisöstään.

**Kolmannessa artikkelissa** tarkastelen edelleen heteroglossista kielenkäyttöä, mutta tällä kertaa puhutussa vuorovaikutuksessa. Tätä artikkelia varten aineisto on kerätty yhteisön vuonna 2011 järjestämältä lumilautailuleiriltä. Aineisto sisältää haastatteluita, äänitallennettuja vapaamuotoisia keskusteluja sekä videotallenteita yhteisön urheiluaktiviteeteista. Analysoidessani heteroglossisia resurssseja keskityin tässä artikkelissa siihen, miten lumilautailijat käyttävät extreme-urheilusanastoon liittyvää rekisteriä, raamatullista rekisteriä sekä miten he pyrkivät sovittamaan yhteen erilaisia, joskus ristiriitaisiakin sosio-kulttuurisia ja ideologisia ääniä. Verrattuna edellä esiteltyyn artikkeliin, jossa tarkastelen suomen ja englannin kielen eri funktioita, tässä artikkelissa pureudun syvemmin eri kielellisten resurssien merkitysmahdollisuuksiin, niiden sosiaaliseen ulottuvuuteen ja siihen, miten tietyt identiteettiasemoinnit liitetään tietynlaisten kielellisten resurssien käyttöön. Käytän erityisesti indeksisyyden käsitettä analyysin työvälteenä (Silverstein 2003, 1993, Ochs 1992). Sen avulla on mahdollista tarkastella tilanteisia, historiallisia ja sosiaalisia viittauksia lumilautailijoiden puheessa sekä pohtia heidän itsensä tekemiä vuorovaikutustilanteeseen liittyviä tulkintoja. Indeksisyyden käsitteen hyöty tulee näkyviin erityisesti siinä, miten kielellisten resurssien olemassa olevia merkityksiä voidaan muokata vuorovaikutustilanteiden aikana liittämällä ne uusiin, yllättäviinkin konteksteihin. Tässä yhteisössä lumilautailijat voivat esimerkiksi liittää lautailusanastoon raamatullisia merkityksiä, jotka palvelevat tietyn puhetilanteen vuorovaikutuksellisia tavoitteita ja yleisesti ottaen vahvistavat heidän yhteisöllisyyttään.

Artikkelin analyysin tulokset osoittavat, että huumorilla ja leikkillisyydellä on merkittävä rooli yhteisön jäsenten välisessä vuorovaikutuksessa. Huumorin avulla on mahdollista samanaikaisesti ilmaista tiettyjä näkemyksiä ja kuitenkin säilyttää niihin tietty etäisyys. Tällä tavoin huumori mahdollistaa kiistanalaisiinkin aiheisiin liittyvän keskustelun. Artikkelissa käsittelen esimerkiksi, miten yhteisön jäsenet ilmaisevat ja käsittelevät Raamatusta nousevia naisten asemaan liittyviä hyvin konservatiivisia näkemyksiä. Kaiken kaikkiaan heteroglossian käsite auttaa tulkitsemaan, miten kristityt lumilautailijat hyödyntävät kielellisiä resurssseja hyvin luovallakin tavalla pyrkiessään sovittamaan yhteen raamatullisia diskursseja, omia mielipiteitään sekä myöhäismodernille ajalle tyypillisiä näkemyksiä, rakentaen näin refleksiivistä osallistumistaan toimintayhteisöönsä.

**Neljännessä artikkelissa** analyysi kohdistuu erityisesti multimodaalisten resurssien käyttöön yhteisön jäsenten tuottamissa verkkovideoissa. Näin ollen huomio kiinnittyy kirjoitetun ja puhutun kielen lisäksi muihinkin ilmaisukeinoihin (kuten kuvaan, liikkuvaan kuvaan, musiikkiin ja erilaisiin artefakteihin). Yleisesti ottaen viime aikaisessa sociolinguistisessä tutkimuksessa on korostettu kielen ja muiden semioottisten resurssien kokonaisvaltaisempaa tarkastelua (Leppänen et al. 2014, Blommaert & Rampton 2011, Kress 2010). Artikkelin teoreettisena viitekehystenä käytän sosiaalisen semiotiikan lähestymistapaa multimodaalisuuden tutkimukseen (Jewitt 2009) ja tarkastelen videoita niin kutsutuina välitteisinä ja medialisoituneina performansseina, joiden kautta ajatukset ilmaistaan, välitetään ja esitetään yleisölle mediateknologia avustuksella (Bell &

Gibson 2011, Bauman 2000). Kokosin artikkelia varten 26 videon korpuksen yhteisön tuottamista ja verkossa julkaisemista videoista. Tarkemman analyysin kohteeksi valitsin kaksi videota, jotka havainnollistavat hyvin niitä multimodaalisuuden keinoja, joiden kautta yhteisön on mahdollista identifioitua kristityiksi lautailijoiksi. Videoiden tekeminen antaa konkreettisen muodon yhteisön toiminnalle sekä osallistumisen näkyväksi tekemiselle. Videot ovatkin tärkeä osa yhteisön näkyvyyttä ja heidän kristillistä missiotaan.

Analyysin työvälineenä käytän multimodaalisen suunnittelun käsitettä ja kohdistan huomioni siihen, millä tavoin tilanteisia merkityksiä luodaan yhdistämällä eri moodeja videon ajallisessa kehityksessä. Analysoin erityisesti, miten rajauksen ja videolle sisällytettyjen kohtausten kautta on mahdollista esittää niin yksilöllisiä näkökantoja kuin kuvata yhteisön jäsenten sosiaalisia suhteita. Ääniraidalla on tärkeä rooli videolla esitetyn toiminnan rytmittämisessä. Lisäksi yhteisön jäsenet voivat välittää tietoa kulttuurisesta toiminnastaan ja uskonnollisesta vakaumuksestaan sisällyttämällä kristillistä kuvastoa ja uskonnollista kieltä sekä lajien harrastamiseen liittyviä artefakteja (esimerkiksi lautojen tai kameroiden käsittelyä) tuottamilleen videoille. Tällä tavoin he myös rakentavat yksilöllisiä ja yhteisöllisiä kristinuskoon ja lautailuun liittyviä identifikaatioita. Kaiken kaikkiaan neljännen artikkelin tulokset osoittavat, että verkkovideoita voidaan käyttää kulttuurisina työvälineinä toimintayhteisön tavoitteiden saavuttamisessa (Norris 2012, Jones & Norris 2005b, Scollon 2001).

Kun artikkeleiden tuloksia tarkastelee yhdessä, on selvää, että kristityt lautailijat käyttävät kieltä ja muita semioottisia resursseja eri viestinnällisissä konteksteissaan rakentaakseen merkityksiä, neuvotellakseen niistä ja muokataksaan niitä omiin tarkoituseriinsä sopivilla tavoilla. He luovat merkityksiä erityisesti liittyen omaan elettyyn sosiaaliseen todellisuuteensa 2010-luvun nuorina kristittyinä, jotka jakavat kiinnostuksen elämäntapalajien harrastamista kohtaan. Sosiaaliset ja kulttuuriset kontekstit, jotka luonnehtivat heidän toimintayhteisöään, asettavat tiettyjä normeja ja odotuksia sille, miten yhteisön jäsenet ilmaisevat ajatuksiaan, uskomuksiaan ja arvojaan. Toisaalta yhteisön jäsenten itselleen luomat tilat mahdollistavat luovan ja leikillisen resurssien hyödyntämisen. Näin ollen tämän väitöstutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että kristittyjen lautailijoiden toimintayhteisöön osallistumista luonnehtivat seuraavat asiat: a) käsitys omasta ryhmästä, joka erottuu muista mutta on samalla kytkeytynyt globaaleihin kulttuureihin, käytänteisiin ja tyyliin, b) yhteisen tavoitteen, eli yhteisön kristillisen mission, toteuttamiseen liittyvät multimodaaliset ja transkulttuuriset käytänteet, c) elämäntapaurheiluun liittyvästä asiantuntijuudesta neuvottelemisen yhteisön paikallisissa konteksteissa, koskien erityisesti lajeihin liittyvää terminologiaa, erilaisia urheiluvälineitä sekä videoiden tuottamiseen liittyvää tietoa, d) Raamatun ja muun kristinuskoon liittyvän semioottisen materiaalin tulkinta ja uudelleen kontekstualisointi elämäntapaurheilun kulttuurisessa kehityksessä.

Nämä tulokset kertovat ennen kaikkea yhteisön translokaalien aktiviteettien ja käytänteiden refleksiivisistä luonteista. Lisäksi heteroglossisten ja multimodaalisten resurssien analyysit osoittavat, miten erottautumisen ja liittymi-

sen prosessit toimivat yhteisön omissa identifioitumisen tiloissa. Koska nämä tilat sijoittuvat instituutioiden, kuten kirkon tai kilpaurheiluseurojen, ulkopuolelle, yhteisön jäsenet voivat itse muokata perinteitä, kulttuurisia stereotypioita ja osallistua heille itselleen merkitykselliseen toimintaan. Tulosten avulla voidaan pohtia, miten arvioiva ja refleksiivinen itsen ja toisten asemointi läpäisee nuorten yksityisiä ja yhteisöihin liittyviä elämäntyyplejä, niin verkossa kuin sen ulkopuolella. Tällä tavoin voidaan paremmin ymmärtää nuorten identiteettien liikkuvuutta ja asemointia jälkimodernissa ajassa (ks. Bucholtz & Skapoulli 2009: 4).

Kaiken kaikkiaan tämä väitöstutkimus antaa uutta tietoa suomalaisista nuorisokulttuureista. Käsittelemällä sekä kristinuskoa että elämäntapaurheilua nuorille merkityksellisinä elämänaueina se täydentää tietoa, jota on saatu aiemmin tehdyistä sosiolingvivistisistä tai kulttuurialan tutkimuksista, joissa on tarkasteltu joko suomalaisten nuorten kristillistä identiteettiä (esim. Niemi 2015, Lappalainen 2004) tai nuorten vaihtoehtolajeihin liittyviä elämäntyyplejä (esim. Harinen et al. 2015, Hänninen 2012). Nuorten sitoutuminen elämäntapaurheiluun sekä tiettyihin uskonelämään liittyviin arvoihin voi näkyä transkulttuurisena toimintana, jonka tavoitteena on kristillisen maailmankatsomuksen välittäminen lajikulttuureiden sisällä. Tämä tutkimus osoittaa, miten toimintayhteisöjen jäsenet voivat ilmaista, muokata ja edistää yhteisiä tavoitteitaan tilanteisesti monipuolisten kielellisten, semioottisten ja diskursiivisten resurssien kautta, niin digitaalisissa kuin fyysisissäkin ympäristöissä.

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## ORIGINAL PAPERS

### I

#### **SNOWBOARDERS AS LATE-MODERN MISSIONARIES: POSITIONING SELF AND OTHER WITHIN A CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE SPORTS COMMUNITY**

by

Saija Peuronen, (submitted for review to *Journal of Contemporary Religion*)

## **Snowboarders as Late-Modern Missionaries: Positioning Self and Other within a Christian Lifestyle Sports Community**

### **Abstract**

This article focuses on understandings of missionary work in the context of late-modern youth culture. Ethnographic interviews with members of a particular community of practice, Christian snowboarders in Finland, are analyzed to discover the discursive strategies of positioning self and other in snowboarding culture in relation to the community's evangelistic mission. While the community members voice opposing positions and construct a marginal position for themselves in the groups they are culturally affiliated with, they nevertheless seek to develop means for transcultural action. Thus, while dis-identifying themselves with confrontational missionary practices, the Christian snowboarders aim to draw on shared communicative codes in snowboarding, such as ways of having fun and forms of visibility on the slopes. Similarly, while dis-identifying with alcohol-driven youth cultures, they place emphasis on community as a space for cultivating social relations, which have been shown to play an important role in religious conversion.

### **Introduction**

Late modernity, seen as an era of altering traditional boundaries in society (Giddens 27), presents intriguing examples of faith-based communities whose members gather in specific socio-cultural spaces to negotiate their shared endeavors. This study focuses on one such group, a youth community in Finland whose members identify with the religion of Christianity and the late-modern activity culture of snowboarding. When engaging in activities at ski centers, as well as on streets and lakes, the Christian snowboarders in Finland (henceforth CSiF) represent "religion outside of congregations", a phenomenon which, for Cadge et al. (441), is worth researching as an important aspect of contemporary religious life. In fact, Stark (382) points out that European and Scandinavian societies are less secularized than "unchurched". Many

people in Western societies may continue to be religious but do not necessarily attend weekly church services. By offering a community of Christians who come together in different public (and private) spaces, and welcoming anyone who is interested in snowboarding, one of CSiF's aims is to reach people they encounter when engaging in lifestyle sports activities.

Regarding the snowboarders' articulations of Christianity, the specific analytical aim of this paper is to understand their discursive strategies in positioning themselves as missionaries within the snowboarding culture. By examining the positions the community members construct for themselves and others in ethnographic interviews (Blommaert and Dong 42), this paper aims at unravelling the processes of (dis)identification and othering, and thus the construction and blurring of the boundaries of self and other (Brubaker and Cooper 18; N. Coupland 244; Jaworski and J. Coupland 675). More broadly, this study is part of a research project that combines theories and methodologies of sociolinguistics, discourse studies and ethnography and examines the socio-cultural and ideological meanings constructed through language use across a variety of communicative contexts in the CSiF community (see Author 1, 2 and 3). To gain a versatile picture of the meaning-making practices in this community, I have participated in four different snowboarding and summer camps organized by CSiF community members, made field notes, recorded spoken interaction and activities at two camps (c. 8.5 hours in total), conducted interviews (N=11), collected both discussion threads from their Internet discussion forum (N=205) and online videos produced by the snowboarders (N=26). These data were gathered at different phases during the years 2006-2014.

### **Snowboarders as Christian Missionaries in Late Modernity**

As an official member of the Finnish Snowboard Association (FSA), CSiF aims to serve different congregations or Christian events by organizing lifestyle sports activities for young people. The community members come from a variety of local protestant, evangelical and charismatic churches (mostly Evangelical-Lutheran, Pentecostal and Evangelical Free Church) in Finland and, as such, form an inter-denominational Christian community. Typically, the community's snowboarding or extreme sports camps attract around 50 participants, both teenagers and young adults (aged broadly 13-35 years). A core group of active CSiF members (c. 10 people) take responsibility for



organizing the different events, making the practical arrangements and circulating information on their upcoming events and camps. The organization is non-profit-making, and instead aspires to offer prices that young people can afford. Participants usually come from different parts of Finland and abroad. Thus, although the community is based in Finland, it has contacts with other similar communities abroad: together they form a network of Christian lifestyle sports communities in the Nordic Countries, Europe and the USA.

Given the importance of social relations in delivering and receiving the gospel (Stark 74), examination of the discursive ways CSiF engages in its Christian mission within the snowboarding culture may be most usefully viewed via the concept of ‘a community of practice’ (Wenger). Members of communities of practice engage in shared activities to pursue a joint enterprise and during their mutual engagement, develop a shared repertoire of resources which they can draw on to negotiate the meanings of their activities and their identities as members of the community. Hence, the joint enterprise, engagement in evangelical practices in this case, is not only a “stated shared goal” but also entails ongoing negotiations on the participants’ roles and contributions to this shared community endeavor (Holmes and Meyerhoff 175). Coming from different local congregations, the Christian snowboarders base their shared interpretation of Christianity on the central message of Jesus’ life. This focus is established amidst the different local, translocal and transcultural flows (Pennycook) that affect the lives of Christian youth today. Therefore, when the community members gather in their snowboarding camps, they need to negotiate the ways in which they are willing to carry out their Christian mission within the snowboarding culture.

In terms of evangelism, the community members do not favor the traditional idea of preaching the gospel publically to make converts. In their understanding of the practice of evangelism, they conform to Stone’s (36) idea of ‘evangelistic communication’ “not as the transmission of data to be decoded, adjudged, and decided by a ‘receptor’ but rather as the embodied sharing of a form of life and thus as a type of communing oriented toward the offer of participation.” As such, CSiF embraces certain elements from the so called Emerging Church Movement, whose participants place value on “missional living” in late-modern circumstances, experimentation with different community structures, and engaging in social, political and environmental causes (Marti and Ganiel 134-135; Moody 16). Bielo (12) describes how Emergent

Christians deprecate “street preaching, handing out Bible tracts, delivering finely tuned conversion speeches, using hyperlogical apologetics, and using weekly congregational events as the entrée to church”. By rejecting certain established evangelical practices, they seek to find ways of contextualizing Christian religiosity in ways that are meaningful for particular people, communities and lifestyles outside their congregational settings (Marti and Ganiel 136; Moody 16). These ideas resonate with the community of Christian snowboarders, even if they were unaware of this specific movement or did not use the term ‘Emerging Church’ in their talk.

Another movement that has inspired some participants in the community of Christian snowboarders is the New Apostolic Reformation (Oro 221, Geivett and Pivec). Their inspiration derives from attending a specific Bible school in California, USA, and participating in international networks of Christian snowboarders who embrace the beliefs of this movement. As the word ‘reformation’ indicates, one of the ideas of this neo-charismatic movement is to transform the church by emphasizing the authority of modern-day apostles and prophets instead of traditional church organizations (Geivett and Pivec). By way of comparison, these two movements, the Emerging Church and the New Apostolic Reformation, both question certain existing church practices, but the alternatives that they offer are very different. Adherents of the Emerging Church Movement encourage Christians to doubt and present difficult questions and, in general, embrace the cultural critique of the modern church (Marti and Ganiel 3; Bielo 5; Hunt 288-289), whereas the New Apostolic Reformation places heavy emphasis on spiritual gifts and experiences, and may not be as willing to leave room for doubt (Oro 221; Geivett and Pivec). The CSiF community cannot be claimed to fully represent either of these two different global Christian movements. Rather, the different ideas which originate in these movements and ‘flow’ to the community through, e.g., specific people and networks, digital media, literature and music contribute to the positions the community members adopt towards their Christianity, and thus their understanding of their Christian mission.

### **Data Collection and Method of Analysis**

The data were collected from one three-day snowboarding camp organized in February 2013 by the CSiF community. I observed and participated in the camp activities and

interviewed five participants familiar from prior encounters. Before the camp, I also followed the event's *Facebook* page and was in contact with my prospective interviewees. The interviewees were a couple, Heta<sup>1</sup>, 22, and Ilari, 24, whom I interviewed together, and Daniel, 21, Mikael, 26, and Toni, 38, whom I interviewed separately on different occasions. Issues covered during the interviews included the participants' understanding of the community's goals in terms of their Christian mission, individual aspirations and vision for the community's future, the purpose of the different activities (e.g. camps), ways of spreading the gospel, and whether they see any challenges presented by the community's inter-denominational foundation. In addition to analyzing the positions constructed in the interviews, I draw on my ethnographic observations and knowledge of the community members' discursive practices (see De Fina 45-46). Hence, the ethnographic material supports the findings based on the interview data.

Regarding my researcher's position, although not involved in the community before this research endeavor, I share knowledge and experiences with the community members in several contexts, discourses and practices of Christianity in Finland. Therefore, I have been able to build rapport and trust with them and talk to them on specific faith-related issues, such as different understandings of their missionary goals. Nevertheless, when talking to the participants in the snowboarding camps, I have explained my researcher role and the kinds of questions my research project aims to answer.

#### *Positioning as a Tool for Examining Processes of Identification*

Positioning, as a theoretical and analytic concept, can be used to explore the ways in which "facets of identity [...] are accomplished in and by discourse" (Deppermann 369). A model provided by Bamberg (337) for the analysis of storytelling includes three levels which help to illustrate the process of positioning. While levels 1 and 2 are concerned with how characters are positioned within the story and how the narrator positions him- or herself to the audience, respectively, the level 3 positioning provides a tool for analyzing how a sense of self is positioned with regard to widely-circulating discourses (Bamberg and Georgakopoulou 385). Moreover, as Wortham (39) in his approach to narrative self-construction points out, a specific social position adopted by a

speaker is not static in nature; instead, “the social position represented by a voice changes as it enters dialogue with other voices”. Thus, Wortham draws on Bakhtin’s dialogism to interpret the ways in which social actors engage in processes of self-identification. Similarly, when conducting positioning analysis in this paper, my aim is to consider the ways in which the Christian snowboarders discursively create, maintain and negotiate identifications and dis-identifications with other groups as well as different values and worldviews (see Brubaker and Cooper 14). I draw on the analytic tools provided by Wortham (70) who defines interactional positioning in terms of reference and predication, metapragmatic descriptors, quotation, evaluative indexicals and epistemic modalization. These discursive strategies are useful in analyzing how social actors echo past voices and anticipate future responses, and in this way “juxtapos[e] themselves against the various voices established in their narratives” (Wortham 40).

### **Positioning Self and Other**

This section addresses the ways in which CSiF members discursively position self and other in their interviews regarding their evangelical mission within the snowboarding culture. First, I examine how the community members engage in the multidimensional processes of othering and self-othering, thereby creating social distance between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Jaworski and J. Coupland 675; N. Coupland 257). I then illustrate how visibility and having fun, as transcultural practices, are established as important missionary strategies. Finally, articulations of community and interpersonal relations illustrate the positionings of self and other vis-à-vis values that the Christian snowboarders deem important in their socio-cultural spaces.

#### *Engaging in the Process of Othering: Building Oppositions*

The following examples illustrate the ways in which the Christian snowboarders use quotation as a discursive strategy to voice and construct the other as people of a particular sort (Wortham 73). The analysis also shows how the community members cast themselves in the role of the ‘other’ by placing themselves on the margin (N.

Coupland 244). They see themselves as a minority group both as snowboarders and as Christian youth workers.

The first extract is from an interview that I conducted with Heta and Ilari, a couple who are active CSiF members. While we talk, Ilari starts pondering the alternative nature of their group in comparison to snowboarding cultures elsewhere.

