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Abstract: *Utilizing Erikson's (1963) psychosocial ego identity development theory, 28 qualitative interviews with religiously devout Americans are analyzed to determine different patterns of adult spiritual identity. Following an integrationist approach, we provide response to the question, "What types of identity development are accommodated, promoted, or prohibited by particular models of Christian education and the educational communities that embody them?" Recognizing individual differences in (a) the social and contextual factors that affect identity formation, (b) the way religious doubts are resolved, and (c) what individuals seek from community, we offer important implications for religious educators and Christian institutions of higher education.*

Introduction

Evangelical Christian educators face the perennial task of upholding a viable orthodoxy while also integrating insights from the social sciences into educational theory and practice. Current texts in the field focusing on foundational issues in Christian education provide helpful strategies for integrating biblical, historical, philosophical, and theological groundings with sociological and psychological perspectives on human development (Anthony, 2001; Burgess, 2001; Pazmiño, 1997). In our current context, educators and theorists who follow the sweeping changes occurring in Western culture have focused increased attention on the growing challenge in our society of forming and sustaining a sense of identity (Arnett, 2004; Côté & Levine, 2002, Van Wicklin, 1994). Evangelical educators focused on establishing Christian identity have called for the following: (a) a reinstatement of practices that bestow Christian identity (Blevins, 2005); (b) a consideration of divine self-donation as the crux of identity construction and social relations (Volf, 1996); and (c) a practical theology that norms the ego's incorporation into the divine passion of the Trinity (Dean, 2004). Following an integrationist approach, we seek in this article to bring Christian educators into a conversation with current identity theorists and researchers. By identifying different patterns of spiritual identity construction, we pose the question, "What types of identity development are accommodated, promoted, or prohibited by particular models of Christian education and the educational communities that embody them?"

Models of Christian Education

In his book *Models of Religious Education* (2001), Harold Burgess traces the historic development of prototypes of Christian education that have been predominant in the church. He notes, for example, how the *historic* prototype, centered on transmitting the salvific message of the early church, shifted radically when autonomous personality, freedom, and the scientific method exalted by the Enlightenment issued in a *liberal* model of religious education. He traces 19th and 20th century movements that reclaimed the need of learners to have a right relationship with God, positing the importance of the revelatory fellowship of the church *(mainline)* or the heralding of a message as central to religious education (*evangelical/kerygmatic)*. He describes Lee's (1971) *social science* prototype as a model that claims religious learning is equivalent to any other learning process, subject to empirical investigation and evaluation.

Without question, models of religious education through the ages have become increasingly dimensioned socially and educationally, and concomitantly the tools of psychology and sociology have come to wield greater influence in models and assessments of Christian education. For example, learning style theory focuses on differences in the way individuals perceive and process information (Lefever, 1995). Praxis theory argues that personality develops in dialogue between people and suggests that through critical consciousness social realities can be changed (Friere, 1998; Groome, 1980). Parker Palmer (1998) emphasizes that the quality of one's teaching depends on the formation or deformation of one's selfhood. The Faithful Change and Taking Values Seriously projects conducted by the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) utilize social science conceptualizations in assessing the mission of their institutions (http://www.cccu.org).

We seek in this article to expand the dimensionality of what Burgess termed the *evangelical/kerygmatic* model by integrating research accomplished through social science (Burgess, 2001). Representative theorists of this approach in various ways have promoted the task of integration (Joy, 1969; Pazmiño, 1997) so long as a clear priority to the determinative force of theology is maintained. The data that we present illustrate that individuals construct their sense of spiritual identity upon differing components of Burgess's prototypic scheme. Erikson's (1963) psychosocial ego identity development theory is particularly useful in understanding variations in the meaning of spirituality that our data indicate are characteristic of some devout contemporary Americans. Our findings regarding individual differences in the structure of spiritual identity have implications for models of Christian education. Our hope is that Christian educators can use identity theory and research on how contemporary individuals form and sustain a sense of spiritual self when considering to what degree their mission is being achieved.