Example 1<sup>23</sup>

- I: But this also came into my mind: anyway when you know what the snowboarding culture is like elsewhere you know  
S: Yes  
I: Like what is a major part of it the partying and substances and things like that then this is so much like the opposite  
S: Hmm  
I: In a way it seems like so \$many people\$ come and ask how can you even do stuff like that like in a way you're not \$like normal snowboarders\$ at all you know

In this extract, Ilari evaluates snowboarding culture from a certain epistemological position. He gives an account of what he thinks is considered normal by other snowboarders. In his first turn, he identifies with and self-ascribes expertise in snowboarding by saying that he knows “what the snowboarding culture is like elsewhere”. In his second turn, Ilari continues to specify the leisure activities generally associated with snowboarding cultures (substance-related partying) and acknowledges that their lifestyle can be seen as the opposite. Finally, in his third turn, when he engages in “voicing of the other” (Jaworski and J. Coupland 686), or the process of ‘othering’ (N. Coupland 244) he uses indirect discourse. Although structurally Ilari voices snowboarders who are outside of his group and represents them as the ‘other’, he nevertheless discursively positions their own group as a minority and thus ‘other’. In doing this, Ilari is reflecting whether they, as a community of Christian snowboarders, can be recognized to belong to the category of snowboarders (Brubaker and Cooper 15, Wortham 71). He adopts a (religious) discourse in which he builds ideological contrasts between ‘us’ and ‘them’ (Woodward 2, Jousmäki 55). By constructing these contrasting positions, he associates a certain type of behavior (substance use) with snowboarders in general while at the same time assigning his own group a more marginal status from the (imagined) other’s viewpoint. This marginal status is accentuated by the phrases “so many people come and ask” and “you’re not like normal snowboarders at all”, uttered with a smiling

tone of voice. Thus, while Ilari constructs the marginal position for their group he also signals that he does not uncritically adopt this assigned position (Kotthoff 50).

Below, Daniel uses the same strategy of oppositionality as Ilari in the previous example, but this time in a Christian context. Thus again, oppositionality is constructed through the process of othering (of themselves).

#### Example 2

- D: But then if we're somewhere like we were at the church youth workers event then there we could actually ride our boards and
- S: Okay
- D: So it depends a bit but in principle we always have the same idea of talking a little and then showing ourselves
- S: Yes right. Well what about the Land Ahoy festival why can't you ride your boards there?
- D: Well it's a bit well with those security guards. They think that it's pretty dangerous to put ten thousand people in danger with two boards so
- S: \$Okay\$
- D: They don't really
- S: Yeah
- D: Don't really like it

In his second turn, Daniel says that they usually go to different places to talk and show themselves. Showing themselves presumably involves engaging in skate- or longboarding activities and, in this example, these activities are something that distinguish them among Christians. In his following turn, Daniel voices security guards at a festival called *Maata Näkyvissä* ('Land Ahoy'), a Christian youth mass event organized annually in Finland. Daniel adopts an ironic tone to "communicate a gap between different evaluations and attitudes" (Kotthoff 49), in this case to safety. He deliberately contrasts specific numbers in expressing his view that prohibiting skate- or longboarding in the festival area is illogical: "they think that it's pretty dangerous to put ten thousand people in danger with two boards". In this way, he positions their group as sometimes viewed as irresponsible youth workers in the Christian context.

#### *Constructing Visibility and Having Fun as Transcultural Practices*

In terms of "living out their faith" outside of church spaces (Marti and Ganiel 134), the Christian snowboarders base their missionary practices on the premise of their

marginality as a specific socio-cultural group. The analysis of the following examples illustrates the ways in which the community members position themselves to themselves, how they define their community's values and the purpose of their activities, while at the same time constructing "a (local) answer to the question 'Who am I?'" (Bamberg 337; see also Davies and Harré 46). The following examples show how, in addition to other strategies, reference can be used to pick out, evaluate and categorize persons, events and actions (Deppermann 376).

In the following extract, as we talk about the role of organizing snowboarding camps vis-à-vis their spiritual mission, Ilari gives an example of how the community can make itself visible on the slope, which they consider their missionary field. Thus, while snowboarding, they also act as Christian missionaries and engage in embodied, multimodal practices of evangelism.

### Example 3

- S: I was also kind of thinking about the role of the camps in a way and like what often comes up that one can in a way be a kind of light on the slope too  
H: Hmm  
I: Hmm  
S: What do you think about it?  
I: Well it does play a really big part and you don't necessarily have to do anything  
S: Hmm  
I: The fact that you go on the slope the fact that you simply are there with a positive attitude and have fun there  
S: Hmm  
I: so even that affects surprisingly many people especially if a large bunch of people like last- we've always had our collective ride down the slope so it does draw attention when seventy campers  
S: Yeah yeah  
I: gather on the same slope. A large bunch of people. You hear people shouting out loud

In this extract, I start by asking about the role of snowboarding camps in their missionary practices. I use the phrase "in a way be a kind of light on the slope too", which refers to Jesus' words about being the light of the world in 'the Sermon on the Mount' (Matthew 5:14). In this way, I echo the discourses that the community members construct regarding their activities on the slope ("what often comes up") while at the same time framing the discussion in terms of visibility (Brighenti 324 mentions "light" as a religious symbol and a form of visibility). In response, Ilari references the

community's traditional practice of organizing a meeting with all the camp participants at the top of a slope and then riding down the slope together. In Finnish, this activity goes by the name of *yhteislasku*, "a collective ride". The term has a history and specific use in the CSiF community and thus by referencing the term they position themselves as members of this community and define their evangelistic activities in a certain way. While this communal activity consolidates their "groupness" (Brubaker and Cooper 20), it is also an important way for them to be visible and engage in their missionary work on the slopes. In fact, the statement "you don't necessarily have to do anything" may be seen to reflect, and function as a counter-argument to, the stereotypical understanding of the Christian mission as a kind of cultural imperialism involving preaching and superimposing one's values on others (see e.g. Robert 1). Ilari's statement may also be seen as reflecting how the snowboarders position themselves in relation to the discourses of duty and work (and the Protestant work ethic in particular). At its ideological core, the snowboarding culture embraces "fun, hedonism, involvement, self actualisation, 'flow,' [...] living for the moment, 'adrenalin rushes' and other intrinsic rewards" (Wheaton 11-12). In this way, their lifestyle-related activities (which in this specific interactional situation are defined as "being on the slope with a positive attitude and having fun") depart from the Protestant work ethic, which emphasizes hard work and the "delay of immediate rewards for future rewards" (Christopher and Zabel 898). Here, in order to convey their message, the snowboarders draw on the shared codes of communication in the snowboarding culture. As such, the playfulness in their activities and attitude (a non-utilitarian ethic) is indexical of both their snowboarder lifestyle and Christian faith, and displayed in their embodied activity of riding down a slope as a group<sup>4</sup>. Ilari describes this embodied activity through phrases such as "a large bunch of people" and "you hear people shouting out loud". 'Being seen and heard' is thus a strategically articulated activity which displays their community to others, and as a form of social visibility it can also imply a claim for recognition (Brighenti 329-331). In fact, during the interview Ilari also explicitly mentions that his personal aspiration is to show that (contrary to general assumptions) living as a Christian is not boring. In the following extract, which is a direct continuation of the interaction in example 3, Ilari and Heta continue to explicate their understanding of spreading the gospel and Heta specifically mentions their aim of causing outsiders to wonder who they are.



#### Example 4

- I: So you can make a difference just by how you are without doing anything at all like in this hotel area
- S: Yes right hmm
- H: But maybe like we try like a lot just by how we act and how we are
- I: Yeah
- H: to somehow respect and value all the people who there are and
- S: Hmm
- H: just like we have fun and at the same time make sure that we don't cause any \$disturbance or trouble\$
- S: \$Yeah\$
- H: Yeah on the contrary
- S: Yes
- H: I at least hope that CSiF's activities could be like that they wouldn't be just like I mean that we would spread the gospel by words alone but it could actually be like acts so that people would wonder what crowd this is and why do they live like that
- S: Yes right
- H: That could arouse something

In this extract, both Ilari and Heta give examples of how to act as Christians in the specific hotel area where they are staying during the snowboarding camp. Heta states that respecting and valuing all people are their core values, which in turn, direct their ways of action. Therefore, she specifies that while having fun they do not want to cause any “disturbance or trouble”. This statement contains the assumption that as a youth group interested in snowboarding activities they could potentially be seen as “troublemakers”, thus evaluating their ways of action vis-à-vis a certain category or recognizable social group (Daniel also echoed this voice in example 2). While Heta utters the phrase “disturbance and trouble” with a smiling tone of voice and I react by agreeing with, and also briefly laughing at this proposed scenario, in her following turn Heta remains assertive and confirms “yeah on the contrary”, thus pronouncing a desire to draw positive attention.

Quotation is again used as a resource to voice the (imagined) other. Heta alludes to the evangelical mission of the community when she formulates their aim of acting to draw attention and cause people to wonder about what motivates their actions (“people would wonder what crowd this is”). She contrasts the spreading of the gospel “by words alone” with “actually be[ing] like acts”, thus attributing more value to what they do than what they say. By constructing this imagined other who is intrigued by their actions, Heta in fact positions themselves to themselves, posing the question “Who am I?” in relation to their community and their lifestyle (Deppermann 374). As a youth group, by focusing

both on visibility and ways of drawing *positive* attention, these snowboarders aim to communicate their communal position as, in particular, a Christian faith-based snowboarding community. At the same time, they also strive to create contacts with outsiders, especially based on the shared understanding and appreciation of visibility in the snowboarding culture (regarding aesthetics and style, for instance; see Hänninen 61).

In the following extract, Toni, a central figure in the community, explicates how the individual community members' ways of action are motivated by their spiritual calling.

#### Example 5

T: Our people like Ilari, Heta, Daniel who are the young the next [...] upcoming generation, well they could organize a camp, do it all, but their greatest calling is in snowboarding to be with people and be on the slopes, so it's quite amazing how God organizes things in these situations so that they can be with people they can do what they have at their heart the most and then for the practical work God sends us people from Norway or from Ukraine through Norway or wherever

In this extract, Toni references the other community members by their name and positions them as Christians who serve the community according to their personal, spiritual calling. Earlier, Toni has mentioned, in response to the idea of handing out evangelizing material, that while these types of materials might always reach some, Christians have many different callings. He gives examples from working life and describes how Christians can serve as missionaries in many different secular settings. He also links this way of thinking to a critique of present-day congregational structures. Toni anchors his views in the ideas of the New Apostolic Reformation, according to which apostles and prophets form the basis of a Christian church and then equip the church members to serve the Christian mission in their own daily contexts.

He also positions himself as a Christian by drawing on a specifically religious register in his talk: “the greatest calling”, “God organizes things”, “at their heart the most”, “God sends”. In particular, Toni constructs a position that reflects a specific religious discourse of obedience: to be successful in the Christian mission, one needs to follow a spiritual calling received from God, and trust that God will provide everything that is needed to carry out the mission. According to this logic, Toni explains how the young community members, “the next generation”, while they have the ability to

organize a camp, including the practical matters, they nevertheless choose to follow their spiritual calling by snowboarding and spending time with people on the slopes. For organizing practical matters at the camp, they had assistance from people coming from Norway and Ukraine. In this way, by explaining how God sent volunteer workers to help them, Toni seeks to authenticate the spiritual character of their community (see Leppänen et al. 1-2).

In sum, the Christian snowboarders argue for visibility as a strategy for carrying out the community's missionary goals and their personal spiritual callings. It is a strategy that enables them to identify with both the snowboarding culture and their understanding of their Christian mission. This conforms to the theories of post-secular societies: at a time of 'liquid modernity' (a term coined by Zygmunt Bauman) "religion has become fluid, but at the same time more visible. By emerging from its former containers into places where we are not used to seeing it, and by blending with other liquid things, religion has become noteworthy" (Lassander 240). Next, I continue to examine how participation in the community's activities provides the Christian snowboarders with (socio-culturally) meaningful ways of engaging in the practices of evangelism, particularly in terms of their community memberships and the building of interpersonal relationships.

#### *Evangelism through Interpersonal Relations*

The analysis of the following examples illustrates how, in particular, evaluative indexicals are used as tools for social positioning. Deppermann (376) provides a useful definition of evaluative indexicals as "descriptions which position persons morally with respect to shared normative expectations and social types". Thus, the values that the community members deem important play a significant role in their positioning themselves as snowboarding Christians.

In the following extract, one of the long-term community members, Mikael, considers their ways of acting as messengers of the gospel among other snowboarders.

#### Example 6

S: Well what do you think about among snowboarders in general who aren't anyhow or who don't have any links to congregations or so?

M: Hmm. It's something that is being done  
S: Hmm  
M: And we encourage people to do it but we haven't really officially done it at any point  
S: Hmm  
M: Or at least I haven't during the time I've been here we haven't officially and I'm not really sure about it in the sense that you privately  
S: Hmm yeah.  
M: We encourage you to meet and talk to people and so like not like setting up huge banners and  
S: Hmm  
M: megaphones  
S: Yeah yeah right  
M: at the slope  
S: Right  
M: That's something that we had voluntarily wanted to stay away from

When I ask about the group's evangelical practices, Mikael is somewhat hesitant when starting to answer the question. He constructs oppositions between official and private evangelizing work. He then parallels official evangelizing with public preaching while at the same time dis-identifying their group from these practices by saying "not like setting up huge banners and megaphones". This phrase functions as an evaluative indexical and serves to voice a certain stereotypical view of preaching the gospel and, at the same time, to position their community vis-à-vis this stereotype (Wortham 73-74). By rejecting the stereotypical view of preaching the gospel, he conforms to the discourses of evangelism prominent in the Emerging Church Movement and positions himself and their group as Christians who are willing to interact and converse with people (Bielo, Hunt).

Thus, although the activities that Mikael mentions represent multimodal practices (including visibility), they do not fit the laid-back attitude of snowboarders. In other words, these stereotypical activities and ways of communication would not be suitable with other snowboarders as they would be perceived as rather confrontational in nature. For Mikael, meeting and talking to people privately is something they encourage each other to do. In fact, Mikael mentions that the use of spiritual gifts (as listed in 1 Corinthians 12: 7-11) is popular among the community members. For instance, they may ask God to reveal prophetic knowledge on a certain person in order to help them in their individual needs and thus, place emphasis on the importance of interpersonal

relations. In this sense, interpersonal ways of communication are seen as more valuable than one-to-many public preaching.

Below, Daniel describes their ways of offering snowboarders a community. He does this by evaluating (building oppositions between) how they act and how other snowboarding events are usually organized.

#### Example 7

- D: But the thing is that we offer spiritual food too [for people] to chew over. Often it goes like this in a snowboarding event that first you snowboard and then you party and that's it
- S: Yeah
- D: So instead we have a camp
- S: Hmm
- D: where we snowboard, have fun and then a barbecue and then the evening program
- S: Hmm
- D: So in a way we don't leave people empty handed

Daniel draws on religious discourse, and specific metaphors in particular, when he asserts that they are able to offer people something more, “spiritual food to chew over” which in turn means that they will not “leave people empty handed”. By referring to the intimate senses of taste and touch (Howes and Classen 8), Daniel evokes an image of a close-knit community who take care of one another. Additionally, Daniel implies that they can enhance the quality of participants’ experiences by meeting their spiritual needs. Overall, he adopts a “privileged epistemological position” (Wortham 74) by way of contrasting their practices with those of other snowboarders, thereby claiming to have a comprehensive view of snowboarding culture. Daniel describes other snowboarding events in general as follows: “first you snowboard and then you party and that's it”. By using passive voice in Finnish, he does not directly specify the ‘other’ and thus attributes less agency to them (De Fina 51-52). Daniel uses the English-language discourse marker *that's it* as an epistemic modalizer and as an evaluative indexical to position themselves in terms of the general description of snowboarding culture. The expression illustrates how Daniel sees the activities of the implied other snowboarders

as not very meaningful. Furthermore, by enumerating the different activities Daniel highlights the contrast between themselves and others. He suggests that when organizing a camp, their activities focus more on people and their (interpersonal and spiritual) needs. Thus, for them the activity of having fun is framed by community-related, people-centered activities for which ‘partying’ is an inadequate description (see Thorpe 33, for a study on the “hedonistic party lifestyle” of snowboarders).

In the next extract, Heta emphasizes community and participation by talking about the importance of hanging out with “a great bunch of people”. This reference to their community serves as a positive evaluation of their group’s joint interactions and activities (Wortham 70-71).

#### Example 8

- H: We’ve talked a lot about the use of substances and I hope that CSiF doesn’t seem to anyone like a temperance society
- S: Okay
- H: As if somehow our point would be that everyone gives up now, or somehow that one would feel like judged or somehow disapproved of, that now one would be worse as a human being if they smoke for instance
- S: Right
- H: So I think that’s not the point
- S: Yeah
- H: Maybe more like if you hang out with a great bunch of people then maybe such unnecessary things will be left out but it shouldn’t be through people disapproving or somehow judging but so that you feel good hanging out with these people and you feel loved rather than \$somehow judged\$

Heta mentions at the beginning of the extract that substance use has been a much discussed topic for them. She references the concept of “a temperance society” (*raittiusseura* in Finnish), which also functions here as an evaluative indexical vis-à-vis the regulation of certain kinds of lifestyle practices. Over their history, different temperance movements have relied on varied ideological backgrounds, some emphasizing the Christian message of salvation, others collective political action, for instance. However, Sulkunen (61) points out that in the modern era the temperance movements in Western societies were remarkably “united in their efforts to discipline the ‘other’” and offer a model of ‘the good life’. In the context of CSiF, the use of this concept gives a specific type of religious frame of reference for the issue of substance use from which Heta wants them to dis-identify themselves. While the community’s

underlying value is the promotion of a substance-free lifestyle, Heta establishes and identifies two different discursive positions that could be adopted with respect to someone smoking, for instance. One is that of judgement or disapproval (the temperance movement discourse) and the other is that of love and acceptance. She draws on a religious register (“feel judged or disapproved”, “worse as a human being”, “feel loved”) to contrast the different approaches to temperance. For herself, Heta constructs a position in which she identifies with the latter type of discourse, distancing herself from the discourse of judgment (also indicated by her smiling tone of voice at the end her last turn) and underlining that participation in their community can change people’s lifestyles (e.g. “such unnecessary things” (such as smoking) can be left out if people “feel loved”).

In sum, in order to negotiate their position as Christian snowboarders, the community members voice certain discourses and position self and other with respect to these discourses. Evaluative indexicals serve here as a way of dis-identifying oneself from specific understandings of Christianity or snowboarding culture. In this way, the community members outline their values that in turn impact their engagement in meaningful actions with each other (see Wenger 73 on mutual engagement in a community of practice).

## **Conclusion**

With respect to their Christian identities and the community’s activities, CSiF members need to negotiate in what ways to engage in missionary practices that harmonize with their community’s values, especially as regards cultivating social relations. The analysis of showed the importance of the discursive strategies of epistemic modalization, quotation, reference and evaluative indexicals in constructing diverse positionings for self and other. For instance, quotation or reported speech “allows participants to set up opposing positions, dramatize situations, try out hypotheticals and present evidence to support their views” (Abell and Myers 153). In this way, Christian snowboarders are able to engage in a reflexive and dialogical treatment of opposing positions with other groups that they are culturally affiliated with.

Being a missionary can be seen as a contradictory position in late-modern societies due to the modernist and even colonialist associations in the history of the

Christian evangelical mission. Bielo (123) states that “[t]he forms of action pursued in the name of being missional are windows into how the missionized subject is imagined”. Accordingly, CSiF members make certain cultural assumptions about snowboarders in general when they engage in the discursive processes of “othering” (N. Coupland 256). In the interviews, they position other snowboarders specifically as people who like to party and consume alcohol or other intoxicants. CSiF members construct themselves in turn as able to evaluate the snowboarding culture from a privileged epistemological position. The Christian snowboarders assert that their community is able to offer meaningful, communal, spiritual and life-changing (not merely recreational) experiences to those who participate in their activities. The boundaries that they draw between self and other (and seeing oneself as ‘more knowledgeable’) together with the aspiration to try to change people’s lives resemble modernist descriptions and evaluations of the Christian mission (see Robert 89).

However, as a way of resisting traditional evangelical practices, the interviewees dis-identify themselves from confrontational ways of spreading the gospel, such as publicly preaching to people at ski centers or handing out Bible tracts. In this respect, they conform to the discourses of late-modernity and the Emerging Church Movement, which stress the importance of a cultural critique of modern church practices, and whose members are characterized by a striving for authenticity (Bielo 197-198, Hunt 289). For the Christian snowboarders, one form of ‘being authentic’ is to follow their spiritual calling, and as participants in the snowboarding culture, they may realize their calling by pursuing forms of action that make their community *visible* to others. Consequently, they engage in specific activities which are meaningful to the goals of their community of practice. For instance, by snowboarding as a big group, they aim to communicate the value they see in creating social relationships. Therefore, in their accounts of their lived, embodied activities of snowboarding, they do not orient towards ‘othering’ but try to find shared communicative means to express their group’s communal position with its specific identification with Christianity. In this way, identification, besides establishing self and other, can work to transcend divisions in social relations (Jordan 269, Burke 21-22).

In the general framework of youth culture, having fun is an important reason for CSiF members to spend time together. The analysis of the interviews showed that they emphasize their Christian values through specific ways of having fun. In particular,



they seek to respect everyone they encounter, have a positive attitude on the slope, promote a substance-free lifestyle in their get-togethers, and offer a space for spiritual teaching and guidance. In this way, they simultaneously identify with snowboarding and Christianity, and refashion what having fun means for their own purposes. In addition, the themes of resistance and visibility are typical of snowboarding and youth cultures in general (Hänninen 69). Here, the snowboarders can be seen to resist conformity on the one hand with specific practices of evangelism, and on the other with certain lifestyles typical of youth cultures, such as the consumption of alcohol. At the same time, they aim to construct points of connection between self and other, seeking to act as ‘transcultural agents’ who are able to bridge between different socio-cultural frameworks by creatively drawing on, blending, borrowing and returning a variety of cultural elements across set boundaries (Pennycook 6). While Christian youth may find specific cultural elements meaningful in participating, and pursuing their missionary goals, in lifestyle-related activity cultures, their dis-identification from certain traditional church practices and institutional structures may also point to a shift towards more reflexive and critical ways of engaging in religious activities in late-modernity.

## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> All the participant names are pseudonyms.

<sup>2</sup> The interviews were conducted in Finnish; their English translations are provided in this article.

<sup>3</sup> In the transcript, my turns are prefixed ‘S’, smiling tone of voice is marked with \$.

<sup>4</sup> The activity is usually filmed, the material is edited and the finished product is posted online to their video sharing platform, thus reaching other audiences too (see Author 3).

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## II

### **“RIDE HARD, LIVE FOREVER”: TRANSLOCAL IDENTITIES IN AN ONLINE COMMUNITY OF EXTREME SPORTS CHRISTIANS**

by

Saija Peuronen, 2011

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## Chapter 8

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### *“Ride Hard, Live Forever”: Translocal Identities in an Online Community of Extreme Sports Christians*

*Saija Peuronen*

PEOPLE ENGAGING WITH digital communication technologies have various linguistic and discursive resources at their disposal. This also applies to internet users in Finland, the specific locus of my analysis. Having relatively easy access to these technologies, many Finns, the young educated generation in particular, are familiar with information, global language resources, and cultural practices that reach beyond their immediate locales (see Leppänen et al., 2011, for the results of a nationwide survey on the uses of English in Finland). Thus, from a sociolinguistic viewpoint, the realities of globalization may be manifested in a variety of ways, such as the ways in which people manage to make sense of and use mobile linguistic resources across contexts (Blommaert, 2010; Jaworski & Thurlow, 2010). Moreover, creative linguistic resources can be used for strategic styling, for representing certain identity aspects in specific situations, and for emphasizing what kinds of cultures or lifestyles one is willing to align oneself with (see especially Newon, Chapter 7, and Vaisman, Chapter 9, of this volume).

New media contexts, therefore, provide an important “field site” in which it is possible to examine how internet users, through their ways of communicating with one another, take up different positions toward specific topics, people, activities, communities, and also the medium of the communication itself. Furthermore, new media environments enable people to constitute their “communities of practice” (Lave & Wenger, 1991) also online. Existing offline communities can be transferred or expanded to online contexts, or the affordances of new media can be used to create completely new communities. For example, Lam (2004) discusses how two Chinese students in the United States found an internet chat room to

be a space for social networking. In the chat room, the students were able to connect with other young people who shared a similar background. They began to use a mixed-code variety of English and Cantonese, which in turn contributed to the discovery of a shared identity related to the particular kind of English they were using. Hence, also within new media contexts, identifying oneself as a member of a specific community is largely achieved by showing competence in making appropriate linguistic, semiotic, and discursive choices across different communicative situations.

This chapter considers the use of bilingual language practices in styling new media discourse between members of one particular online community: Finnish Christians who participate in extreme sports. My aim is to examine the ways in which identity is negotiated through the use of a social-communicative style consisting of a variety of resources from two particular languages, Finnish and English. In this case, the community members have set up *Godspeed*, a network that has a dedicated website and online discussion forum ([www.godspeed.fi](http://www.godspeed.fi)). This online space serves as a place for community members to give information about their particular community activities, sharing their views, and creating networks within and between different extreme sports. Even though the community is Finland based, the members orient themselves to global contexts, cultures, and lifestyles by engaging in processes of borrowing and blending of cultural forms (Pennycook, 2007). They also draw on a variety of bilingual resources, which is one way for them to index communicative connectivity with different cultures and ideologies. Take for example, the community's English-language slogan—"Ride Hard, Live Forever"—which references the well-known expression "Live Fast, Die Young." Here, the phrase has been playfully but pointedly turned around to express the Christian worldview of the *Godspeed* community. Moreover, the choice of English is meaningful as the verb "to ride" offers a functional and dynamic concept for referencing a variety of action sports practiced by the community members.

I will begin by discussing briefly the general language context and some of the theoretical concepts that inform my research, before introducing the *Godspeed* community and the new media context. Next, my analysis will center on three specific communicative situations in the community's online forum. These are illustrative of the sociocultural frameworks prominent in the discussion forum data: Christianity, extreme sports, and youth culture. Finally, in the conclusion, I sum up my observations about how the members of this specific online community draw on a *heteroglossic* repertoire by making creative linguistic and discursive choices and how they can thus style their *translocal* identities as extreme sports Christians.

*Finns as Users of English:  
Style and Identity Construction in New Media Sites*

Let us consider the linguistic repertoire of the average young Finn: he or she will have studied his or her mother tongue, and the other official language of Finland (either Finnish or Swedish) as well as one obligatory foreign language. Most pupils opt to study English as their mandatory foreign language. They usually begin their studies at age nine and continue for at least seven years for the duration of compulsory education. Many young people continue studying a foreign language for a further three years at the upper secondary school level (Taavitsainen & Pahta, 2003, p. 6).

Besides formal instruction given at school, there are many leisure activities in which young Finns encounter English and where they can learn the language (Nikula & Pitkänen-Huhta, 2008). Perhaps one of the most important everyday contexts for English is new media. Engaging in activities through different new media sites requires a knowledge of foreign languages (English in most cases) while also offering possibilities for learning and using foreign languages (see Piirainen-Marsh & Tainio, 2009, on language learning through playing computer and video games). In terms of both online and offline leisure time activities, sports are also a domain in which knowing English can be very useful. Due to the North American origins and the global nature of many extreme sports, people involved in them are even more likely to rely on English-derived terms. This is also because many of these newer sports are only now gaining ground in Finland and do not yet have an established Finnish terminology. Even in the case where a Finnish term exists, drawing on the “authentic” vocabulary is most likely preferred among devoted sports enthusiasts who wish to align themselves with a particular sports culture (cf. Heller, 2007b). However, the original English terms may and are also likely to undergo orthographic or morphologic changes when used by Finnish extreme sports devotees.

A diversity of language forms is constitutive of the Bakhtinian notion of *heteroglossia* (Lähteenmäki, 2010; see also Squires, Chapter 1, and Androutsopoulos, Chapter 13, of this volume). Bakhtin (1981) views heteroglossia from a social perspective and considers linguistic diversity, with different social dialects, jargons, and dynamic patterns of language use, characteristic of any national language (pp. 262–263). Heteroglossic discourse may, therefore, entail mixing of registers, genres, and codes. In comparison with theories of code switching, heteroglossia comprises a



diversity of forms both in monolingual and multilingual discourse and, therefore, allows a more comprehensive analysis of social meanings, voices, and ideological positions created by language use (Bailey, 2007). Since particular language forms may be used across communities, cultures, or locales in which similar interests or values are shared, heteroglossia is also an important manifestation of *translocality*. In this chapter, my understanding of translocality is based on recent work focusing on the appropriation and use of globally available communicative and expressive resources in local activity spaces, and especially in the new media context (Hepp, 2009; Leppänen, forthcoming; Leppänen et al., 2009). By engaging in the dynamic processes of appropriation and creation of cultural and linguistic forms, translocal actors can index their sense of connectedness between different locales. The internet, in particular, enables users to move easily between different sites related to their interests, be it other community sites, online stores, or videos on *YouTube*, for instance. Because of their multilingual repertoires, young Finns are able to access and navigate a far wider range of sites and to find groups or communities with whom to align themselves and possibly also to connect.

In order to characterize global, technologized cultures today, Alim (2009) uses the concept of *translocal style communities*. He examines hip-hop culture as an example of one such community as it focuses on “sets of styles, aesthetics, knowledges, and ideologies that travel across localities and cross-cut modalities” (Alim, 2009, pp. 104–105). The view of style may simply refer to *ways of speaking* by which speakers create social meanings (Auer, 2007; Coupland, 2007). Here, this notion is applied to new media interactions between participants of the *Godspeed* online forum, by examining how they talk about certain topics and how this impacts the group members’ identity construction. According to Auer (2007), social-communicative style may include language choice, linguistic variation, and pragmatic patterns (politeness, preference for certain genres). Thus, style can be crafted by using various heteroglossic resources. Moreover, the concept of style also includes aesthetic dimensions, both on a verbal and nonverbal level (see Vaisman, Chapter 9 of this volume).

In this way, participants in translocal communities can build identifications with certain cultures or lifestyles and align with their discourse practices. Bauman (2000) defines identity as “the situated outcome of a rhetorical and interpretive process in which interactants make situationally motivated selections from socially constituted repertoires of identificational and affiliational resources and craft these semiotic resources into identity claims for presentation to others” (p. 1). When members of a

certain community of practice come together and engage in their shared activities, they may, therefore, by their ways of speaking, position themselves as similar or distinct from other groups (cf. Eckert, 2005). Along these lines, this paper takes a social perspective on bilingualism, viewing languages as not clearly definable, bounded systems but as sets of linguistic resources that speakers, or internet users, strategically draw on in specific social situations (Heller, 2007a).

*Studying an Online Discussion Forum:  
Data from Finnish Christians Interested in Extreme Sports*

As a medium, the online discussion forum is a well-established one and one that has received relatively substantial coverage in the academic literature (Androutsopoulos, 2007; Baym, 2000; Hinrichs, 2006; Kytölä, forthcoming; McLellan, 2005). In terms of its technological features, the kind of interaction that takes place in online discussion forums can be described as public, one-to-many, and asynchronous as users do not have to be logged on the system simultaneously to be able to read the messages posted to the forum (see Herring, 2007). Forums are created to address certain topics or themes, and therefore, discussion threads are thematically organized. In general, users identify themselves with nicknames and user profiles. However, the degree of anonymity varies; community members might be strangers to each other in both offline and online contexts, or they can include people who constitute an offline community but have decided to form an online community as well.

The *Godspeed* forum described in this chapter is focused on topics related to extreme sports and Christianity. The forum includes separate sections for different action sports such as snowboarding and other boarding activities, motor sports, biking, climbing, and parkour. There are also sections for discussing Bible passages and sermons. Additionally, forum participants talk about upcoming events, camps, and get-togethers. According to the *Godspeed* website, the community's main aim is to unite people engaged in different extreme sports activities, spread the gospel in the extreme sports community, and support people in their Christian faith. By updating their activities online, members also aim to create offline networks between different action sport groups and people involved in them. As a consequence, community members who interact in the online discussion forum often inform others of their offline identities by giving their names, ages, and places of residence, and of course their preferred sports activities.

The nature of online discussion forum interaction has been described as highly normative, for example, users may engage in boundary maintenance strategies such as making newcomers perform strict entrance rituals (Honeycutt, 2005) or expecting conformity in language use (Kytölä, forthcoming). In this respect, *Godspeed* differs from more conventional online forums in which participants might not otherwise know one another, and therefore, discriminatory discourses might arise. In the *Godspeed* forum, the tone of messages posted to the forum is in most cases highly cooperative. This might be because the community is small, the participants in the forum more or less know each other, and they might not want to create any unnecessary conflicts, and so they therefore also behave more politely than what is generally seen in regard to mediated behavior (see Spilioti, Chapter 4 of this volume). Based on her research, Georgakopoulou (1997, p. 144) has indicated that studying computer-mediated communication between intimates reflects the informants' everyday use of language better than in data collected from totally anonymous new media settings. Hence, it could be assumed that the language practices found in the *Godspeed* forum illustrate the participants' everyday, offline language use.

For the purposes of my research, I collected online discussion data from the community's web forum: a total of 205 discussion threads from the launching of the forum in August 2006 until March 2008. These threads comprise messages posted by 79 registered forum users. During the data collection period, online ethnographic observation was carried out in order to understand the lifestyles, specific cultural contexts, and fields of discourse with which the participants align themselves (cf. Androutsopoulos, 2008; Markham & Baym, 2009). With regard to my position as a researcher, I am not a member of the community, and during the data collection period I did not participate in the forum discussions. Since the forum is open and available for everyone, and reading the posts does not require a registration, I have considered the forum a public environment (Sveningsson Elm, 2009). That is why I have not sought an informed consent from every participant of the forum. However, in addition to the systematic observation, I have contacted community members on a few occasions, and thus I have incorporated the two levels of discourse-centered online ethnography (Androutsopoulos, 2008). First, I contacted the forum administrator to inform him about my research interest and, later on, I conducted a semistructured interview with another community member in order to gather information

on the background and origin of the community. In these exchanges, I informed them about my research questions, the data collection, and how the data were to be used.

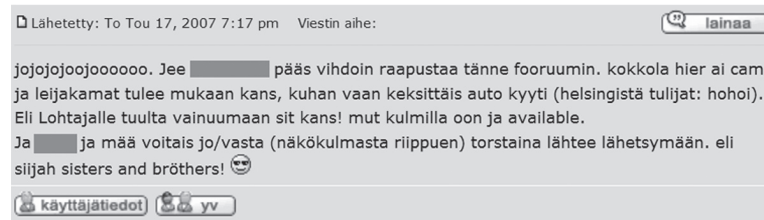
### *Styling Identities in an Online Community of Practice*

In analyzing this new media discourse, I will show how the *Godspeed* community members construct a social-communicative style (Auer, 2007) through a variety of language resources at their disposal. I will analyze the kinds of identity aspects that the forum users construct throughout different communicative situations online. I will, therefore, pay particular attention to the kinds of online activities that the community members engage in, while also taking the purpose and the tone of the messages into account. As Herring (2007, p. 20) states, “each activity has associated conventional linguistic practices that signal when that activity is taking place.” Consequently, the activities participants engage in require the mastery of certain discursive and linguistic resources as well as knowledge of the cultures with which they wish to associate themselves.

### Playful Style in Constructing Community Membership

The first example illustrates how forum participants use a playful communicative style to construct membership in the community. Extract 8.1 deals with a post to a discussion thread about an upcoming Christian event that some of the community members had indicated their intention to attend. The thread comes from a forum section where participants announce and discuss upcoming events, camps, and get-togethers. The thread contains several posts in which community members have let others know about their individual plans (the post below is the 12th message in the thread). The overall aim of these exchanges is to match participants' schedules and to arrange some sports activities during the weekend in addition to simply attending the Christian event organized by one of the local churches. The message in Extract 8.1 is written by a young woman who wishes to inform others about her plans to participate in the event. My English translation of the example follows the extract. Any names of the participants have been omitted from the examples, and I mark in bold non-Finnish segments intended for discussion here.

## Extract 8.1:



- 1 yeayeayeayeayeaahh. Yeh [poster's first name] was finally able to write something here on the forum. **kokkola here I come!**
- 2 and the skysurfing gear will be coming too, as long as we are able to find a ride there (people from helsinki: ahoy).
- 3 So heading to Lohtaja to catch the wind! but I'll be in the hood and [I'll be] **available**.
- 4 And [first name] and I will be heading there already/only (depending on the viewpoint) on Thursday. so
- 5 **seeyah sisters and brothers!**

This example illustrates how a new member of the online community initiates her participation in the discussion forum. She uses various linguistic resources in order to construct a communicative style in her opening message. The overall style in her message is very informal, spoken Finnish; most of the words she uses are not written according to standard Finnish. By sending the message, she enters both this discussion thread and the forum as a whole. As she mentions at the beginning of her message (in line 1), this is the first time she has ever posted in the forum. However, her post is very direct and, as such, does not follow the self-deprecating style that is sometimes thought appropriate to newcomers in an online forum (see Honeycutt, 2005). Given her very casual way of using language and the in-group references to specific people and places (e.g., line 3 “Lohtaja”), one can conclude that she is already a member of the *Godspeed* community. For instance, she refers to herself and another girl by their first names, implying that others in the forum already know who they are. Hence, there is no need for her to introduce herself in a more detailed way.

The playful and creative use of language becomes evident right from the beginning of the post, which consists of affirmative exclamations such as *jojojoojoooooo*, and *Jee* (“yeayeayeayeayeaahh”, “Yeh” in line 1). These

lexical items can be considered similar to stylized orthographic practices common to new media users in general. For example, the first lexical entity, which reflects “joo,” the Finnish equivalent for “yes,” is illustrative of prosodic spelling, including repetition and vowel lengthening, also found in other types of (new) media genres, such as texting or subcultural magazines (see Androutsopoulos, 2000; Thurlow, 2003). With this playful introduction, the poster most likely characterizes her enthusiastic feelings toward the event and the possibility of meeting with other community members. The use of *jojoojojoooooo* might also be understood as a reference to “yo,” a greeting ritual in urban hip-hop slang (Pennycook, 2003), and therefore, it illustrates how linguistic forms may be given diverse interpretations in a translocal space. However it is interpreted, this lexical item functions similarly to “yo”—it can be seen as an informal, casual way of entering the discussion and greeting others.

After the greeting, the poster carries on with a similar, playful style of writing and uses English as a stylistic resource in her message. She draws on a particular “localized” way of writing a well-known English phrase as she informs others of her travels to the Finnish town, Kokkola, where the event takes place: *kokkola hier ai cam!* (“here I come!” in line 1). Androutsopoulos (2000, p. 521) describes “the phonetic spellings of loanwords according to native orthographic rules” as interlingual spellings. A similar process is taking place here. However, the poster’s way of spelling the English words is not consistent throughout the message: on the one hand, she uses Finnish phonetic spelling of an English phrase (*hier ai cam!*), and on the other hand, she inserts an English lexical item into a Finnish phrase without any modification (*mut kulmilla oon ja available*: “but I’ll be in the hood and [I’ll be] available” in line 3). She explicitly uses the English word “available” for letting others know that she will be there and that she is interested in, and available for, going kite surfing. This language choice most likely fills an actual linguistic gap but also conforms to the playful style of the post. The use of English thus possibly mitigates any demands that she might otherwise impose on the participation of others.

At the end of her message, the poster once again draws on English, this time for leave-taking: *sijah sisters and bröthers!* (“see yah sisters and brothers!” in line 5). Again her writing practices vary as she partly adapts the English phrase according to Finnish phonetic spelling. Additionally, she uses some stylistic or aesthetic elements, such as attaching “h” to the end of the phrase *sijah* and replacing “o” with the Finnish letter “ö” in the word *bröthers*. It is notable that these modifications do not reflect Finnish pronunciation of the words but show the poster’s willingness to play with language and orthography. By drawing on a variety of ways to style her discourse in a personal


way and by calling the community members her sisters and brothers, the poster raises a sense of intimacy and solidarity in the discussion forum. My interpretation is that she also evokes the Christian register following the common use of “brothers and sisters” in biblical and church discourse. The phrase might also index a similar style of address used in hip-hop communities. From the viewpoint of heteroglossia and translocality, the poster manages to express multiple social and cultural meanings in her message and, thus, create a discourse that may be interpreted as multivoiced.

Overall, in the heteroglossic and playful deployment of different linguistic forms and socioideological voices, elements of humor, and thus informality, familiarity, and solidarity are created. By engaging in these processes of styling, the poster positions herself and others as insiders in the community and “members of the same family” who know each other even before entering the online space. In this way, she also contributes to the overall construction of their group identities as members of this community of practice.

### Styling Religious Discourse




In the second example, the sociocultural frames (cf. Coupland, 2007) of Christianity and extreme sports are shown as interwoven in an intrinsic way. The style used in Extract 8.2 draws heavily on religious register, but it is incorporated into discourse about extreme sports. One of the most frequent users of the forum defines the ultimate purpose of this community by writing down a Bible verse as well as using Finnish and English to interpret its meaning in the context of their sports activities. This post comes from a section of the forum dedicated to recording Bible passages that the users find inspirational.

#### Extract 8.2:

Lähetetty: To Elo 03, 2006 1:58 am Viestin aihe: kor 9:19-22  lainaa

Sillä vaikka minä olen riippumaton kaikista, olen tehnyt itseni kaikkien palvelijaksi, voittaakseni niin monta kuin suinkin. ja olen ollu juutalaisille ikäänkuin juutalainen, voittaakseni juutalaisia; lain alaisille ikäänkuin lain alainen, vaikka itse en ole lain alainen, voittaakseni lain alaiset; ilman lakia oleville ikäänkuin olisin ilman lakia - vaikka en ole ilman Jumalan lakia, vaan olen Kristuksen laissa - voittaakseni ne, jotka ovat ilman lakia; heikoille minä olen ollut heikko, voittaakseni heikot; kaikille minä olen ollut kaikkea, pelastaakseni edes muutamia.

Miten me..  
Lumilautailijoille lumilautailija, skeittaajille skeittaaja, autoilijoille autoilija, motoristina motoristeille... It´s our mission. Voittaaksemme Herralle edes muutamia.

 käyttäjätiedot  yv  www

- 1 Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone,
- 2 to win as many as possible. to the Jews I became like a Jew,
- 3 to win the Jews; to those under the law I became like one under the law, though I myself am not under the law,
- 4 so as to win those under the law; to those not having the law I became like one not having the law – though I am not free from
- 5 God’s law but am under Christ’s law – so as to win those not having the law; to the weak
- 6 I became weak, to win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that by all possible means I might save
- 7 some.
- 8 How about us..
- 9 A snowboarder to snowboarders, a skater to skaters, a motorist to motorists, a motorbiker to
- 10 motorbikers... **It’s our mission.** In order for us to win at least some to the Lord.

As with most of the previous messages posted to this forum section, this post begins with a passage from the Bible. The passage comes from the book of 1 Corinthians 9:19–22, and it has been written according to the 1938 edition of the Finnish Bible. (My English translation [lines 1–7] comes from the New International Version.) Unlike in the other messages in the forum section, this poster adopts a preacher-like role by presenting a mission statement for their group. He sets the Bible verse into a dialogue with the values of their community: after writing down the passage, he presents a question in line 8 to which he then provides an answer in lines 9–10. The poster crafts his message by drawing on different registers, codes, and patterns of language. He constructs the connection between the message of the Bible passage and the community members’ everyday life as extreme sports enthusiasts by creating structural parallels in his text. He uses the rhetorical structure of the Bible passage when outlining the group’s overall purpose in the extreme sports community. According to him, their “mission” is to be a snowboarder to snowboarders, a skater to skaters, and so forth, just as the Apostle Paul became like a Jew to the Jews, like one under the law to those under the law. At this point, he uses casual spoken language and adopts the extreme sports discourse. For instance,



he uses the English-derived word *skeittaaja* for “a skateboarder” when the standard Finnish word would be “rullalautailija” (see the issue over Anglicans in Lenihan, Chapter 3 of this volume).

After drawing an analogy between the Bible verse and the different extreme sports activities, the poster verbalizes *Godspeed*'s shared goal of spreading the gospel to the wider extreme sports community when he points out in English that “It’s our mission” (line 10). The switch into a different code is meaningful because, firstly, it adds emphasis to the communicative value of the argument he is making (Hinrichs, 2006, p. 4). Secondly, the use of the English phrase also has a translocal meaning: by using the word “mission,” the poster associates their community with global missionary work. He is reminding the other members that missions can also be carried out locally. Thus, members align themselves with the community’s sports activities and at the same time orient to Christian values and a global evangelistic mission. Overall, this identity work is carried out through the two codes: Finnish and English. The poster uses bilingual discourse to draw the community members together as a group. This is realized by the use of the personal pronoun “our” and also through the references to different activity groups (snowboarders, skateboarders, etc.) in the previous sentence.

In order to conclude and further argue for their shared goal, the poster then switches back to Finnish and employs a formal, specifically religious register when encouraging (himself and others): “In order for us to win at least some to the Lord” (*Voittaaksemme Herralle edes muutamia*). The first word in the Finnish phrase (*Voittaaksemme*, “In order for us to win”) illustrates a verb structure (first infinitive, translative case, first-person plural) that is rarely used in everyday spoken language. Again, the choice of this structure reflects the verb structures in the Finnish Bible passage. In this way, the writer invokes a formal style of preaching.

In this post, the preacher-like discourse is achieved by the argumentative structure of the message and the use of formal religious register in Finnish. It is notable also that the inserted English phrase (“It’s our mission”) follows the *standard* spelling conventions and so does not include the kinds of adaptation or humorous language play in the orthographic level often seen, say, as described in this chapter. However, even though the tone of this message is somewhat serious and therefore different from the one in Extract 8.1, the heteroglossic style, including Finnish religious language and the use of English, makes this message distinct from conventional monolingual religious discourse. The alternating use of languages

and registers creates a particular kind of religious discourse in this online context: a style that the poster uses to construct the community members' identities as extreme sports Christians.