Erik Erikson's View of the Spiritual/Moral Adult

Although focused primarily on the formation and transformation of internal ego identity structure, Erikson's psychosocial orientation gives import to the familial and contextual appraisals of available religious ideologies and roles. These serve to enhance or to constrain the ego's attempt to organize and integrate the various dimensions of the self across emergent developmental crises. Spirituality, for Erikson, can serve the crucial function of providing the ego with a sense of wholeness—a sense of things being rebound (Roazen, 1976)—and it can support the positive virtues of hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care, and wisdom (Erikson, 1971).

Erikson chased with profound interest ideas that led to generativity and that provided the means by which adults can move (a) outward beyond themselves to connection with others, (b) forward toward new challenges by building on prior identity resolutions, and (c) upward toward an ethical sense of care and responsibility (Hoare, 2002). He recognized the power of faith to activate this vital core and reshape perceptions of self, other, and the world images in which adults habituate and relate (Erikson, 1996). In his Yale lectureship, for example, Erikson considered the geographical and historical context of Galilee, noting the pervasive lack of boundary requirements for a collective national identity. He claimed that such vulnerabilities opened Galilee to the revelatory reorientation of a world image that emerged first in monotheism and later in Jesus' emphasis on an individual's propensity for an active faith (Erikson, 1996). His particular concern was how prevailing worldviews, such as the Messianic expectations inherent in Judaic monotheism, created a sense of readiness for people's individual sense of *I* to enjoin others in a sense of *We* (Erikson, 1996).

Despite an affinity for Jesus and recognition of the regenerative power of faith, Erikson launched vitriolic attacks on religion and religious institutions. Like Freud, Erikson had witnessed many patients for whom the superego harbored an “internal restrictive covenant” (Hoare, 2002, p. 71) that led to self-judgment—a pervasive fear that they were far from being as good as they should be. This moralistic self, Erikson thought, developed quite naturally from parental modeling and internalization. Driven by rules and a sense of reciprocal justice, the moralistic self judged others rather than attempting to understand the meanings of their behavior. He held religious institutions or “homes of faith” culpable for often keeping adults at pre-autonomous, moralistic levels of identity development (Hoare, 2002). He believed that all too often religious institutions fostered moral covenants based in fear or negation that served to isolate and divide the peoples of the world, exacerbating the human tendency toward “pseudospeciation” or in-group favoritism (Erikson, 1975). He found neurotic the imposition of excessive, guilt-sponsoring, penitential rituals. In essence, Erikson criticized religious institutions for inhibiting spiritual identity exploration processes.

The spiritual/moral adult Erikson envisioned grows beyond the moralistic aspects of childhood and the ideological aspects of adolescence to a grounded, principled orientation (Hoare, 2002). This ethical adult evidences movement from knowing “what to say no to,” toward “what to say yes to,” inasmuch as that “yes” entails knowing what one owed others that might foster their developmental potential (Hoare, 2002, p. 73). Thus, for Erikson, the spiritual/ethical adult treats others as worthy, equal beings, in spite of the differences that may exist between self and others; the spiritual/ethical adult evidences commitment to ensuring that others receive love; and the spiritual/ethical adult supports and sponsors agency and engagement in the world on behalf of others (Hoare, 2002).

Erikson’s conceptualization of the spiritual/ethical adult, coupled with the psychohistories he provided of exemplars of profound dynamics possible in spiritual identity (e.g., “Young Man Luther,” 1958) offers Christian educators an opportunity to examine individual spiritual identity journeys. What follows is an analysis of spiritual identity interviews that provides a substantive example of this pursuit.

Methodology

Erikson offered little by way of a research methodology to test or utilize his psychosocial theory. The most widely used empirical operationalization of Erikson’s theory has been Marcia’s identity status construct. Marcia’s four quadrant design distinguishes identity patterns defined by the extent (high or low) to which one actively engages in a meaningful exploration of competing roles and ideologies, and by the degree (high or low) to which one has committed to available alternatives (Marcia, 1966). Thus, in a collaborative project conducted by the CCCU, an assessment based on Marcia's theory was *made* regarding how significantly Christian colleges provided an opportunity for identity development. This approach surmised that a typical student enters college with a *diffused* identity (low exploration, low commitment) that is "detached and disengaged" or with a *foreclosed* identity (low exploration, high commitment) that is "uncritically committed to beliefs and practices but emanating from a rather limited range of experience" (Van Wicklin, 1997). Presumably, the college experience of exploring various roles and appropriating alternative views of peers and professors provides a context that moves a student toward an identity in *moratorium* (high exploration, low commitment) with critical examination of alternatives, and finally toward an *achieved* identity, with convictional commitments based on exploration (Van Wicklin, 1997). Erikson (1968) suggested that although ego identity formation during adolescence and young adulthood provided an initial psychosocial structure for continuity in adult life, a person's sense of identity could be revised through ongoing experience, shifting social contexts, and/or historical circumstances.