### Constructing Expertise

Extract 8.3 illustrates another aspect of the community members' identities and shows how *expertise* is constructed in the extreme sports community through bilingual language practices and cultural knowledge (see also Newon, Chapter 7 of this volume, on expert identities). A style used in this post draws on English extreme sports terminology, which is, nevertheless, adapted into the Finnish language. This post is part of a long discussion thread in a forum section called "other sports." The poster of this message (an experienced inline skater, "User B") initiated the thread and dedicated it to a discussion about inline skating/roller blading. During 2006–2007, he was very active in updating information about inline skating in this thread and, over time, constructed an image of himself as an expert inline skater. This was largely done through a style that included the use of an English or English-derived lexicon. His expert status was also other ascribed when other community members started asking him questions about roller-blading. This next extract is one such example of this, where a community member (User A) has asked for assistance in choosing roller blades from an online store that the expert member had recommended earlier.

The post is attached here first in its entirety in order to make its question-and-answer structure visible. The quoting possibilities of message boards enable posters to visually modify their messages. In this extract, User B positions himself in the role of an advisor by segmenting User A's questions into separate entities and systematically inserting his own answers immediately after each question. Hence, User B transforms computer-mediated discourse to reflect conversational turn taking (Georgakopoulou, 1997, p. 146). Later in this section, I will present my analysis of each question–answer segment.

User A's initial post is very casual as he has framed his request for help with a playful salutation (in line 1) and a humorous leave-taking (line 28). The salutation displays prosodic spelling (vowel lengthening), and the leave-taking illustrates "accent stylization" (Thurlow, 2003) in which dialectal Finnish is caricatured. Hence, the framing is done in Finnish, but the writer nevertheless uses heteroglossic, linguistic and


## Extract 8.3:

Lähetetty: Ke Tou 09, 2007 7:44 pm Viestin aihe:  lainaa

**kirjoitti:**  
Heeeel!

No heeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeiiiiiiiiiiiiii sulleekin! 😊

**kirjoitti:**  
Minkälaiset jalanjatkeet vois tuolta Swift2Footista kannattaisi ostaa?

Itse voin kertoa et mikä tahansa mikä jalkaan, tyyliin ja lompakkoon sopii, niin kannattaa... ka toi kauppa ei myy schaissea!  
REMZit [http://www.swift2foot.com/verkkokauppa/product\\_info.php?cPath=1\\_17&products\\_id=849](http://www.swift2foot.com/verkkokauppa/product_info.php?cPath=1_17&products_id=849) on monen mielest parhaat... mut myös kalleimmat...  
Mut kyl halvemminkin pääsee...  
Itse valitsisin jos hommaisn nyt uudet blädät:  
USD UFS Throne Dominik Sagona bootin eli kenkä osan:  
[http://www.swift2foot.com/verkkokauppa/product\\_info.php?cPath=1\\_17&products\\_id=717](http://www.swift2foot.com/verkkokauppa/product_info.php?cPath=1_17&products_id=717)  
Jotkut anti rocker freimit kuten noi:  
KIZER Type "M" Chino Frame  
[http://www.swift2foot.com/verkkokauppa/product\\_info.php?cPath=1\\_4&products\\_id=737](http://www.swift2foot.com/verkkokauppa/product_info.php?cPath=1_4&products_id=737)  
(mätsäis aika kivast väreihin)  
UNDERCOVER Leonov Renkaat  
[http://www.swift2foot.com/verkkokauppa/product\\_info.php?cPath=1\\_8&products\\_id=691](http://www.swift2foot.com/verkkokauppa/product_info.php?cPath=1_8&products_id=691)  
...siin olis mun kompliitti...smuutti ja valkoinen...hyvä souli iso rokkis tila...hyvä...  
Mut itse tiiät parhaiten mitkä on coo...myös myyjä  kyl osaa neuvoo...tääh ei kato oo "kesport" ("we sell everything") myymälä!

**kirjoitti:**  
Ja miten, pystyykö noilla kuinka sitten esim. kaupungilla huvinvuoksi rullailla?

Sanotaan näin et kyl voit chilli rullail kaupungil. Varmaan poljet nopeempaa kun mostly skedeejät.  
Mut jos poljet rec(reational) rullaavien kavereiden kaa, jääät kyl harmittavan paljon jälkeen...ei nää oo niin nopeet ku perus rullaimet.  
Mut voit kyl muutenki rullailla...  
Mut rec rullaimil ET VOI grindata...et sinäänsä temppu rullat on only do it all skate! 😊

**kirjoitti:**  
Auttakkee kaverio mäjes! 😊

Alamäes vauhti kiihtyy! 😊

semiotic, resources, including orthographic creativity, emoticons, and a dialectal word play. User B responds to A by imitating, exaggerating, and elaborating on his style (but without conforming to the dialectal features drawn on by User A):

**Salutation:**

- 1 A: *Heeeei!*  
‘Heeeey!’
- 2 B: *No heeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeiiiiiiiiiiiiii sullekin!* 😊  
‘Well heeeeeeeeeeeeeeyyyyyyyyyyyyyyy to you too!’ 😊

**Leave-taking:**

- 28 A: *Auttakkee kaverio mäjes!* 😊  
‘Please help me in my uphill battle!’ 😊
- 29 B: *Alamäes vauhti kiihtyy!* 😊  
‘You’ll go faster downhill!’ 😊

After the salutation, User B moves on to answer User A’s two questions. First, User A wants to know what kinds of inline skates User B would recommend. User B adopts the role of expert by giving detailed information and commentary on what kinds of skates he himself would purchase. He accomplishes the construction of an expert role by using specialized sports jargon, referring to specific professional products, and evaluating different products, stores, and ways of practicing inline skating:

**Extract 8.4:**

**kirjoitti:**  
Minkälaiset jalanjatkeet vois tuolta Swift2Footista kannattaisi ostaa?

Itse voin kertoa et mikä tahansa mikä jalkaan,tyyliin ja lompakkoon sopii,niin kannattaa...ka toi kauppa ei myy schaissea!  
REMZit [http://www.swift2foot.com/verkkokauppa/product\\_info.php?cPath=1\\_17&products\\_id=849](http://www.swift2foot.com/verkkokauppa/product_info.php?cPath=1_17&products_id=849) on monen mielest parhaat...mut myös kalleimmat...  
Mut kyl halvemmallakin pääsee...  
Itse valitsisin jos hommaisn nyt uudet blädät:  
USD UFS Throne Dominik Sagona bootin eli kenkä osan:  
[http://www.swift2foot.com/verkkokauppa/product\\_info.php?cPath=1\\_17&products\\_id=717](http://www.swift2foot.com/verkkokauppa/product_info.php?cPath=1_17&products_id=717)  
Jotkut anti rocker freimit kuten noi:  
KIZER Type "M" Chino Frame  
[http://www.swift2foot.com/verkkokauppa/product\\_info.php?cPath=1\\_4&products\\_id=737](http://www.swift2foot.com/verkkokauppa/product_info.php?cPath=1_4&products_id=737)  
(mätsäis aika kivast väreihin)  
UNDERCOVER Leonov Renkaat  
[http://www.swift2foot.com/verkkokauppa/product\\_info.php?cPath=1\\_8&products\\_id=691](http://www.swift2foot.com/verkkokauppa/product_info.php?cPath=1_8&products_id=691)  
...siin olis mun kompliitti...smuutti ja valkoinen...hyvä souli iso rokkis tila...hyvä...  
Mut itse tiiät parhaiten mitkä on coo...myös myyjä [redacted] kyl osaa neuvoo...tää ei kato oo "kesport" ("we sell everything") myymälä!

- 3 [quote: What kind of footwear should one buy from this **Swift2Foot**?]
- 4 I can tell you that whatever suits your feet, style and wallet is
- 5 worth buying...see that store doesn’t sell **Scheiße** [shit]!

- 6 For many **REMZs** [link to the product]  
 7 are the best...but also the most expensive ones...  
 8 But there are cheaper ones too...  
 9 If I purchased new roller **blades** I would pick:  
 10 a **USD UFS Throne Dominik Sagona boot** that is the shoe:  
 11 [link to the product]  
 12 Some of the **anti rocker frames** such as:  
 13 **KIZER Type “M” Chino Frame**  
 14 [link to the product]  
 15 (it **would match** the colors quite nicely)  
 16 **UNDERCOVER Leonov Wheels**  
 17 [link to the product]  
 18 ...this would be my **complete...smooth** and white...good soul  
 plate big space for the rocker set up...good...  
 19 But you know best which are **coo**...also [first name] the salesper-  
 son can give you advice... see this isn't a  
 20 “kesport” (“**we sell everything**”) kind of store!

The product trade names of extreme sports equipment are a good illustration of global and translocal multilingual practices (Kelly-Holmes & Mautner, 2010). They exemplify how global brands shape the use of languages, and draw on certain linguistic resources by which they construct authenticity and legitimacy (Heller, 2007b, p. 543). Even though User B is rather careless in spelling words according to their standard spelling, he very rigorously follows the spelling of the product trade names. For example, this is evident when comparing how he describes the products in his own words and how he spells the actual product names:

- 12 *Jotkut anti rocker freimit kuten noi:*  
 ‘Some of the **anti rocker frames** such as:’  
 13 **KIZER Type “M” Chino Frame**

The localized spelling of *anti rocker freimit* creates an interesting contrast with the spelling of the brand name. In *freimit* the Finnish vowel combination “ei” is used to phonetically reproduce the “a” in “frames,” and the word ending is formed by using a Finnish inflectional vowel (‘i’) and the plural ending (“t”). This localized spelling reflects the writer’s personal style (the way he would pronounce the word) whereas the product name becomes objectified by the use of the spelling most likely created by the producer of the brand.

Similarly, the poster uses a thoroughly modified word *blädät* to talk about (roller) blades, but, when referring to the actual product name, he more or less preserves the original spelling: *USD UFS Throne Dominik Sagona bootin*. He nonetheless chose to inflect the last part of the product name (*boot|in*) according to Finnish morphology by adding an inflectional vowel (“i”) and an accusative case ending (“n”). Thus, in addition to the global market, this term, too, has been adapted to become part of a more localized Finnish extreme sports jargon. Despite this localization, the poster also provides a Finnish translation for the term “boot”—an act that further exemplifies his role as expert/advisor.

Later in line 16, the poster uses a Finnish term after the brand name: *UNDERCOVER Leonov Renkaat* (“UNDERCOVER Leonov Wheels”), but interestingly, he preserves the use of the initial capital letter in *Renkaat* (“Wheels”) even though it is not a proper noun. According to conventional Finnish orthographic norms, common nouns in brand names should not be spelled with initial capital letters. These specific orthographic choices may therefore reflect the practices used on the online store website, which the poster is reproducing in this online forum.

After naming various products, the expert inline skater makes his comments about his preferences for the gear set:

18 <i>siin olis mun</i>	<i>kompliitti...smuutti ja valkoinen...</i>
‘this would be my	<b>complete...smooth</b> and white...’

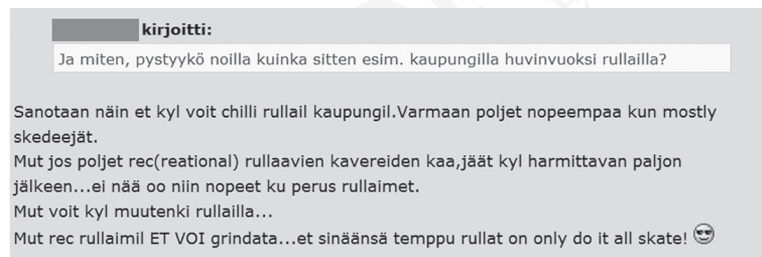
Here, he modifies the spelling of the original English adjectives to better reflect the Finnish pronunciation of the words. Used in the middle of a Finnish phrase *kompliitti* and *smuutti* are (to a local Finn) foreign lexical items, but after the modification their spelling (or, at least orthography) is more Finnish. The use of Finnish word endings also makes the words rhyme and thus creates a locally oriented instance of language play. In this kind of playful, informal, and creative linguistic environment in which mixing of codes is recurrent, localized words such as these may lose some of their foreignness (cf. Auer, 1999; also compare with Vaisman, Chapter 9 of this volume).

The author of this post positions himself as an expert, while at the same time positioning others as novices. In this way, he takes an epistemic stance, communicating that he has superior knowledge about different products and about inline skating; he also implies that he has the authority to evaluate, for instance, stores that sell sports products. Granted he gives others the authority to decide “what is cool,” but nevertheless, he

sets a norm in regard to the purchasing of sports equipment. According to his own explicit evaluation, the online store that he recommends “doesn’t sell Scheiße [shit]” (line 5) whereas it is definitely not “cool” to buy skates from ordinary sports stores such as *Kesport*, which he dismissively characterizes with the English slogan “we sell everything” (line 20). By invoking this imaginary mass-marketing quote, he mimics the general concept of commercial practice in which the same products are sold to all customers with little attention to individual needs (Heller, 2007b). Overall, the poster invokes translocality and draws on heteroglossic resources as he incorporates multilingual extreme sports terminology, youth-cultural discourse with lexical adaptations (e.g. “schaissea” from the originally German word “Scheiße”), and diverse commercial voices into his message.

In Extract 8.5 (lines 22–27), the expert inline skater describes different ways of rollerblading in responding to User A’s second question.

#### Extract 8.5:



- 21 [quote: And how about, can you skate with those e.g. in town for fun?]  
 22 Let’s say that you can **chill** skate in town. You’ll probably go faster than  
 23 the **skateboarders mostly**.  
 24 But if you skate with **rec(reational)** skaters, you’ll be annoyingly left  
 25 behind...these are not as fast as basic skates.  
 26 But there are other ways to skate too...  
 27 But with **rec** skates you **CANNOT grind...** so as such the trick skates are **only do it all skate!**

This exchange further illustrates how the poster shores up his epistemic stance by positioning himself in an expert role. For instance, he instructs User A in the correct use of English extreme sports vocabulary: when

he first refers to “recreational skaters” he uses parentheses to imply that the abbreviation “rec” is generally used. Later on (in line 27), he refers to “rec skates,” this time using only the abbreviation. This might be seen as a way to socialize the novice member into the professional jargon of inline skating (see, e.g., Lave & Wenger, 1991).

Another instance where English is drawn on is when User B inserts the phrase *only do it all skate!* This is a very casual way to mix the languages, and the English phrase does not seem to fit into the overall grammatical and semantic structure of the Finnish sentence. However, given that User B employs the phrase to describe trick skates in comparison with rec skates with which “you cannot grind,” one can assume that he talks about a “do-it-all skate” and thus uses this term to refer to skates with all possible features. User B sums up his answer to User A with this English phrase; he prefers trick skates over recreational skates and considers them to be more legitimate in terms of the “true” nature of rollerblading.

### *Conclusion*

In this chapter, I have attempted to show how translocality is an essential component of one specific online community. The analysis of just three instances of online interaction reveals that translocality is manifested by heteroglossic linguistic and discursive resources. For example, by styling their language use, forum users can localize a global language, make it a resource of their own, and thus construct their identities as Finnish users of the English language. Moreover, the members of the *Godspeed* community not only use English-language elements in their online discussions but they also create associations with other cultures by drawing on specific registers or displaying certain cultural knowledge. The sociocultural frames of Christianity, extreme sports, and youth culture structure the topics and ways of speaking in the online forum. For instance, topics related to extreme sports prompt the use of English-derived terminology, which in turn contributes to creating a style that is characterized by, for example, references to global products and ways of practicing sports. In the Christian framework, translocality is evoked in reference to the message of the Bible and the shared values and goals in the global community of Christians. English is also integrated into the Christian discourse but with a different meaning potential than the more playful and aesthetic appropriations of English in the discourse of extreme sports or youth



culture. Overall, the members of the community are, by way of using a variety of linguistic and discursive resources, able to engage in a stylistic expression of their identities.

The extracts in this chapter can be seen to illustrate three different identity positions through which the community members style their interaction in the online discussion forum. Specifically, the resources for styling include language choice between Finnish and English, use of different registers, discourses and cultural references, and creative spelling practices. The analysis of the extracts showed how the members of the community can play with language, and hence, by drawing on and adapting English elements into the Finnish language, they are able to create a humorous way of communicating their message. By engaging in the playful use of language, the community members conveyed affiliation and solidarity and thus constructed a sense of shared community. Nevertheless, they can also associate themselves with global youth cultures that are often characterized by “[p]layful co-articulations of various social voices and cultural resources” (Androutsopoulos & Georgakopoulou, 2003, p. 5). By incorporating formal religious register into their talk about the community’s sports activities, an evangelistic mission for the whole group was discursively constructed, and the Christian identity was explicitly evoked. Finally, consumer culture in extreme sports was highlighted through the use of specialized English extreme sports jargon. Expert identities were thus constructed through superior knowledge within the extreme sports culture.

On the whole, the three examples analyzed here illustrate how an online space can function as an authentic site for community construction. Shared interests, cultural identifications, and values as well as specific language practices may lead a particular group of people to form a community of practice online. Identifying oneself as a member of a group requires experiences, knowledge, or expertise both on relevant topics and the ways in which these topics are talked about. Current research on language practices in online communities, such as in communities for fan fiction writers or football enthusiasts, support these observations: specific ways of using language and discussing certain topics are drawn on and also expected by the participants when they construct and maintain their online community (Kytölä, forthcoming; Leppänen, forthcoming). This chapter, similarly, shed light on the mechanisms, or language practices, by which sociality is created online—both locally and translocally.

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### III

#### **HETEROGLOSSIA AS A RESOURCE FOR REFLEXIVE PARTICIPATION IN A COMMUNITY OF CHRISTIAN SNOWBOARDERS IN FINLAND**

by

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## Heteroglossia as a Resource for Reflexive Participation in a Community of Christian Snowboarders in Finland<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the ways in which linguistic heteroglossia is mobilized to construct participation in a youth cultural community of practice. The analysis focuses on spoken interaction among Christian snowboarders in Finland, and specifically on how the community members create social meanings by using their shared linguistic resources (e.g. religious register or snowboarding terminology). These socially indexical resources gain new meanings when the snowboarders engage in debates concerning gender, expertise and literal versus non-literal interpretations of the Bible. During specific interactive events, they reflect on their responses to different Biblical discourses, thus aiming to reconcile traditional church teachings with late modern lifestyles. In the process, they construct themselves as authentic Christian members of the community. Humor and playfulness are often important means for the snowboarders to negotiate the potential contradictions between traditional religious voices and their lived social reality. Hence, ultimately heteroglossia and indexicality enable the Christian snowboarders to establish and transform meanings, identities and cultural contexts.

Key words: heteroglossia, indexicality, gender, Christian, Biblical interpretation, community of practice

## ABSTRACT IN FINNISH

Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkastellaan, miten kielellistä heteroglossiaa voidaan hyödyntää rakennettaessa osallistumista nuorisokulttuuriseen toimintayhteisöön. Analyysi keskittyy suomalaisten kristittyjen lumilautailijoiden puhuttuun vuorovaikutukseen ja erityisesti siihen, miten yhteisön jäsenet luovat sosiaalisia merkityksiä jaettujen kielellisten resurssiensa (esim. uskonnollisen rekisterin tai lumilautailusanaston) avulla. Nämä sosiaalisesti indeksaaliset resurssit saavat uusia merkityksiä, kun lumilautailijat ryhtyvät keskustelemaan sukupuolesta, asiantuntijuudesta ja Raamatun kirjaimellisesta ja ei-kirjaimellisesta tulkinnasta. Tiettyjen vuorovaikutustilanteiden aikana he pohtivat vastauksia erilaisiin raamatullisiin diskursseihin pyrkien näin sovittamaan yhteen perinteisiä kirkon opetuksia ja myöhäismoderneja elämäntyyliä. Samalla he rakentavat itseään autenttisina kristittyinä jäseninä tässä yhteisössä. Huumori ja leikillisuus ovat useissa tilanteissa tärkeitä keinoja, joiden avulla lumilautailijat neuvottelevat mahdollisista ristiriidoista perinteisten uskonnollisten äänien ja heidän oman eletyn sosiaalisen todellisuutensa välillä. Näin ollen pohjimmiltaan heteroglossia ja indeksaalisuus auttavat kristittyjä lumilautailijoita sekä vakiinnuttamaan että muokkaamaan merkityksiä, identiteettejä ja kulttuurisia konteksteja.

## INTRODUCTION

Youth cultures serve as sites for the expression of communality, identities and diverse language practices, thus presenting an intriguing topic for sociolinguistic research. This article focuses on a specific youth cultural community of Christian snowboarders in Finland. The analysis of the community members' face-to-face interactions will illustrate how they articulate the relevance of both Christianity and the culture of snowboarding in their lives. To achieve their interactive goals, they often employ *heteroglossia* (Bakhtin 1981), i.e. socially indexical resources from different languages, registers or professional jargons (cf. Bailey 2007: 258; Lähteenmäki 2010: 25). For them, these resources (e.g. religious registers, snowboarding terminologies, youth cultural discourse) have important expressive potential which can be utilized when they jointly construct identity positions and communicate situational meanings. In particular, the community members' mutual engagement in specific metapragmatic activities renders visible the ways in which these resources are employed to evoke specific contexts and identities in their interaction (Silverstein 1993: 42).

The notion of heteroglossia helps to show how the community members use a variety of linguistic and discursive resources to draw on diverse, sometimes even contradictory, socio-ideological voices in the course of particular interactive events. Their interaction offers important insights into 'dialogized heteroglossia' (Bakhtin 1981: 272) in which specific voices and value systems, here evangelical Christianity and late modern youth cultures, are set in dialogue with each other. The different cultural and ideological positions each have their own distinctive features in terms of linguistic repertoires, cultural references and ways of conceptualizing the world (Morson and Emerson 1990: 141). Thus, specific words "come with social and historical associations from prior usage" and their meanings are constantly being shaped in new interactive situations (Bailey 2012: 502). In this study, a snowboarding camp organized by the community members serves as a situated context where specific ideologically-laden positions are juxtaposed, adopted and assigned. Therefore, heteroglossia is key means for them in establishing, negotiating and maintaining their community of practice.



By definition, communities of practice (CoPs) build around mutual engagement, apprenticeship and a joint enterprise through repeated activities, which usually take place in specific institutional contexts, such as the workplace or school (Lave and Wenger 1991: 67; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992: 464). Nevertheless, mutual engagement in a joint enterprise may also take place in less institutional environments: peer groups and lifestyle-related activities form an important part of social life, and therefore provide valuable possibilities for individuals and groups to construct dynamic CoPs.

The Christian snowboarders studied here form a self-constituted CoP and the community members' mutual engagement is based on events and camps which they organize themselves in order to gather together and participate in activities of snowboarding and Bible study. In so doing, the snowboarders exchange ideas related to the community's practices and values, and in this way, constantly learn from and teach one another. For instance, they share expertise on snowboarding skills, equipment and terminology, or reflect together on how to carry out the community's evangelical mission. Overall, they share not only an interest in similar lifestyle activities but also feel deeply connected to each other by their Christian faith. Hence, in their joint enterprise, they aspire to serve as a group of Christians within the cultural field of snowboarding and related sports. This is not an uncomplicated endeavor, since the community members come from different local Christian churches in Finland (in most cases the Evangelical-Lutheran, Pentecostal, Free Church and other evangelical or charismatic movements) and often have intricate histories of participation in the activities of different Christian congregations. However, despite the fact that the members' Christian backgrounds are different and their respective churches may have varying takes on doctrinal issues, such as infant baptism, women priests, or faith-healing, in interviews and in their web writing, the snowboarders repeatedly describe their group as a family (see Peuronen 2011: 162-163; see also Campbell, 2005: 83, for a study on Christian online community members referring to themselves as 'brothers and sisters.'). Thus, while being committed to Christian values and traditions, the participants embrace the kind of diversity (mobility, mixing and complex communicative contexts, including the digital communication technologies) that characterizes individuals and groups in late modernity (Blommaert and Rampton 2011: 4-5).

In the following sections, I first discuss the theoretical notions used in this paper: heteroglossia and indexicality. Following this, I describe the community of Christian snowboarders and the data collection methods in more detail. I then offer a close analysis of how the community members use a diversity of heteroglossic resources to negotiate social meanings, evoke a sense of a community of practice and participate in this community.

#### HETEROGLOSSIA AND THE CREATION OF INDEXICAL MEANINGS

The concept of heteroglossia is drawn from Mikhail Bakhtin's (1895-1975) theoretical vocabulary, which he originally developed to describe the nature of literary language. For Bakhtin (1981: 261-262) the language of the novel is necessarily composed of a diversity of stylistic unities including narrative styles and social speech types prevalent in everyday life. Hence, heteroglossia is, in essence, used to describe the inherent diversity that is present in language. For Bakhtin, language is not a unitary, normative system which can be fully explained by set rules and standards; instead, it is always being reworked by social and historical forces and by social actors' attitudes, values and views of the world (Morson and Emerson 1990: 139-141). Indeed, Bakhtin (1981: 411) states that "[e]very language in the novel is a point of view, socio-ideological conceptual system of real social groups and their embodied representatives". Similarly, within the group of Christian snowboarders, heteroglossia enables the community members to organize their social realities by linking together and navigating amidst differing and competing socio-ideological worldviews expressed through a diversity of forms, registers and styles of language.

However, language is characterized not only by diversity, but also by a struggle to achieve uniformity. Bakhtin discusses the concepts of centripetal and centrifugal forces, which refer, respectively, to normativity and diversity in language use. Centripetal forces strive to set the norms and standardize language use. Centrifugal forces, in turn, are dynamic, embracing diversity, difference and creativity (see Bell 2007: 99). Bakhtin (1981: 272) emphasizes that these two forces are in a constant struggle with each other, and can intersect even within a single utterance. Heteroglossia is essentially a centrifugal phenomenon (Bell 2007: 100), and it can be a useful tool for

analyzing how individuals strategically select and modify the resources on which they draw for expressing their intended meanings.

In the case of Christian snowboarders in Finland, several languages of heteroglossia (see Bakhtin 1981: 262-3; Lähteenmäki 2010: 23) can be identified which both structure their language use and provide them with resources for creating meanings in interaction. Hence, a struggle between centripetal and centrifugal forces is also present within the community members' language repertoires. The resources shared by Christian snowboarders include extreme sports lexical registers, Biblical registers or religious language use more generally, different dialects of Finnish, and other such resources deemed appropriate to their specific contexts of interaction. In order to participate in the negotiation of meanings with other community members, the participants need both shared cultural knowledge and competence in the use of situationally relevant linguistic resources (Lave and Wenger 1991: 109; for registers see Agha 2007: 146; for language use in different domains of social life see Higgins 2009: 15).

Therefore, despite the fact that heteroglossia foregrounds the diversity of language forms and their related meanings and associations, in order for the different situational, historical and social references in the snowboarders' talk to be understandable and communicable, they need to share certain indexical interpretations (Silverstein 2003; Ochs 1992: 339; Blommaert and Rampton 2011: 5-6). Social indexicality of language refers to the ways in which particular linguistic signs are related to particular situational conditions to create social meanings (Ochs 1992: 338). At given moments, the members of Christian snowboarders may use specific linguistic resources, e.g. the snowboarding lexicon or words from the Bible, to evoke associations typically connected with these resources. But the same linguistic resources can also be used to achieve different communicative goals: by altering tone of voice or by referring to different, even unexpected, contexts, people or things, community members can use their shared resources to introduce new meanings and interpretations into their interaction (see Sawyer 2003: 86). These two dimensions of indexical meaning are called indexical presupposition and indexical entailment (Silverstein 2003: 195, 1993: 36). They imply that linguistic forms presuppose, that is, have available meanings which are

appropriate to their context of use, and that, by the entailment of existing contextual parameters, linguistic forms can also be used to create new meanings in interaction.

Consequently, language is always more or less dialogized. During their history of use, linguistic signs have attracted social and historical associations from more than one context and value system (Bailey 2012: 500). There is, then, a potential tension in the use of a particular linguistic sign in a specific context. In my analysis, the notion of dialogism helps me to understand, first, how the community members draw on the heteroglossic resources that are available to them to construct their unique subject positions (Lähteenmäki 2010: 23). These resources have particular socio-historical associations and ideological values deriving from, among others, youth cultures and Christian discourses, and as a result, they can be used to evoke situational identities and the various social voices attached to them. Secondly, dialogism is also relevant in specific situations in which the community members strategically employ heteroglossic resources to create double-voiced discourse. For example, they may draw on the ambiguity of indexical interpretations to create humor and irony. Double-voicing within specific discourse types can thus be seen as a degree of “internal dialogization” (Bakhtin 1984: 199; Morson and Emerson 1990:146-147), and is one means by which community members are able to juxtapose and contrast different worldviews for the purpose of constructing their community of practice.

Youth cultures are rich sources for the study of heteroglossia, since, in general, young people are active in creating and learning new forms of cultural expression and co-articulating diverse social voices (Androutsopoulos and Georgakopoulou 2003: 4-5, Jørgensen 2008: 168-169, Li 2011: 1230, Higgins 2009: 93-94). In late modern societies, young people are not necessarily expected to follow certain standard life trajectories and thus, they are in a key position to introduce cultural and social changes. Participation in cultural practices is largely a matter of individual choices, and both (global) youth lifestyles and spiritual traditions can provide young people with resources for reflexive identity work (Collins-Mayo 2010: 4). In the youth cultural group of Christian snowboarders in Finland, while some of the participants are teenagers still living with their parents, many have already started their independent

young adult lives. The community members mostly range in age from 15 to 25 (some of the people in charge are 30-35 years old). Therefore, 'youth' is, defined here first and foremost in terms of their interest and possibility to engage in specific youth cultural practices in their leisure time (Pujolar 2000: 255, Bucholtz 2002: 539).

#### THE COMMUNITY OF CHRISTIAN SNOWBOARDERS IN FINLAND

Officially, the organization of Christian snowboarders in Finland is a member club of the Finnish Snowboard Association. A core group of enthusiasts interact regularly and organize activities for the whole Christian snowboarding community. The community is geographically dispersed, smaller groups functioning locally in different towns across the country. Consequently, one important means for the group members to maintain their community is to organize snowboarding/extreme sports camps in Finland and abroad. In the camps, people with different ties to the community gather together: they come from different towns, they might be closely connected with the community, or they might be participating in a camp for the first time. In each camp, the participants form a short-term community of practice. Information on the camps is disseminated through websites and social media sites, such as *Facebook*, where upcoming or ongoing activities are discussed (see Leppänen, Kytölä, Jousmäki, Peuronen and Westinen, forthcoming). Additionally, the group hosts a website featuring a virtual community where it is possible to create personal profiles, post pictures and videos, read blog writings and participate in web forum discussions.

As pointed out by Mooney (2010: 325), in the globalizing world, the field of religion is highly complex and multifaceted: in addition to formal memberships, it is possible to perceive "commitment to religion as a central element in conceptions of identity". As an organization, the Christian snowboarders do not commit to any single denomination but aim to serve Christian youth from different churches. Overall, there is a strong inter-denominational orientation in the community. The present participants, for example, have various backgrounds in terms of their membership in local Christian churches in Finland and affiliations with global Christian networks.

Many of them are enthusiastic about traveling abroad, often because of better snowboarding or surfing possibilities but they are also interested in joining international mission organizations or attending Bible schools abroad. Thus, they are familiar with different teachings and interpretations of the Bible and a formal membership of a specific church may not reveal much about their religious views. What they as individuals have in common is a conviction to treat personal faith in Christ as an inseparable part of any aspect of one's life. Similarly, they see the Bible as the sole reliable source of God's word.

In terms of membership, the Christian snowboarders who took part in this study belong to different Protestant churches: they reported being either currently, or previously affiliated with the Evangelical-Lutheran, Pentecostal, Baptist, Methodist or Evangelical Free Church of Finland<sup>2</sup>. All of these churches recognize two sacraments, baptism and Holy Communion, although the ways in which each church practices the sacraments and defines their meaning differ. The Evangelical-Lutheran Church has an official status in Finland with 77% of the population as registered members (Statistics Finland 2011). This "strong state-church oriented tradition" (Kääriäinen 2011: 156) means that most of the participants in the community, if not officially members of the church, are familiar with the Lutheran doctrine through various institutions in Finland, such as school and military service (compulsory for men). The church's relationship to free evangelical and charismatic movements has been problematic in the past, but at present ecumenical activities and doctrinal discussions are being undertaken yearly. However, recent internal debates within the Lutheran church and its own revivalist movements e.g. on women priests and the rights of sexual minorities have caused wide-ranging discussions in the Finnish society (Palmu, Salomäki, Ketola and Niemelä 2012: 379-380). Overall, the community members' interactions are more likely influenced by a variety of teachings and sermons as well as the public debates than potential differences between their respective churches.

Moreover, all of the snowboarders recognize the importance of the fellowship of other young Christians in their community and beyond. According to Statistics Finland (2011), the percentage of young people (15-24 year-olds) is around 12% in the Lutheran, Pentecostal and Free Church whereas the percentage of over 65 year-olds (the largest group in each of these

denominations) varies from 16.5 to 20%. One of the snowboarders noted that, despite visiting various evangelical and charismatic movements all his life, their snowboarding organization was the only long-term Christian community of which he has officially been a member. Another acknowledged the encouragement she had received from other Christian snowboarders to go abroad and join an international missionary movement for two years. Yet another saw himself, through their snowboarding community, as a member of a global network of churches which unites local congregations in resort locations in North America and Europe. Hence, these youth are translocal actors in the sense that while 'local' is meaningful for them, global connections also matter in terms of people, places and activities (Leppänen, Pitkänen-Huhta, Piirainen-Marsh, Nikula and Peuronen 2009: 1081-1082).

On the whole, the community members are aware of the diversity of their backgrounds and experiences in different Christian churches. Indeed, their mutual engagement in the activities of the community provides them with a specific socio-cultural space for discussing different practices in their local churches and other contexts. Nevertheless, they feel a need to focus on what they have in common. The following interview extract illustrates how two community members, Ilari<sup>3</sup> and Jasmin, articulate their views on the ecumenical nature of the community.

#### Interview extract

Ilari: 'Yeah what is cool about this is that it doesn't matter if you think differently about some things -- of course not everyone can agree on things because otherwise there wouldn't be different churches but everything would be the same. But still even if you disagree a little, still we are sort of the same like the same family.'

Jasmin: 'Yeah and our aim is to be able to discuss different opinions but we won't start arguing like defending our own opinion like not accepting the other view as an alternative and maybe we focus on more important matters like how Jesus died for us like now at Easter and you know loves us all or you know the most important questions not like infant or adult baptism, you can probably find all the different

opinions in this camp too but they are not what matter in the end.’  
(transl. by SP)

## DATA COLLECTION

Due to the multiple modes of participation in the community of Christian snowboarders in Finland, the data were collected from both online and offline interaction between the community members. The different data also reflect diverse practices in the community: during 2006-2008, I collected discussion threads from the community’s web forum with a specific focus on the forum members’ ways of using English. Later on, during 2009-2013, I established offline relations with the community members, interviewed them, and finally, participated in three of the community’s camps, where I conducted individual and group interviews together with audio and video recordings of naturally occurring interactions (see Androutsopoulos 2008; Blommaert and Dong 2010; Li Wei 2011: 1223). Furthermore, online and offline data were combined in an analysis of the community members’ online video making practices (Peuronen, submitted).

The material analyzed for this paper come from a 5-day snowboarding camp organized in April 2011. There were approximately 20 participants in the camp, all with varying backgrounds in the community. Most actively participate in the community’s activities. However, three of the camp participants had never previously taken part in the Christian snowboarders’ camps. My role in the camp was also that of a peripheral participant: whereas previously I had only had individual contacts with the community members, I now moved into a more engaged form of participation (Lave and Wenger 1991: 36). To introduce my project to the prospective camp participants, I created a profile page on their website and described my project on the site’s message board. Sharing a Christian background with the community members, I felt comfortable about participating in the camp and creating new contacts with them. Therefore, I can also define myself as a participant-as-observer (Davies 2008: 82). I took part in the camp activities by spending time with the snowboarders on the slopes (however, I had skis instead of a snowboard) and off the slopes (I shared a cabin with four young women). I constantly interacted



with the snowboarders, took field notes, and made recordings of interviews as well as other natural spoken data. The interviews and discussions with the community members focused on the members' personal stories of how they have entered the community and their views on the importance of the community in their lives. The participants also discussed their preferred sports, styles of dress, music, and the community's activities in general. The role of language in community interaction was also discussed on several occasions. The total length of the audio and video recordings made during the camp is 6.5 hours.

#### CONSTRUCTING PARTICIPATION BY HETEROGLOSSIC RESOURCES IN METAPRAGMATIC ACTIVITIES

With the analysis of the data examples included in this section, I will show how a group of Christian snowboarders in Finland draw on heteroglossic resources to construct participation in their community of practice. The interactive events took place in one of the cabins that the community members had rented for their snowboarding camp. They exemplify situations in which many of the community members are present at once, and in which they engage in informal, casual, and playful interactions with each other. However, besides playful interactions, the Christian snowboarders navigate the socio-ideological diversity in the community through the use of specific linguistic and discursive resources. The chosen examples represent metapragmatic events during which they evoke appropriate contexts of use for these resources (Johnstone, Andrus and Danielson 2006: 80).

##### *Incorporating ideological voices*

In the following extract four of the community members, three young men (Mikael, Kasper and Toni) and one young woman (Jasmin), reflect how Christians should always try to earn the respect of others. I sit together with them at a table (my turns are marked with S in the transcript). This short conversation contains many ideological and cultural voices, i.e. unique and independent subject positions (Bakhtin 1984: 6-7), which the community members find relevant in conceptualizing who they are as a community.

## Example (1)

- 1 M: kaikkia ei voi miellyttää mutta hengellistä yhteyttä [voi] yrittää säilöä  
'you cannot please everyone but you can try to preserve spiritual  
togetherness'
- 2 K: totta  
'true'
- 3 T: niin  
'yes'
- 4 K: eihän meillä täällä mitää muuta yhteistä oookaa ku usko (.) niin ja  
extremeharrastus  
'actually we don't have anything else in common but faith (.) oh yeah  
and extreme sports'
- 5 T: ni::in  
'ye::ah'
- 6 K: lumilautailuakaa ei voi sanoa yhteiseksi \$ku täällä on näitä suksijoita  
tullu jostain\$  
'we cannot say that we even share snowboarding \$because we have  
these skiers who have come here from somewhere\$'
- 7 S: ((laughter))
- 8 J: hmm hmm älä viitti  
'hmm hmm tell me about it'
- 9 K: ei se haittaa  
'it's okay'
- 10 ((laughter))
- 11 K: luovuttaa newschooliin  
'[to] surrender to newschool'
- 12 ((laughter))
- 13 T: tää on sitä newschoolia että Jumala antaa aurinkonsa paistaa niin  
lautailijoille ku suksijoillekin nykypäivänä  
'this is the newschool where God lets his sun shine over boarders and  
skiers nowadays'
- 14 K: hmm
- 15 J: \$nykypäivänä\$  
'\$nowadays\$'

16 K: me käytiin muuten pistään pressi mäkeen äsken  
 'by the way we set up a pressi [a snowboarding obstacle] on the slope  
 just now'

In this exchange, the participants voice Christian ideals in order to conceptualize their (spiritual) togetherness and what unites them as a group. They construct ideological, cultural and historical perspectives on their community by referencing the sports-related concept of 'newschool' and applying Biblical discourse to its use. One of the participants, Kasper, suggests that they do not have even snowboarding in common, since their group currently includes both snowboarders and skiers (line 6). As I am sitting close to the discussion participants, I assume that Kasper is directing his words at me and, thus I react by laughing. However, I was not the only skier in the group. In the context of skiing, the concept of 'newschool' is indexical of a type of freestyle skiing with a specific focus on jumps and tricks, and in this sense, it has many similarities with snowboarding. The meaning of the term is presupposed among (at least some of) the participants as they indicate their shared understanding of Kasper's reference to the term (line 10) by a 'knowing laughter' (Holmes and Meyerhoff 1999: 176). Responding to Kasper's argument that faith is the only thing that they share, Toni extends the meaning of 'newschool' to include both snowboarders and skiers. At the same time, he entails a religious voice to the concept by saying: *tää on sitä newschoolia että Jumala antaa aurinkonsa paistaa niin lautailijoille ku suksijoillekin nykypäivänä* ('this is the newschool where God lets his sun shine over boarders and skiers nowadays'). This utterance references the "Sermon on the Mount" chronicled in the Matthew, which states that God is good for every person, whether they are good or evil. In much of his talk, Toni conceptualizes their group as a family, and this statement can be seen as contributing to the family-related discourse in the community through which he wishes to welcome people with different skills or views into the group. Toni is one of the group's core members and thus in a position to define the community as a whole.

At the end of this exchange, Jasmin repeats Toni's expression *nykypäivänä* ('nowadays') with a smiling tone of voice. With this comment,

she points out that in Toni's statement, there are two conflicting meaning-positions as regards the idea of God. In other words, the temporal expression which Toni uses (*nykypäivänä*, 'nowadays') implies that God's grace is subject to variation, thus constructing a meaning-position which is at odds with the idea of the unchangeable nature of God in Christianity. The combining of these different voices contributes to the construction of the community as a heteroglossic entity. Different voices, perspectives and points of view are being experimented with and incorporated in the participants' utterances during the constant flow of discursive events. On line 16, with reference to the concept of newschool, Kaspero introduces a shift in voice by informing everyone that they have constructed a snowboarding obstacle, *pressi*, for them to ride the following day. A *pressi* is a kind of snowboarding obstacle that both snowboarders and skiers can ride, thus enabling them to engage in a shared, newschool-related activity on the slope.

#### *Double-voicing the Bible*

In the following two examples, the participants' communality is further negotiated as they draw on a specific passage from the Bible (1 Timothy 2) to evaluate its message in the course of their interaction. This results in the processing of heteroglossic voices concerning their gendered and expert roles. In examples (2) and (3), two young women, Alina and Jasmin, and a young man, Kaspero, construct an interactive situation in which 'two meaning-positions come into dialogical contact within one utterance' (Lähteenmäki 2010: 22). Thus, the analysis of the examples illustrates the use of heteroglossic resources from the viewpoint of different discourses and *double-voicing*.

During this interaction, some of the community members are sitting around a table and talking about different practices of worship at their local churches. They are not undertaking a Bible study *per se*, but as they have had a short Bible teaching session a few moments earlier and have their Bibles with them, they are able to cite verses from it. I sit together with them, mainly listening to what they have to say. Kaspero asks the others' opinion about the waving of flags during worship in a church's youth gatherings. He gives an example of a person who has started to wave a flag during different gatherings

in his local church, causing some bafflement among the other church members. At some point, Kasperri refers to the person who he is talking about as a woman (in Finnish, personal pronouns are gender-neutral). Since apparently he did not intend to make the person's gender known, he jokingly explains his language use: *meinasin sanoo naiselle, se on nainen mut puhutaan siitä nyt ihmisenä kumminkin* ('I almost said woman, she is a woman but let's talk about her as a human being anyway'). The others laugh at this rather cheeky side-comment but continue to listen to Kasperri's thoughts about the topic of worship. However, Alina starts to flip through her Bible and introduces the topic of women and Biblical discourse.

Example (2)<sup>4</sup>

- 1 A: mitä naisista oli (.) tänään luin taas.  
'what was it about women (.) I read [about it] again today.'
- 2 K: *sitä en salli että nainen opettaa enkä sitä että \$hän hallitsee miestä\$ (.) hänen on elettävä hiljaisesti*  
'but I do not allow a woman to teach or \$exercise authority over a man\$ (.) but to be in quietness'
- 3 A: ((laughter))
- 4 (2.0)
- 5 J: no sinä[hän tässä oot äänessä  
'well you're the one who's doing the talking'
- 6 K: [SSSHY::S  
'SSSHU::SH'
- 7 ((laughter, length 5 sec))
- 8 A: mut se oli vaa Paavali Paavali puhuu omast puoles[taan=  
'but it was just Paul Paul is only speaking for himself='
- 9 J: [niin ((inaudible))  
'yeah' ((inaudible))
- 10 K: =*puhun totta en valehtele \$minut on pantu kansan opettajaksi opettamaan niille uskon totuutta\$*  
'=*I am telling the truth I am not lying \$as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth\$*'
- 11 ((laughter))

- 12 K: *ilman vihaa ilman epäilyä >puhtain mielin< (1.0)*  
 ‘*without wrath and [without] doubting [>with a pure mind<]* (1.0)’
- 13 ((laughter))
- 14 *tahdon samalla tahdon että naisten kau[nistukseksi on \$hillitty esiintyminen\$ vaatimattomuus ja säädyllisyys (.) eivät tukkalaitteet*  
 ((points to the girls)) *kultakorut* ((points to Alina)) hopeaa varmaan  
 ‘*I want likewise I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing \$modestly and discreetly\$ (.) not with braided hair* ((points to the girls)) *and gold* ((points to Alina)) silver probably’
- 15 J: [joo joo Kasperin ((laughter))  
 ‘yeah yeah Kasperin ((laughter))’
- 16 A: *tää on risti* ((laughter))  
 ‘this is a cross ((laughter))’
- 17 K: *helmet. kenellä on helmet? kalliit vaatteet.*  
 ‘*pearls. who’s got pearls? expensive clothes.*’
- 18 J: @timanttein [timanttein@  
 ‘@diamonds diamonds@’
- 19 K: [teillä on kaikilla kalliit vaatteet<  
 ‘>you all got expensive clothes<’
- 20 A: \$eikä oo kalliit vaatteet [kuule\$  
 ‘\$no expensive clothes you know\$’
- 21 J: [ei ollu kyl kallis  
 ‘wasn’t expensive’
- 22 K: *vaan hyvät teot (.) niin kuin sopii naisille jotka tuntevat palvelevansa Jumalaa* ((laughter))  
 ‘*but rather by means of good works (.) as is proper for women making a claim to godliness* ((laughter))’
- 23 ((laughter))
- 24 K: *tää on hauskaa lukea Raamattua ihan tahallaan väärin* ((laughter))  
 ‘this is fun to deliberately misread the Bible ((laughter))’
- 25 A: *housut seittemän euroa paita viisi euroa kaksoista euroa vaatteet niin oliko kalliit*  
 ‘pants seven euros shirt five euros twelve euros for clothes so is it expensive’

In this interactive event, the speakers move between different (meta)communicative frames (Lucy 1993: 15), and in the process draw on many heteroglossic resources to achieve their communicative goals. Kasperri reacts to Alina's opening line by reading out loud Apostle Paul's words in 1 Timothy 2:12 (line 2): *sitä en salli että nainen opettaa enkä sitä että hän hallitsee miestä hänen on elettävä hiljaisesti* ('but I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man but to be in quietness'). Although the linguistic resources he uses (words from the Bible) are very conventional and also appropriate-to-context considering the religious character of the community, the verse brings up the contentious issue of gender equality in church. The participants are likely to be aware of the potential threat that this very patriarchal voice poses to the unity of their mixed-gender group. The emphatic and smiling tone in which Kasperri utters the words reveals that he is not entirely serious: humor enables him to distance himself from the seriousness of the Biblical text. Nevertheless, the others are hesitant to continue the topic until Jasmin points out to Kasperri that he is the one who is speaking anyhow (*no sinähän tässä oot äänessä* 'well you're the one who's doing the talking', line 5). By using the indexical pronoun 'you' when addressing Kasperri, Jasmin positions those present as either male or female, and makes 'the social parameters of speaker and hearer explicit' (Silverstein 1976: 34). Hence, whereas Kasperri drew on centripetal, literal Christian discourse and addressed his turn to 'the indefinite other,' Jasmin adjusts the conversation to concern the ongoing interactive situation and 'the immediate participant-interlocutors' (Bakhtin 1986: 95). In this way, as I interpret it, she is challenging Kasperri on the appropriateness of citing the verse in the context of their community. In his turn, Kasperri complies with the male position and, at the same time, positions Jasmin as a female by his loud interjection *SHYS* ('SHUSH', line 6) aimed at her. This turn is interpreted as very humorous: the participants laugh because of "the juxtaposition of two or more incongruous ways of viewing an aspect of reality" in this situation (Crawford 2003: 1420). Kasperri is, on the one hand, performing his gender by complying with Apostle Paul's teaching but, on the other hand, his impersonation of an authoritative male over the female participants is excessively overstated. He uses the guise of this persona to embody the patriarchal religious voice and parody it, being

both funny and critical at the same time (Palmer 2009: 84). Through Jasmin's and Kasper's turns, the issue of women in church is now readdressed to include the participants of the interaction. In this way, they imply that the Biblical discourse is not only a voice from the past but concerns the lives of contemporary youth as well. For them, humor, in its ambiguity, can function as a way to consider a controversial issue from different perspectives (Crawford 2003: 1420).

When Alina offers a point of view according to which the quoted verse was Paul's personal opinion, Kasper picks another quotation from the same passage again as if impersonating Apostle Paul. He speaks very emphatically but also with a smiling voice when uttering these words from 1 Timothy 2:7 (line 10): *puhun totta en valehtele minut on pantu kansan opettajaksi opettamaan niille uskon totuutta* ('I am telling the truth I am not lying as a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth'). In this way, he rejects Alina's suggestion by constructing Apostle Paul's authority as a messenger of the truth. Since this sentence fits the conversational frame perfectly and creates an imagined exchange between two incongruous views, a very humorous and ironic tone informs the situation. The two opposing views bring out two contradictory positions, those of *male leadership* and *gender equality* (Groothuis and Pierce 2005: 15-16). Both views are taught in contemporary Christian churches and they exemplify different methods of interpreting Biblical texts.

Kasper continues his double-voiced performance to impersonate Apostle Paul through the Bible text. From line 14 onwards, he draws on Paul's words to comment on their immediate physical context (the female participants' clothes and jewellery) thus taking on an authoritative and evaluative role while at the same time constructing his personal relationship with the female participants. His enthusiasm is revealed by his emphatic, smiling tone and his eagerness to keep the turn to himself. Jasmin and Alina object to Kasper's comments but by co-constructing the situation together with him, they give him permission for the parody (Palmer 2009: 82). By their shared laughter, they accept the ambiguous intentions and indexical interpretations embedded in the double-voiced utterances (Priego-Valverde 2009: 168). Later on, Kasper makes a dramatic shift in his performance by his explicit metacommunicative comment



on the literal Biblical interpretation: *tää on hauskaa lukea Raamattua ihan tahallaan väärin*, ‘this is fun to deliberately misread the Bible’ (line 24). By asserting their interaction as funny, Kasperri emphasizes the special character of the ironic treatment of the Bible. He implies that his intention was to provide amusement by challenging the more conservative views of other Christian groups who do not accept women priests and possibly simultaneously referencing the older generation of believers who, in the past, used to impose strict dress codes for women. Moreover, his statement suggests that there are more appropriate ways of reading the Bible, which are not explicitly discussed by the participants in this situation.

However, despite the fact that Kasperri distances himself from the patriarchal voice by parodying it, his performance highlights the inequality based on gender differences. The following example is a direct continuation of the participants’ discussion and further illustrates how other meanings are incorporated into the talk about women.

### Example (3)

26 K: sit tää on kaikista paras *ensinhän luotiin Aadam ja sitten Eeva*

((laughter))

‘then this is the best of all *for it was Adam who was first created and then Eve* ((laughter))’

27 J: sillee tähän väliin vaan ((laughter))

’so just to mention it ((laughter))’

28 K: \$Ensimmäinen kirje Timoteukselle *eikä petetyksi joutunut Aadam vaan nainen antoi pettää itsensä ja rikkoi käskyn*\$ ((laughter)) @kaikki tuli nauhalle@

’ \$The First Letter to Timothy *and it was not Adam who was deceived but the woman being deceived fell into transgression*\$ ((laughter))

@everything is on tape now@’

29 ((laughter))

30 J: je::i

‘ya::y’

31 K: todistaa taas sitä minkä takia kaiken takana on nainen (.) *lasten*

*synnyttäjänä hän on \$kuitenkin pelastuva\$ jos hän vaan pysyy uskossa*

*ja rakkaudessa ja viettää hillittyä Jumalalle pyhitettyä elämää eli ei extremeurheilua*

'this goes to prove again how there is a woman behind everything (.)  
*but women \$will be preserved\$ through the bearing of children if they  
continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint so no extreme  
sports'*

32 ((laughter))

33 J: ei todellakaan

'definitely not'

34 K: hillittyä elämää (.) nainen \$paikkasi on keittiössä\$ (3.0) joo (.) kiitos  
nainen että jaoit tämän kanssamme

'with self-restraint (.) woman \$your place is in the kitchen\$ (3.0) yes (.)  
thank you woman for sharing this with us'

35 ((laughter))

36 J: avas taas niinku tätä

'opened this up again'

As Kasperri reads further in the same passage a section that evaluates the status of men and women, Jasmin's comment on line 27 (*siltee tähän väliin vaan*, 'so just to mention it') seeks again to challenge or ignore his enthusiasm on positioning women in a certain way. Despite this comment (or rather encouraged by it), Kasperri continues and this time places the message of the Bible in the context of their community's sport activities. After reading from 1 Timothy 2:15 (line 31) *ja viettää hillittyä Jumalalle pyhitettyä elämää* ('continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint'), he presents the conclusion that women should not do extreme sports (*eli ei extremeurheilua* 'so no extreme sports'). This ironic comment serves to take a stand on the participants' gender roles both in terms of religion and the extreme sports culture. Although e.g. the position of female skaters is often marginal in skateboarding communities (Jones 2011: 607), here women's participation in extreme sports activities is considered self-evident. Hence, the comment implies that the requirement of women remaining silent at church is equally arbitrary.

Throughout their verbal interaction, the parodical presentation of a dogmatic Bible reading, the participants balance their orientations to two different interpretive frameworks in the Christian discourse. One of them is the traditional, very literal interpretation of the Bible that conforms to the conservative discourses of the church. The direct quotations that Kasperri reads from the Apostle Paul's letters are meant to exemplify this discourse. In addition to the Biblical register, Kasperri also references well-known (Finnish) expressions *kaiken takana on nainen* ('there's a woman behind everything', line 31), and *nainen paikkasi on keittiössä* ('woman your place is in the kitchen', line 34). By using these phrases, he places the literal reading of the specific Bible verses in the context of a conservative view of women's role in society. Another interpretation of the Bible is represented by an egalitarian view which advocates the equality of women and men in all tasks in the church (Groothuis and Pierce 2005: 16-17).

It is apparent that young people of the 21<sup>st</sup> century do much interpretive work to apply the message of the Bible to their own lives and the late modern society in which they live (Bailey and Redden 2011: 14). One might justifiably assume that heteroglossic linguistic and discursive resources facilitate the meaning-making processes in which the young people engage through their language use. In addition, they most likely interpret a number of interactive events, of the kind exemplified above, in the context of many other societal discourses about women's rights or the relevance of the Bible in the late modern society in general. Indeed, Jule (2005: 1) points out that '[o]ne of the ways in which religion today is in a state of flux and transition involves gender roles, particularly the role of women'. Jasmin's final turn on line 36 (*avas taas niinku tätä* 'opened this up again') can be seen as a comment on the recurrent issue of women's role in the church within both Christian and societal discourses.

Through indexicality, the participants can construct many intertwining layers of meaning. In the situated context of peer-to-peer interaction, the community members' shared presupposed knowledge of the different readings of the Bible enables them to participate in the creation of an ironic interpretation of a specific Bible passage. At the same time, they engage in a reflexive activity, displaying their responses to different Biblical discourses.

The double-voiced performance serves to challenge the literal interpretation of the Bible passage and thus, sets an expectation of more refined ways of Biblical interpretation. On the whole, the sources of irony and humor come from socio-ideological contradictions as several of the voices do not match the participants' lived social reality or their identities in this specific situation. Therefore, they use this interpersonal, discursive and ideological activity to distance themselves from the literal interpretation while at the same time defining and positioning themselves as authentic Christian members in their community.

*Reflecting on shared cultural concepts*

In addition to the community members' Christian identities and their knowledge of Biblical interpretation, they are also devoted snowboarders, having expertise in the snowboarding culture and terminology. The analysis of the following extract illustrates how a Biblical voice is included in the interpretation of the literal meanings and appropriate uses of specific snowboarding terms. Although the participants manage to incorporate frameworks of language learning and eventually also that of Bible study within the macro-sociological context of the snowboarding culture, they also see a certain difference in the negotiation over meaning in snowboarding vocabulary and the Bible.

During their interaction, the participants foreground the different indexicalities of specific snowboarding terms and the underlying heteroglossic nature of their discourse. Thus, in their talk, they draw on metapragmatic discourse that 'renders potentially presupposable context more transparent' (Silverstein 2003: 196). Here, the notion of heteroglossia provides an understanding of the socially meaningful linguistic forms that the participants have at their disposal. The sports-related terms that they use are part of their expert language use: the participants know how to use the terms appropriately in specific contexts and therefore their indexical value is presupposed (Silverstein 2003: 195). According to Vice (1997: 21), 'Bakhtin emphasizes that it is precisely in use that speakers of a language come to understand and repeat the "inflections" of meaning which are absent from the dictionary' (see Bahktin 1981: 294).

In example 4, below, Kaspero enters the cabin while I am interviewing Jasmin and Mikael. As the participants talk about riding a *pressi* (a snowboarding obstacle), Mikael carefully pronounces (as if thinking out loud) two terms that are commonly used by Finnish snowboarders, *pressi* and *reili*. This reflexive action is most likely produced as a result of an earlier discussion on the use of English by Finns. In response, I point out to him that they probably not even notice how much they use the snowboarding lexicon in their talk.

The two terms that the participants discuss refer to specific snowboarding obstacles: *pressi* denotes a certain type of rail or bench (but does not have a direct equivalent in English snowboarding terminology), and *reili* is a localized form of a ‘rail’. After my comment, Mikael initiates their metalinguistic reflection by asking: *pressi ei oo kyllä suomenkielistä sanaa vai onko?* (‘pressi isn’t a Finnish word or is it?’). As pointed out by Mikael, the term *pressi* cannot be characterized as *standard* Finnish. Furthermore, although Kaspero gives an English translation for the term, its English origins are also unclear: ‘press bench’ (from which *pressi* has supposedly been derived) is not part of the English-language snowboarding terminology. It seems, therefore, that this term is a local appropriation which has developed at the grass-roots level and is learned by participation in the relevant communities of practice. It has a meaning and value in a certain socio-cultural context (among snowboarders in Finland) but not necessarily in others (see Blommaert 2010: 12).

When the group members have worked out a literal Finnish translation for the term *pressi* and Kaspero spells it out *painetuoli eiku penkki* (‘press chair I mean bench’), Jasmin laughs and states that the term is not Finnish, but it has come from English and it is *used* in Finnish (line 1). Judging from Jasmin’s reaction, translating the term into standard Finnish is not the correct, or not a socially acceptable, way of referring to this snowboarding obstacle:

#### Example (4)

1 J: (1.5) mut eihän se suomee niinku oo, se on niinku englanniksi tullu ja sitä käytetään suomen kielellä ta[vallaan  
'(1.5) but it's not like Finnish, it has come from English and it is used in Finnish in a way'

- 2 K: [reili on handrail eli kä[si käsi  
'reili is a handrail that is a hand hand'
- 3 M: [niin hänkkä  
'yeah hänkkä'
- 4 K: mikä reili on? mikä rail on?  
'what is a reili? what is a rail?'
- 5 M: reil. se on raide  
'rail. it is a track'
- 6 K: käsi[raide?  
'hand track?'
- 7 J: [ei vaan ei vaan toi mikä on tos kaide ((points to a hand rail outside  
on the porch))  
'no no it's that over there a rail' ((points to a hand rail outside on  
the porch))
- 8 M: [niin  
'yeah'
- 9 J: siis kaide  
'so a rail'
- 10 K: käsikaide niin  
'a hand rail yeah'
- 11 M: niin kaide (.) niin siis kaidehan se on [mut hand rail on kaide mut jos  
'yeah a rail (.) yeah so it is a rail but a hand rail is a rail but if'
- 12 K: [se on taas merkityksestä kiinni ja  
tulkitsemisesta vähän niinku Raamatun tulkitseminen että miten sitä  
tulkitsee  
'it depends on the meaning and  
interpretation again it's a bit like interpreting the Bible like how you  
interpret it'
- 13 J: aivan aivan taas päästään tähän  
'right right we come back to this again'
- 14 ((laughter))

We can see both the centripetal and centrifugal forces that Bakhtin describes in play here. While alternative sports have brought many new terms and expressions into being in Finland, often through modification and appropriation

of their English counterparts, there are, nevertheless, certain norms governing how such terms are modified and adopted into the community's language repertoire.

After their initial discussion about *pressi*, Kaspero moves on to discuss *reili* (line 2), another snowboarding jargon term used in Finland. Again, he shows his knowledge of the origin of the term when he first refers to its English equivalent and then starts to look for the Finnish translation: *reili on hand rail eli käsi käsi* ('reili is a handrail that is a hand hand'). At this point, Mikael provides another Finnish snowboarding term used to describe a handrail, *hänkkä*, which also derives from the original English term. Kaspero does not respond to Mikael's suggestion but asks for the translation for the second part of the English compound (line 4): *mikä reili on mikä rail on* ('what is reili what is rail'). In order to clarify that he is looking for the literal translation of the term into standard Finnish, he carefully pronounces *rail* [raɪl] according to Finnish phonetic rules. Consequently, they collaboratively negotiate on the correct Finnish translation.

Finally, despite Mikael's attempt to elaborate on the topic further, Kaspero ends the negotiation by explicating how meaning always depends on interpretation, just as the Bible can be interpreted in different ways. The reference to the Bible and its many interpretations at this point relates back to the discussion the community members had the previous evening on the role of women in the church. Their shared Christian identity is thus indexed as it provides another context – the Bible – where the community members encounter differences in interpretation. By making an intertextual link here between the interpretations of different snowboarding terms and readings of the Bible, Kaspero references the repertoire of their shared socio-cultural knowledge and acknowledges the heteroglossic and multi-voiced nature of their community. At the end of the exchange, Jasmin's response *aivan aivan taas päästään tähän* ('right right we come back to this again', line 13) is an ironic remark by which she seemingly acknowledges the point Kaspero is making but simultaneously, communicates her opinion on the absurdity of the comparison. The group members' laughter further indexes the incongruence of linking Biblical interpretation and ambiguities in the snowboarding lexicon.

Through this reflexive, metapragmatic activity, the participants are able to examine the intentional – denotative and expressive – dimensions of their professional jargon (Bakhtin 1981: 289). They evoke different voices of learning and knowing English, their expertise in the snowboarding lexical register, and ways of interpreting the jargon terms of interest. By contrasting the situated and socially indexical meanings of the terms with their literal translations, the participants come to terms with the limitations in the general expressive dimensions of their sports-related vocabulary. In this way, their discussion illustrates how the meaning of particular terms is created through mutual engagement in the participants' locally constructed socio-cultural spaces and how the challenges in interpretation can be contrasted across contexts.

## CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have presented an analysis of how heteroglossic language use can function as an important resource for constructing participation in a self-constituted community of practice. I argue that the community members studied here, Christian snowboarders in Finland, may draw on diverse language forms as well as different, even conflicting, socio-cultural and ideological voices as they seek to construct communality within their group. In particular, this study showed how young Christians living in a late-modern society face a variety of meanings associated with specific social issues, such as gender equality, in an intersection of different worldviews. They have grown up in Finland, a society where, at a global level, there is high gender equality in education, working life and political decision-making (Hausmann, Tyson and Zahidi 2012: 18). Thus, for them, equality between genders is of self-evident value. But they also aspire to live as Christians according to the teachings of the Bible, which may cause “tension-filled” situations in which they need to re-evaluate their values, knowledge and interpersonal subject positions (Morson and Emerson 1990: 52).

Linguistic heteroglossia is a significant resource for the young Christian snowboarders in tackling this challenge. By using different lexicons, registers, or textual sources, they are able to negotiate their subject positions as male or



female, experts or learners, or specifically, as Christians who are brought together by a shared interest in youth cultural activities of extreme sports. While the snowboarding camp provides the community members with a shared physical space for their mutual interaction, the communicative, socio-cultural space is actively created by their language use. It is worth emphasizing that the participants are active agents in these reflexive processes and are therefore able to both 'establish and transform existing contexts' (Lucy 1993: 21). The fact that they are young people or young adults, who both practice their Christian faith and are involved in the contemporary lifestyle activity of snowboarding, may be of consequence in a society where the younger generations in general do not consider religion as a meaningful part of their lives (Kääriäinen, Niemelä and Ketola 2003: 192-194). Counter to this trend, the young Christian snowboarders studied here actively base their meaning-making practices on religious ways of thinking.

A micro-level analysis that focuses on the use of highly indexical resources that may gain added value in the course of the participants' face-to-face interactions can contribute to understanding the role played in interaction by the phenomenon of heteroglossia. The community members can interpret specific questions from different perspectives and apply words from the Bible to their contemporary youth culture of snowboarding, for instance. Thus, during the snowboarders' situated local interactions, they in fact have a dialogue with many societal issues. As they strive to define their membership in the group, they are able to experiment in their responses to different authorial and ideological issues.

Humor is one means by which they can foreground a point of view while at the same time reserving the right to distance themselves from it. Playful interactions also serve to establish the participants' mutual relationships. The analysis of the Christian snowboarders' metapragmatic activities, often light-hearted or humorous, served to understand their reflections on their roles and identities, their negotiation of the community's practices and their evaluations of "what is right" from the point of view of their values, beliefs and knowledge (Eckert and Wenger 2005: 583).

Although the usefulness of the notion of a community of practice has been debated in sociolinguistics in recent years with respect to the problematic

issues of legitimacy, membership and peripherality (Davies 2005: 567; chapters in Barton and Tusting 2005), the value of the notion is that it enables the examination of locally produced meanings in the context of a complex set of memberships, practices and linguistic behaviors (Moore 2010: 133). The group of Christian snowboarders studied here is not governed by a religious institution, and therefore the participants must find their shared socio-cultural space ideal for contemplating different ways of thinking. They participate in the community's activities by strategically balancing between centripetal and centrifugal forces, the past and the present, and the standard and the creative in language. Ultimately, heteroglossia enables the members to interweave past, but still influential, voices into their meaningful present. As members of religious youth communities increasingly need to navigate, interpret and evaluate a diversity of ideological and identity-related meanings as part of their everyday and community lives, it is crucial to continue to examine the challenges of tradition and interpretation in contexts of religion and youth.

## NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> Since the community is relatively small and one of a kind in Finland, to protect the privacy of the participants, I do not specify their respective Christian affiliations.

<sup>3</sup> All names are pseudonyms.

<sup>4</sup> The translations for the Finnish Bible verses come from the New American Standard Bible. However, specific expressions needed a more precise translation and I have, therefore, consulted other translations, too. For example, the King James Version had the best correspondence of the expression "without wrath and doubting" (line 12 in example 2). With respect to the Finnish Bible, there are two principal translations, published in the years 1938 and 1992, currently in use. Here, the participants use the 1992 version, which is modern in style, and in relation to the passage analyzed in this paper corresponds to the text of the New American Standard Bible.

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## APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

.	downward intonation
?	rising intonation
<i>word</i>	reading (the Bible)
<u>word</u>	emphasis
WORD	speech that is louder than the surrounding talk
wor::d	a sound or a syllable is extended
(.)	micro pause
(1.5)	silence longer than a micro pause; length timed in tenth of a second
((laughs))	transcriber comment
[	beginning of overlapping speech
=	latching of talk
> word<	more rapid speech
@word@	animated voice
\$word\$	smiling or laughing voice



## IV

### **IDENTIFICATIONS THROUGH MULTIMODAL DESIGN: AN ANALYSIS OF THE MEDIATED PERFORMANCE OF CHRISTIAN LIFESTYLE SPORTS IN ONLINE VIDEO**

by

Saija Peuronen, 2014

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## Identifications through multimodal design: An analysis of the mediated performance of Christian lifestyle sports in online video

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### Abstract

Producing videos and posting them online are important activities for many young people who engage in lifestyle sports, such as snowboarding and skateboarding (see e.g. Jones 2011). As part of a sociolinguistic and ethnographic research project that investigates linguistic, semiotic and discursive practices by the members of Christian snowboarders in Finland, this paper focuses on online videos produced by the participants in this particular youth community. I analyze how the multimodal design of the videos contributes to the construction of various identifications with both religion and lifestyle sports. Specifically, the analysis illustrates how the Christian snowboarders' online videos function as mediated and mediatized performances. By making use of multimodal resources (such as music, image, gesture as well as aspects of framing and shot), the community members are able to construct specific narratives of their Christian journey. Furthermore, the videos serve to achieve the goals of their community: the video-making practices enable the Christian boarders to emphasize their sense of a shared community, invite other people interested in (snow)boarding to participate in their activities, and spread the Gospel to outsiders of the community. In this way, digital media can be strategically used and adapted for identificational and communicative purposes in youth communities.

### 1. Introduction

This paper will explore identifications constructed within a youth cultural and religious community of Christian (snow)boarders in Finland. The analysis will focus on amateur online videos produced by members of the community and in particular, the multimodal means provided by contemporary digital technologies for creating a mediated and mediatized performance. Thus, this study draws primarily on the theoretical frameworks provided by the sociolinguistics of performance (Bauman & Briggs 1990, Bauman 2000, 2011, Bell & Gibson 2011) and the social semiotic approach to multimodality (Kress 2010, Jewitt 2009). Since the construction of meaning in new media environments is characteristically multimodal, it is worth paying attention to the ways in which semiotic resources, in addition to language, are employed in online contexts. For instance, various modes, such as (moving) image, gesture, appearance and sound, are essential for the multimodal design of online videos.

According to Kress (2010: 23), by engaging in design, social actors participate in social and communicational contexts in a way that allows them to project their interests onto, and thus make an impact on, their socio-cultural environments. In the semiotic entity of an online video, social actors are able to introduce and conjoin specific discourses of relevance for them, and thus build identifications across cultures, lifestyles, ideologies and communities (see also Jousmäki on the websites of Christian metal bands, [this volume](#)). Hence, besides the multimodal products, it is equally important to observe social actors who engage in multi-semiotic online activities as part of their daily lives. For instance, the designing of online videos may function as a means of active cultural participation and contribute to building self-identifications and a sense of commonality and connectedness (see Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 18–20).

The group of young Finnish Christians who relate to each other by sharing an interest in different boarding activities, such as longboarding and snowboarding, form a specific *community of practice* (CoP) (Wenger 1998, Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992: 464; Holmes & Meyerhoff 1999: 175–177). The members of the community have a joint enterprise of functioning as Christians in the field of lifestyle sports: as an official member of the Finnish Snowboard Association (FSA) the community organizes events and camps both in Finland and abroad throughout the year, thus engaging together in boarding, Bible study and prayer. They also have certain repertoires of shared linguistic, semiotic and discursive resources at their disposal, which they employ in both in offline and online contexts (Peuronen 2011: 160; Peuronen 2013: 300).

The community has a core group of active members (c. 10–15 people) who take the lead in organizing e.g. the camps, making the practical arrangements and circulating information on their upcoming events. In a typical snowboarding or extreme sports camp in Finland there are around 50 participants, both teenagers

and young adults (aged broadly 13–35 years). The organization does not aim to make a profit and they therefore aspire to offer their sports activities at prices young people can afford so that as many people as possible can participate. Usually, there are participants from different parts of Finland and from abroad (the Finnish community forms a network with other similar Christian snowboarding communities in the Nordic Countries, Europe and the US). Creating and maintaining contacts through new media is therefore characteristic of the community (see e.g. Bergs 2006: 10–11 on the comparison of communities' offline and online communication). Online contexts also provide suitable environments and tools for reifying the Christian snowboarders' participation in their community's practices (Leppänen et al. 2014: 118–119, Stommel 2008: 15). They actively employ different textual, visual and multimodal resources in their online activities: for instance, the videos they make can be linked to the community's Facebook page when they advertise upcoming events. In this paper, to illustrate the processes of individual and communal identification with religion and lifestyle sports, I will focus on one individual who, as a member of the group, designs and produces online videos featuring the activities of e.g. longboarding and snowboarding. This individual boarder is one of the key figures in the community with regard to filming sports, producing videos and posting them online.

As regards young people's social media practices in general, online video provides a fascinating object of study since, in addition to the purposes outlined above, it functions as an important means for self-staging and self-stylization (Peters & Seier 2009: 188). Furthermore, as will be illustrated in this paper, online video may bridge the gap between "everyday" and "staged performance" (Bell & Gibson 2011: 557) and is therefore an illustrative example of the converging popular and participatory media cultures of today (Burgess & Green 2009: 13).

## **2. Design and performance: The construction of identifications in online videos**

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In this section, I will discuss how to approach the strategic and reflexive employment of modes through which these Christian snowboarders' online videos are designed and produced. Online video is both a focal cultural tool and a shared practice in the community of snowboarders, one through which they can relate to specific socio-cultural contexts and communicate their message to others. Designing online videos is thus a specific way for the community members to create "points of focus around which the negotiation of meanings becomes organized" (Wenger 1998: 58).

Furthermore, by focusing on design, it is possible to understand the skilful "control and deployment of communicative resources" that enables the social actors to engage in performance, which in turn can be seen as an important site for constructing identifications (Coupland 2003: 426). In the following, I will discuss the theoretical orientations of this study in more detail.

### **2.1 Designing semiotic entities**

In order for the Christian snowboarders to represent their ideas and actions from a specific perspective, they can create semiotic entities, such as online videos, by deciding to use a particular mode or modes for communicating meanings. According to Kress (2010: 65), an individual's interest guides the way in which a particular object or phenomenon is represented while at the same time revealing his or her position in the world. In this way, the snowboarders are able to produce a material realization of meaning (Iedema 2003: 40) which is here examined through the concept of design. Kress (2010: 132) defines the concept as follows: "Design is the process of translating the rhetor's politically oriented assessment of the environment of communication into semiotically shaped material".

Selecting a specific mode for communicating meaning also produces certain affordances and limitations (Burn & Parker 2003: 7). That is, social actors need to be familiar with the semiotic potential of modes, the social environments in which the modes may be used and also the affordances provided by the use of specific media to convey their message (Kress 2010: 137; Jones & Norris 2005: 5). For instance, through the medium of online video, the Christian snowboarders can get an audience for their performances, share their experiences with others, and promote their ideas and values. Indeed, in reference to the growing popularity of skateboarding and snowboarding, Jones (2011: 594) points out that these alternative sports are "culturally and structurally aligned to the postmodern mediascapes of today's youth". In other words, skateboarders actively engage in using digital technologies (digital cameras, video recorders and computers) as part of their sports activities. Stauff (2009: 247–248) observes that certain subcultural sports might benefit from the dynamics of video-sharing platforms, such as YouTube, since the practitioners of a certain sport could then easily share and compare their performances online.

The social semiotic approach to multimodality is useful for studying the various identifications the snowboarders convey through online video since it pays attention to social actors and the strategic choices that they make in reference to the semiotic resources available in their social and cultural environments. Indeed, within the social semiotic approach, “[t]he emphasis is on the sign-maker and their situated use of modal resources” (Jewitt 2009: 30). Signs and modes are therefore seen as open systems, continuously being remade in specific social contexts. To interpret the process of sign-making, it is necessary to make “detailed observational accounts” of the use of different modes (Jewitt 2009: 30). Since all modes have specific affordances for meaning-making, a semiotic entity can be arranged in a sequence in which the information that each mode carries is gradually unfolded (Kress 2010: 162). For example, in a short video, modes are strategically foregrounded through the process of design to fulfil the organizational function of the video, and in this way the message of the multimodal communication is intensified (Burn & Parker 2003: 6).

To be able to analyze the unfolding of meanings in the semiotic entity of an online video, I will draw on and apply the phasal analysis of Baldry and Thibault (2006). They emphasize that a film is not only “a sequence of alternating shots” but there are also “alternating turns between different voices” which may express different social positionings (Baldry & Thibault 2006: 184, also p. 211). Thus, the framework provides a practical analytical tool for unraveling the multimodal and filmic design of the videos and consequently, a tool for analyzing the acts of identification created at each phase of the Christian boarders’ online performances.

Finally, I will consider online video, including the multimodal performances of cultural activities, as an essential *cultural tool* through which social action is mediated in the community of Christian boarders. A cultural tool is a theoretical concept used in mediated discourse analysis to depict semiotic means which mediate between agents and their social worlds (Norris 2012, Norris & Jones 2005, Scollon 2001). The concept is useful because of its social relevance and multifunctional nature: a specific cultural tool may be embedded in the practices of a community and social actors can shape the use of cultural tools through creative engagement with them. Norris (2012: 115) observes that new media technologies are “[t]he most widely recognized cultural tools”. In skateboarding and snowboarding communities in general, the role of online video and the process of designing videos can be significant in terms of constructing identifications and belonging. Jones (2011: 593) describes how skateboarders may have a variety of functions in mind when filming and producing videos: they use video to “analyze tricks and techniques, to document the stages of their learning and socialization into the group, to set community standards” and “to build a sense of belonging with their ‘crews’”. These functions, among others, can serve as the basis for constructing a performance by the medium of online video.

## 2.2 Mediating performance

Designing online videos is a highly reflexive, even virtuosic activity. In order to address this reflexivity both during the process and in the product of the design, I will study the situated online events in the videos as performances through which specific identifications are expressed. As a theoretical concept in linguistic anthropology, performance has traditionally been applied to poetics and other creative ways of speaking or writing. Nevertheless, by way of putting specific expressive elements on display, amateur online videos can be seen as particular kinds of mediated performances (Bauman 2011: 717; Bauman & Briggs 1990: 73). Therefore, the concept of performance is well-suited also for the analysis of mediated action.

Bell and Gibson (2011: 557–558) distinguish between everyday performance and staged performance. According to their definition, media products are staged performances: they include planning and programming, they occur in a clearly delimited physical space and the form of the performance is likely to be evaluated by an audience. The design of the performance is therefore important. Despite being new media products and thus falling into the category of staged performances, amateur online videos also share characteristics with everyday performance. For example, although the social actors are performing in front of a camera, their performances might not be planned, scheduled or pre-announced. Indeed, with reference to language use, Bell and Gibson (2011: 559) point out that in mediatized societies today, performed and everyday language may have a very dynamic, circulating relationship. For example, Leppänen et al. (2014) show how individuals and groups in social media engage in processes of entextualizing and resemiotizing linguistic and semiotic material from one medium or context to another, and sometimes also attract their audiences to reflect the meanings produced by these circulations.

Performance in online videos is *mediated* by social actors, their appearance and embodied actions, the

material objects that they use, the set and the individuals' relations to other people in the shared socio-cultural space. At the same time, performance is also *mediatized* through technological aspects of design, such as the editing of the film footage, the choice of soundtrack, the display of different camera angles, and the embedding of narrative elements. Because of these strategic choices, the process is reflexive from beginning to end: it includes acquiring suitable camera equipment (especially suited for filming sports), the actual filming, the editing and finally, posting the completed products online.

The acts of making a video and posting it online may serve specific identificational purposes, and therefore I will here outline how the term identification can be understood and defined. In specifying the term, I follow Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 14), who describe identification as an active process by "the agents who do the identifying". Moreover, contrary to static definitions of identity, identification is seen as inherently connected to the situational and dynamic contexts of our contemporary social life (Coupland 2003: 427). In this paper, this processual perspective to identification complements and intertwines with the social semiotic view of multimodality and design, which focuses on the social processes of sign-making. In particular, identification is a fruitful analytical concept as it enables examination of the diversity of ways in which social actors construct positions, define memberships and represent activities in specific socio-cultural contexts. Throughout the making of an online video, the Christian boarders are in a creative and dynamic interaction with their social environment. Creativeness in performance is illustrated especially "when social actors exhibit a particular attention to and skills in the delivery of a message" (Duranti 1997: 16). For instance, snowboarders may communicate identificational meanings with their bodies through speech, gestures, movement or their appearance (cf. Burn & Parker 2003: 4). Furthermore, different written, filmic or musical elements incorporated in the design of a video may reveal something of the social actors' taste and affiliations.

Brubaker and Cooper (2000: 15) make an important distinction between relational and categorical identification: one's position may be defined in terms of a web of different types of kinship and relations, or one may identify oneself through membership in a group "sharing some categorical attribute". As regards relational identifications, the Christian snowboarders' videos may be analyzed in terms of their different audiences and functions. A video may be aimed at people sharing an interest in boarding activities and being affiliated with the specific lifestyle cultures, whether they are Christians or not. Additionally, a video may convey meanings about the Christian message to non-believers, or consolidate ideological togetherness between members of the snowboarding community. Either way, the videos reveal the affiliative intentions of their producers, and so relational identifications position the Christian snowboarders vis-à-vis their fellow community members or others whom they wish to invite to join their group. With respect to categorical identification, the snowboarders may construct meanings of belonging to a specific category, e.g. by the activities that are represented in their mediated performances. As a whole, identification presents an intriguing focus for a study on multimodal, new media-related meaning-making practices, especially in terms of understanding how young people in a late-modern society seek to represent themselves and make an impact on their social environment through participation in activities of youth culture and religion.

### 3. Data and methods

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As data, I will use short videos that members of a community of Christian (snow)boarders in Finland have produced by filming their snowboarding and other boarding activities and editing the video footage. Finally, they have posted the finished products online. I have collected a corpus of 26 online videos produced in 2011-2014. Typically, these videos are documentary narratives of the snowboarders' trips abroad or to camps in Finland and they include the use of a range of different modes. Videos by individual community members are also included in the corpus: these videos mostly document the individual's travels on roads or slopes. For a detailed analysis, I have chosen two representative videos, which feature the boarding activities of an individual longboarder and of a group of snowboarders. [1] In addition to the primary video corpus, I have collected a few videos produced by a separate group of Christian skateboarders in Finland. In these videos, the skateboarders mainly demonstrate their mastery of different skateboarding techniques.

In terms of the online video material analyzed in this paper, I have worked closely with the producer of the videos, and thus engaged in a dialogical research project in which ethnographic interlocutors can act as partners and make a significant contribution to the issues addressed in the project (Bauman & Briggs 1990: 66). I have been able to follow the making of the videos, and during the process the video producer has explained to me every step of what is going on. He has also explicated his views in interviews and informal

conversations on the purposes of filming sports and other activities of the community.

#### 4. Analysis

In this section, I will analyze two online videos produced by one Christian boarder. I will examine the co-occurrence and arrangement of different modes, such as music, spoken and written language, movement, gesture, set, appearance, shot and framing (see the modes in mediated performances outlined by Bell & Gibson 2011: 566–567; Burn & Parker 2003: 19–23) and consider how the meanings thus produced contribute to the construction of individual and communal identifications within this community of Christian snowboarders.







##### 4.1 Example 1: “Jesus, I roll with Thee” – Individual identifications

The first semiotic event is illustrated in a video posted on both Vimeo and YouTube. [2] As indicated by the title (“First day with my new ContourHD 1080p”), the overall purpose of the video is to illustrate and document the testing of a new camera while longboarding. The total length of the video is 1 minute 47 seconds. The film starts with the opening credits: the producer’s artist name, the title of the film, the name of the song used for the soundtrack and the date of production (phase 1 in Figure 1). Thus, written language serves an introductory function in the video. After the opening credits, the film features different camera angles, which are used to record the longboarding. The video consists of one continuous shot: the longboarder is holding the camera in his hand and varying his positions on the board. In this way, the varying camera angles serve the purpose of testing the camera. In addition to the moving image of riding a board, there is electro music that is used as a soundtrack. Other socio-cultural meanings are further expressed by gestural, visual and linguistic means.

In the following illustration (Figure 1), the use of different semiotic resources has been described in different phases in the short film (see Baldry & Thibault 2006: 54). I have divided this particular film into 11 different analytical units, i.e. phases which “make use of a distinctive copatterning of meaning options in order to create the meanings of that phase” (Baldry & Thibault 2006: 50). Figure 1 gives an overview of the phases, their duration, examples of the visual framing in each phase, and a textual description of the actions and semiotic signs featured in the video. A description of the soundtrack is also included in the figure.



Phase	Duration	Visual Frame (framing and shot)	Textual description of a phase: movement, gesture, semiotic signs	Soundtrack
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1	00:00–00:08		Opening credits.	A cut from a song (the song is not specified in the video, music style: drum and bass)
2	00:08–00:18		The video shows the bike/pedestrian lane along which the longboarder is riding.	A cut from another song ('Double Happiness')  Bass and drums are played on the synthesizer.
3	00:18–00:23		As he rides, the longboarder turns the camera to his feet, his body and face. He smiles. Clothes and safety equipment (knee pads and a helmet) are visible.	The song continues (uncut until the end of the video)  Bass and drums.
4	00:23–00:36		He turns the camera back to the road and rides from the pedestrian lane to the center of the road.	Piano is added to the bass and drums.
5	00:36–00:40		He films his feet on the board while he zigzags the white road markings.	Steady rhythm continues.
6	00:40–00:46		He turns the camera back to the horizon.	Steady rhythm continues.  Piano sounds become intensified.

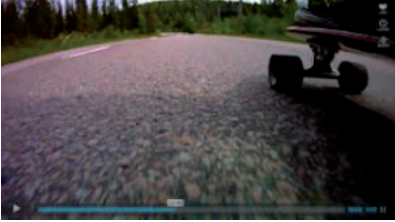


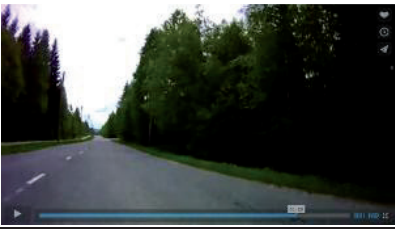
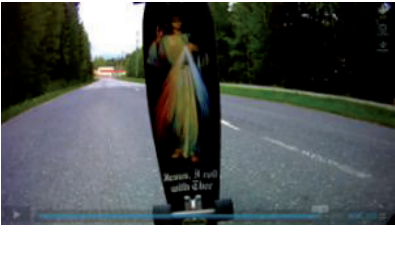
7	00:46–00:55		He bends down to shoot footage from the wheel level.	Steady rhythm continues.  Piano sounds still foregrounded.
8	00:55–01:14		He stands up and after a while, the road turns right.	Drums become more prominent.  Addition of another sound on the synthesizer.
9	01:14–01:26		After the bend he bends down again and directs the camera to his front foot and the nose of the board.	The soundtrack continues as before.  Toward the end, high piano notes are heard.
10	01:26–01:33		He stands up and starts to slow down, and finally, he jumps off the board.	The piano becomes more prominent as other sounds gradually diminish.
11	01:33–01:47		He turns the camera to face the board, and lifts its nose. He films the underside of his deck which has an image of Christ standing on a skateboard and the phrase "Jesus, I roll with Thee" printed on it.	Toward the end, sporadic sounds of piano, bass, and drums.

Figure 1. Phases in the video.

The different phases outlined in Figure 1 can be distinguished by observing the transition points between them. In this video the transitions are realized by changing the camera angles during the one continuous shot of which the film is composed. The changing camera angles also coincide with changes in the longboarder's movements. Thus, in this particular film, the design of the modes is used to construct a performance from the social actor's subjective point of view: the film features his longboarding while he also acts as the cameraman and the editor of the video. In terms of constructing the performance, the most significant modes in this video are framing, shot, movement, image and written language. Additionally,



other modes that support the meanings conveyed in the video include music, set, gesture and appearance. With the help of the table above (Figure 1), the co-occurrence of different modes within the phases can be examined.

The longboarder uses so-called “mobile framing” (the camera movement) and a “subjective shot” (first-person camera) (Bordwell & Thompson 1997: 243, 267) as he rides along the road with the camera attached to his hand. Movement is conveyed by providing changing camera angles within the shot and while longboarding. For the most part, the camera films the road, but at times the camera lens focuses on the board and the longboarder’s feet. In phase 3, the longboarder turns the camera from his feet to his face, thus showing the person behind the camera. He gives a wide smile and turns the camera back to the road. Capturing the moving image from a subjective point of view allows the viewer to get an idea of the speed and movement of the boarder. For instance, by paying attention to the passing scenery, one is able to see how the boarder slows down and jumps off the board (in phase 10). In the final phase, he lifts up the nose of the board and carefully films the image of Christ standing on a skateboard and the text “Jesus, I roll with Thee” printed on the underside of the board.

The transition point between phases 10 and 11 (the moment when the longboarder turns to show what is printed on the bottom of his board) establishes a dramatic moment within the film: the image and the text printed on the board together illustrate a material realization of a meaning (Iedema 2003: 42). Hence, the longboarder’s story is dramatized by revealing the semiotic signs on his board. The archaic use of language (‘Thee’) and the icon-like image of Christ which are here being recontextualized (see e.g. Silverstein & Urban 1996: 2) and combined with the late-modern activity culture of longboarding, contribute to the longboarder’s individual identifications with religion and youth culture. By including specific religious signs in the video in a culturally appropriate way, he represents himself as an ideologically conscious young person who is also a legitimate participant in the activities of longboarding. His action shows how semiotic objects may sometimes become the material representations of specific discourses with which social actors wish to associate themselves. How this operates is explained for example by Kress (2010: 113):

“Semiotic objects, whether as buildings, written texts, stories casually told, films, gardens and their layout, video games, the layouts and contents of museums and supermarkets are the material sites for the conjoining of discourses and their emergence in material and naturalized form.”

In this particular case, the discourse thus encountered is Christianity: capturing the Christian imagery and text on the board on the video help the longboarder to construct an “explicit discursive articulation” of himself as both an expert longboarder and a devoted Christian (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 18). Moreover, since the board is used within a mediated performance, the act of turning the board in order to reveal its underside “opens up a reflexive space” (Bell & Gibson 2011: 562) in which the audience of the video are invited to observe the activities depicted in the video from a new and so far probably unexpected perspective. While constructing an affiliation with Christianity, the longboarder at the same time identifies himself as a messenger of the Gospel within boarding sports. This is achieved by deliberately making use of the semiotic resources of Christianity which are placed on the material object of a longboard to convey to others a specific ideological viewpoint. The reflexivity of the act is further illustrated by the mediated aspects of the design and framing. The camera moves to capture a close shot of the print, after which the camera lens zooms in on the board from top to bottom, focusing on the text under the image of Christ, and then zooms out to include the entire board in the picture. A heightened awareness of the multiple meanings and representations of self is being raised and in this way, through the strategic choices made in terms of the design of the video, the film captures some of the characteristics of a mediated staged performance. In the remainder of this section, I will discuss how the interplay of different modes supports individual identifications with longboarding as a form of cultural and religious practice.

In addition to the text printed on the longboard, written language features in the opening credits, the title and the description of the video. Written language is used to communicate the purpose of the film and the description gives technical details about the testing of the camera, the specific location, the placement of the camera and the technology used for editing the video. The language used in all these instances is English, which targets the video for a global audience of longboarders (especially those interested in filming sports). Indeed, in an interview, the video producer explained his use of Finnish and English and how these languages target different audiences. However, he also remarked that he does not usually use written language for narrating the story in a video but he lets “the visual speak for itself”. He thus

recognizes the symbolic and identificational value of the visual in representing oneself in digital environments (Jones 2011: 602–603).

Furthermore, the set “provides a context *within* the performance” (Bell & Gibson 2011: 566). The discourse of Christianity constructed by the image and words on the board has been placed in context in this short film. The video was filmed in the Finnish countryside: the longboarder rides along a road which is mainly surrounded by dense green trees. There are power lines at one side of the road, lamp posts, traffic signs, some bus stops, the occasional house, and a construction site. The long empty road in the middle of the Finnish countryside is not meaningful only in the context of longboarding, but it can also be interpreted as a more metaphorical symbol of a “Christian journey”. This interpretation is possible when the road is examined as a semiotic sign together with the Christian message on the board. The ending of the video sets the film’s narrative in a new interpretive frame: the longboarder’s actions can be retroactively seen from a specific ideological context. Hänninen (2004: 80) discusses how snowboarders may recycle elements from specific value systems to recontextualize meanings into their own local situations, and in particular, how visuality in stylistic expression can serve for reflections of ideology. Therefore, studying signs in each mode and in combination with each other helps to build the interpretation of a mediated performance in its entirety. Additionally, the reading of a Christian journey is supported by interviews with members of the community. Many of them mention in interviews that boarding activities are also a spiritual experience for them. For instance, while snowboarding, they can pray, contemplate personal issues and spend time alone with God. At the same time, they may give praise to God for the possibilities of enjoying the nature He has created.

Music also constitutes an important element in the multimodal, mediated performance and has a significant role in contributing to the meanings constructed in the video. Specific songs have been chosen at the editing stage as the soundtrack of the film. In an interview, the video-maker specified that he usually searches for free music online. In this case, there are two musical pieces in the soundtrack: one song has been cut together with the opening credits of the film and another song, called “Double Happiness” by Beyond, has been used to provide a musical landscape for the activity of longboarding. The song is an instrumental electro tune that provides a rhythm for the different parts and actions performed in the video. It creates a musical background for the story, with a gradually growing use of sounds and instruments as the longboarder’s journey goes on. Toward the end of the video, the use of instruments falls back to what it was in the initial stage, with only monotonous sounds from the bass, drums and piano played at long intervals on a synthesizer. In this way, the similar musical landscape at the beginning and at the end of the video provides a structure for the physical activity of longboarding: the music is minimal when the movement is starting up or slowing down, and the music intensifies as the movement increases. In terms of meaning-making practices, Baldry and Thibault (2006: 215) point out that the “multimodal integration of different sources of rhythm” should be interpreted as one meaningful unit. Indeed, by creating this rhythmic entity, the longboarder is able to emphasize the identifications he constructs by symbolically representing an individual’s journeys through life. The different ways of representation in the film, the passing forest scenery together with a varying but unbroken musical background, and finally the revealing of the semiotic signs on the board, contribute to his identification with Christian lifestyle sports. Furthermore, at the same time, the song entitled “Double happiness” conveys an idea of enjoyment with his youth cultural and religious lifestyle.

Finally, the appearance of the longboarder also affects the interpretation of the cultures associated with the mediated performance. In the video, the longboarder wears sneakers, loose jeans, a casual shirt, a fish necklace, and the appropriate safety equipment (knee pads and a helmet). The wearing of a necklace symbolizing a fish (a Christian symbol for Jesus) can be interpreted together with the message written under the board. Both these signs, the necklace and the message under the board, together with the mobile framing and subjective shot of his longboarding that animate the first-person phrase “Jesus, I roll with Thee”, illustrate the longboarder’s self-identification with active Christianity.

In sum, the identifications that are being constructed and performed in this video include representing oneself as a skilled boarder and a participant in boarding culture. The video-maker displays knowledge, skills and expertise in longboarding, in the camera equipment needed for filming lifestyle sports, and in editing film footage into a finished product. He also represents himself as a Christian believer for whom boarding can be seen as a form of religious practice. Longboarding is a way for him to symbolically embark on a Christian journey in which Jesus accompanies him.

**4.2 Example 2: “My best friends beside me” – Communal identifications**

In addition to constructing identifications with Christianity and (long)boarding from an individual perspective, the members of the Christian snowboarders use online videos to represent the affiliations and activities of their entire community. These representations serve both to establish the snowboarders’ relationship with each other as members of a community of practice (Wenger 1998: 184) and to invite others to join their activities. The analysis of the following example, focusing on a video made during a snowboarding camp that the community held in Finland, illustrates the ways in which specific relational identifications are constructed. The snowboarders filmed the material while they were on the slope, and later the filmed footage was edited and the finished products were posted on their website. [3] The material was put together and edited by the same individual who produced the video analyzed in the first example.







The film features several snowboarders and their embodied actions on the slope. Mediated performance is constructed through their movement (individually or as a group), gestures, facial expressions, appearance and handling of objects. Other modes that are drawn on in order to create meanings include music (Finnish hip hop), speech and the set. Hence, we can identify many of the same elements in this video that were already seen in the video discussed in the first example. However, whereas in the first example the longboard served as a semiotic object by which the Christian discourse and ideology were introduced, in this video the song lyrics play an essential role in conjoining the discourses of Christianity and snowboarding. For instance, in specific shots the moving image is carefully synchronized with the lyrics of the song to create meaningful connections between the different modes, and ultimately, identifications with the shared values and interests of the group.

In this example, the purpose of the video is to document the activities of the snowboarders and capture their sense of a shared community. Hence, the motive for producing the video differs from that in the first example and the modes are therefore organized and used somewhat differently. For example, instead of written opening credits, there is a visual introduction of the snowboarders, with a long shot of them waiting for the ski lift. That is, both human figures and the surroundings are visible in the framing (Bordwell & Thompson 1997: 238). This framing gives an overall idea of the participants, the location and the activity. Following this, the camera focuses on four snowboarders, showing consecutive close shots of their faces. Their expressions are either playful or smiling. Additionally, at the beginning of the video, one of the snowboarders asks the others a question: “Mikä fiilis?” (‘How are you feeling?’) to which the others reply: “Hyvä” and “Paras” (‘Good’ and ‘The best’). Therefore, during the first 17 seconds of the video, multiple modes (varying aspects of framing, the social actors and their facial expressions, speech) are used to introduce the video. By introducing themselves, the snowboarders create performer roles for themselves and thus align themselves toward an audience.

Figure 2 presents the different phases in the video. Clear transition points occur between shots since the shots are usually filmed by different people with different framings and camera angles. Transitions from one phase to another also occur when there are changes in the song that is used as a soundtrack.



Phase	Duration	Visual Frame	Textual description	Soundtrack
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1	00:00–00:07		A long shot of the snowboarders	A snowboarder (the one who is filming) asks the others how they are
2	00:07–00:17		Close head shots from four snowboarders	A rhythmic whistle (synced to the back-and-forth movement of the camera)  Intro of the song begins
3	00:17–00:32		Mobile framing: a snowboarder rides down the hill, there are two snowboarding obstacles on the way	Intro of the song, including a couple of lines in English.
4	00:32–00:44		Mobile framing continues: the snowboarder rides down the hill	Lyrical part of the song begins
5	00:44–00:55		Three snowboarders ride a specific snowboarding obstacle	Lyrics continue
6	00:55–01:07		Mobile framing: a snowboarder films himself riding down the hill	Lyrics continue

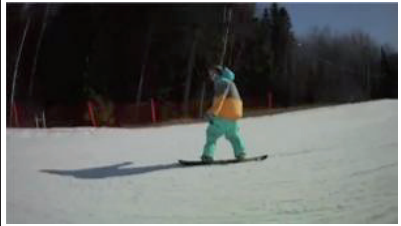

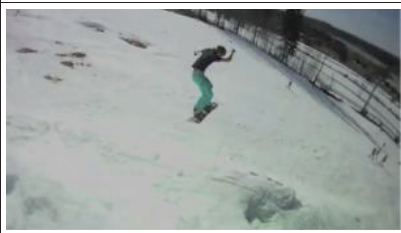

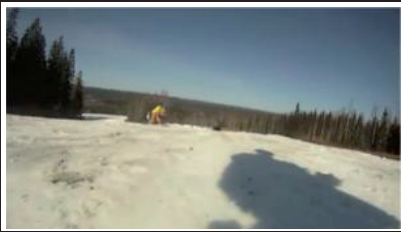

7	01:07–01:19		Camera turns to the person riding next to him	Lyrics: “Mul on niin kivaa / parhaat kaverit vierellä” (I’m having a good time / my best friends beside me).
8	01:19–01:44		Mobile framing: a snowboarder films himself riding down the hill	Bridge of the song, including a couple of lines in English.  Finnish lyrics continue.
9	01:44–01:54		Five snowboarders ride a particular jump on the hill one after another	Lyrics continue
10	01:54–02:09		A snowboarder attaches a camera on his board	Lyrics continue
11	02:09–02:18		Mobile framing: shot from the camera on the board when the snowboarder jumps a particular obstacle	Lyrics end  Outro of the song begins.
12	02:18–02:32		A snowboarder leaning against the board while on a ski lift	Outro of the song, including a couple of lines in English.

Figure 2. Phases in the video.

The video highlights the snowboarders' connectedness (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 20) through its design as a multimodal entity. The snowboarders have used different techniques for filming their embodied actions: they employ a subjective shot and mobile framing to film their own riding and other community members on the slope. In addition to mobile framing, where the camera is on the move, there are two occasions where the camera is not moving but it focuses on a specific snowboarding obstacle which the snowboarders ride one after another (phases 5 and 9). This framing also reinforces the sense of belonging to a group: the people in the video engage in the same activity, e.g. jumping a hill one after another. They have shared knowledge of how to engage with each other and use the resources of the community to participate in the communal activity (Wenger 1998: 152–153). By constructing this collective representation through moving image, the snowboarders perform and display their relational ties to each other.

Furthermore, music and the song lyrics consolidate the communal position constructed in the video. The song used as a soundtrack is a Finnish rap/hip hop song in which discourses of friendship, God, and leading a Christian life have been verbalized. The song is representative of its genre since it incorporates different sonic and verbal elements, including a few lines in English which have been mixed together with the Finnish lyrics (see Pennycook 2007: 88–89 on sampling as a cultural practice in hip hop). The song, again, provides a musical background and rhythm for the activities performed in the video. There is one instance in particular (the beginning of phase 7 at 01:07) where the co-occurring modes of song lyrics and moving image form a meaningful unit. In this sequence, one of the snowboarders turns the camera from himself to the person riding next to him at exactly the same time as the line "parhaat kaverit vierellä" ('my best friends beside me') is articulated in the song lyrics.

### Song lyrics

"Mul on niin kivaa / parhaat kaverit vierellä / kulkee samaa tietä / tiedetään et Jumala ei itseään kiellä / vaan on uskollinen / tahtoo meidän parasta / ei tarvi olla arkana"

*"I'm having a good time / my best friends beside me / on the same road with me / we know that God doesn't deny himself / but He is faithful / He wants the best for us / we don't have to be afraid"*

As the mediated, embodied action of snowboarding side by side with one's friends and the song lyrics about walking together on the same road are carefully synchronized, identification with both the community of snowboarders and the Christian way of life is merged in the design of the video. New meanings are attached to the lyrics in this particular context and thus again, by way of creating a mediated performance with multimodal resources, the ideas about the Christian journey are made meaningful in this snowboarding community. Whereas in the first example one's personal relationship to Christ was foregrounded, in this case the importance of friends who will share the journey is emphasized.

Although online videos can have a significant function in building a sense of belonging with one's 'crew' (Jones 2011: 593), it can also serve to welcome new people into the group. The choice of language indicates that the video is intended for local Finnish audiences. In addition to the snowboarders' comments in Finnish at the beginning of the film and the Finnish song used as a soundtrack, Finnish is also used in the description attached to the video. In this way, the video is first and foremost used as a source for local communal identification and a way of reaching Finnish audiences.

Many of the characteristics of a staged performance are also observable when the snowboarders do tricks and jumps on the hill. Judging from many of the shots, the snowboarders construct their performance to entertain their audience (Bell & Gibson 2011: 557). The snowy hill and the snowboarding obstacles function as their stage, and the snowboarders either direct their gaze at the audience (via the camera lens) or the audience is guided to direct their gaze at the snowboarders (as they focus on specific tricks, jumps, or ways of snowboarding). Additionally, by showing the handling of the camera equipment in the video, the audience is being familiarized with the "making of" the film.

Thus, reaching out to other snowboarders gives a specific, missionary purpose to the community's online videos. By using the cultural tool of online video to represent the group's identifications with youth cultural practices of hanging out, having fun with friends, listening to rap music and engaging in snowboarding, the community is able to portray itself as welcoming anyone who shares these interests. Indeed, when I interviewed the video-maker and one other community member during the camp and asked questions

about the reasons for making videos, they said the videos function as a way to present the community's activities to other people and in this way, invite them to join their group. In the following extract from the interview, the two community members make their views clear.

#### Interview extract

A: The video maker, B: Another community member, S: The researcher

- A:** sitä on mukava saada sitte julkastavaks matskua ku tietää että sitä kautta on helppo esimerkiksi houkutella porukkaa mukaan  
*is nice to get material published when you know that it's an easy way to attract people to come along*
- S:** niin joo hmm  
*right yeah hmm*
- B:** et kattokaa meillä on näin kivaa  
*like see how much fun we have*
- S:** niinpä  
*yes*
- A:** niin sit ku näkee et ne ei oikeesti oo kaikki niitä Lennart [...] jotka heittää mitä tahansa mistä tahansa  
*yeah and when you see that they aren't all these Lennart [...] who ride whatever wherever*
- B:** niin  
*yeah*
- S:** niin justiin (.) niin et kaikki mitä laittaa niihin videoihin ei tarvi olla just niitä parhaita [temppuja, lautailijoita]  
*yes right (.) so everything you include in the videos does not have to be the best [tricks, boarders]*
- A:** niin siellä on nimenomaan niinku kerätty leiriläisistä laajasta otosta  
*yeah we have purposefully collected material from as many participants as possible*
- S:** joo  
*yeah*
- B:** et siel voi olla niitä pro pro lautailijoita kans ja niinku hienoi hyppyjä ja isoi ilmoi mut sitte on kans just...  
*so that you can have the pro the pro riders also there and like great jumps and big airs but then you also have the...*
- A:** just sitä pienempää  
*the smaller*

According to these views, the two community members see producing and posting videos online as serving the community's aim to invite new people to participate in their activities. They want to emphasize that one does not have to be especially skilled to be able to join their group. In this way, they construct the community as a group of people who are united by their shared interest in snowboarding but also by other communal activities, such as having fun and spending time together. These views correspond to the aspects accentuated by the mediated, staged performance in the online video analyzed above.

Together the different semiotic resources help to build an image of the individual snowboarders forming a group and illustrate the ways in which they perform their connectedness. This point is supported by their behavior when they gathered together to watch the edited videos in the snowboarding camp. Instead of evaluating specific techniques, they focused on the feeling conveyed by the video. For example, at the end of the film, many of them paid attention to the extremely relaxed manner in which one of the snowboarders had positioned himself (leaning against the board) while riding on the ski lift. They expressed their appreciation of the casual feeling the shot conveys and their willingness to learn this particular "trick" too. Overall, video, as a specific kind of communal practice, functions to enhance the participants' lived experiences in and belonging to the community.

In sum, the identifications expressed in this short video are first and foremost relational, constructing a sense of groupness between the snowboarders. In addition to the actual ties between the members of the local community of Christian snowboarders, the mediated performance of their communal activities

(boarding, having fun, spending time together) conveys an idea of a community in which others could also join. Thus, they build translocal identifications with the community of practice of (Christian) snowboarders more broadly. Finally, the snowboarders identify themselves as missionaries for whom boarding and the representation of the activities of their community is a way of spreading the Gospel.

## 5. Conclusion

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In this article, I have examined identifications that Christian (snow)boarders in Finland construct through strategically employed semiotics in the online videos that they themselves make. Through a detailed analysis of the multimodal design of two online videos, I have attempted to show how multiple individual and communal identifications are constructed as part of the snowboarders' mediated and mediatized performances. In terms of the categorical attributes and their relational ties (Brubaker & Cooper 2000: 15), the Christian snowboarders draw on various modal resources to depict themselves as individuals with a religious, Christian worldview and as legitimate members of longboarding and snowboarding communities both locally and globally. Moreover, in addition to focusing on the video-making practices within this specific community, this study also contributes to the ongoing discussion about including analyses of multimodality and mediation in the sociolinguistic studies of performance (Bell & Gibson 2011, Bauman 2011, see also Thurlow & Jaworski 2011).

As far as lifestyle sports are concerned, physicality, materiality and visuality are important means for meaning-making in e.g. skateboarding and snowboarding communities (Jones 2011: 594, Wheaton 2004: 7–9; Hänninen 2004: 75). Video therefore seems an obvious choice for constructing identifications in such communities. As regards the social history, structure and ideology of online video as a cultural tool, Jones (2011: 597) observes that in alternative sports, and especially in skateboarding, online video continues the "long tradition of self-publication", which gives the participants themselves control of their sport. As illustrated in this paper, members of the community of Christian boarders in Finland have certain recurrent, typical ways of using different modes and representing themselves through online videos. Often they draw on established video-making conventions, but at the same time modify them to suit their own communicative and identificational purposes in their local contexts. For instance, in terms of music, the videos analyzed in this paper are similar to other videos in the skateboarding or snowboarding video genre, since music has been given an important role in creating a rhythm for the actions performed in the video narratives (see Jones 2011: 598–599). Especially in the second example, music functions as a locally meaningful resource for meaning-making in the snowboarders' community of practice. By synchronizing music lyrics with the modal resources of framing and shot, the community members are able to convey meanings about a Christian journey, i.e. their shared religious worldview. The analysis of the first video showed that framing and shot synchronized with gesture and image communicates similar meanings. At the same time, the unfolding of meanings through the design of the videos also invites others to identify themselves with the Christian way of life. Thus, the religious meanings conveyed by the multimodal representations of particular personal points of view and the community members' social relations give these lifestyle sports videos a special character.

Similarly, Jousmäki ([this volume](#)) points out how Christian metal bands draw on traditional metal imagery on their websites but modify specific symbols in order to create meanings suitable for their Christian values and potential missionary agendas. Hence, when carrying out a sociolinguistic study on language use and meaning-making practices in the local context of a community of practice, to gain a more rounded picture of the expressive resources available to community members, it is worth paying attention to multimodal aspects of communication. In this case in particular, an attention to multimodality allowed me to discover meanings associated with lifestyle sports as a form of religious and spiritual practice.

Furthermore, Bell and Gibson (2011: 565) point out that "[e]ach performance confirms or develops the genre, often both in the same performance". In terms of being narratives of their Christian journey, the videos by the Christian boarders in Finland have similarities to online videos of Christian lifestyle sports in general. Thus, they represent a specific "field of computer-mediated discourse" (Androutsopoulos 2008: 5) in which Christian imagery and language (either spoken, written or sung) are used to construct both individual conviction and identifications with one's 'crew'. However, communities might have different emphases in terms of their communicative goals. The community studied in this paper puts considerable emphasis on constructing their communality while, by way of comparison, another Finnish Christian skateboarding group whose videos I have also examined aims to highlight more their expertise in skateboarding skills and style. Hence, for the Christian snowboarders in Finland, online video functions as



a cultural tool not only for the mediation of action, but also for achieving their goals as a community of practice. More specifically, these goals include constructing their sense of a shared community, inviting other snowboarders or people interested in snowboarding to participate in their activities, and spreading the Gospel to outsiders of the community. It is, therefore, possible to identify the global missionary discourse which is being constructed in the videos. Spreading the Gospel is one of the social reasons for the activities of the community, and with the affordances provided by the video format and the community members' competence in engaging in the process of design, semiotic objects and the cultural activities of the group can be drawn on to deliver the message.

Finally, since digital media are often an integral part of the cultures of skateboarding and snowboarding, and filming one's activities is everyday reality for many participants in lifestyle sports, the distinction between everyday and mediated staged performances becomes obscure. This convergence of media cultures allows the participants to reflect on how they "see themselves as they are and as they might be" (Bauman 2011: 715). In their mediated and mediatized performances, the Christian boarders are able to draw on the knowledge of their shared socio-cultural contexts to relate to their possibly divergent audiences and to each other in their local communities, and ultimately, to illustrate their relationship to God through the multimodal design of online video.

### Notes

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[1] The data examples analyzed in this paper are based on a larger study of a community of Christians interested in lifestyle sports in Finland. Sociolinguistic, discourse analytic and ethnographic perspectives are combined in the analysis of the linguistic, semiotic and discursive practices in the community. As an ethnographic observer and participant, I have moved from studying the community's online interactions to participating in offline encounters, and then moved back to examining their online environments. In addition to the examination of their video-making practices, the study encompasses the analyses of multilingual writing practices in one of the community's web discussion boards (Peuronen 2011), participant observation, recordings and interviews in offline settings (in snowboarding camps in which I have engaged in the activities of the community together with the other participants) (Peuronen 2013). At each stage, I have contacted and informed key actors in the community about my research and the ways in which I treat the data. In terms of the videos analyzed in this paper, the individuals who are most visible and thus potentially recognizable in the two videos have given their permission to include the videos in this research article.

[2] The video is available at <http://vimeo.com/12148144> and [http://youtube.com/watch?v=U4v9-qL\\_WEO](http://youtube.com/watch?v=U4v9-qL_WEO).

[3] The video is available at <http://vimeo.com/22833921>.

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