In order to analyze adult identity, Sorell, Montgomery, and Busch-Rossnagel (1997) adapted the Role-Related Identity Interview (RRII) from a protocol developed by Whitbourne (1986). In Whitbourne's conceptualization, the analysis of roles reveals the mediations between the meanings of signs and language in a social context and the ways by which these meanings are appropriated in the consciousness of the individual. The RRII focuses on Role Salience and Role Flexibility as adult development extensions of Marcia's (1966) dimensions of exploration and commitment. Role Salience refers to the manner in which involvement in a social role contributes to an individual's sense of role-related identity. Role Salience questions inquire about the motivational, affective, self-evaluative, and behavioral (i.e., time commitment) aspects of social role involvement; for example, "How does being [participant's chosen term for referring to the spiritual aspect of his/her life] affect what you do in everyday life?" and "What impact does this area of your life have on the way you feel about yourself as a person?" Role Flexibility refers to the extent to which an individual evaluates feelings and considers possibilities for behavioral change in role involvement. Role Flexibility questions inquire about past and present/future considerations of change, including the evaluation and implementation of alternative ways of feeling and behaving in each role; for example, "Have you ever considered other ways of behaving as a spiritual person?" and "What steps have you taken to implement the changes you are considering?"

The participants were 13 male and 15 female adults chosen for their reputation as being devoutly spiritual and for exhibiting the capacity to articulate the significance and influence of spirituality in their lives. They were associates on the campuses where we teach; referrals from an interfaith dialogue group; referrals via the researchers' own religious affiliations; and a few individuals who were participants in the larger Adult Identity Development Project from which this study is derived. The majority of the participants were young and middle-aged adults, though they ranged in age from 22–72 years. The sample was predominantly Euro-American, but also included one African, one Hispanic, two African Americans, and one Asian Indian participant. More than half of the participants identified themselves as Protestant; however, the sample also included three Muslims, a Jew, a Greek Orthodox, a Roman Catholic, a Buddhist, two who identified their religious preference as "none," and one Wiccan who labeled herself as "pagan." Almost all participants had at least an undergraduate degree, and many were aiming for or were already employed in a vocation associated with their spiritual convictions. Fourteen were married (none to each other), ten were single, two divorced, and two remarried. Fifteen participants were childless, and thirteen had two or more children. Income levels varied considerably because a number of participants were in school or semi-retired, but most appeared to represent middle to upper-middle level socio-economic status, based on their educational backgrounds and lifestyles.

Our analysis focused primarily on responses to questions concerning the participants' perceptions and evaluations of themselves as spiritual persons. In order to contextualize the responses about spirituality, information from sections of the interview inquiring about the salience and flexibility experienced in the role(s) of wife/husband, mother/father, sister/brother, daughter/son, homemaker/breadwinner, waged worker, age, and gender was reviewed during data analysis. A fuller report of the methodology and findings of our study is available from the first author (Kiesling, et al., under review).

Findings

The theoretical dimensions of salience and flexibility from which the RRII was derived emerged as significant categories in the content analysis of the interview transcripts, as might be expected. In analyzing the manner in which these participants perceived and evaluated their sense of role-related spiritual identity, we employed as an organizational frame James Marcia's (1966) classification of four identity statuses: *foreclosed, moratorium, achieved, and diffused.* Here, we provide a brief characterization of persons assigned to each status and derive insights from the psychosocial identity components influencing the content and structure of each particular identity pattern. However, no treatment is offered with regard to the diffused status because the category included only one respondent whose confidentiality could be compromised if an elaborated description were included in this report.

In Marcia's operationalization, "foreclosed" characterizes individuals who have a high degree of commitment within particular options (vocational or familial roles, or ideational orientations), without having engaged in a high degree of exploration. In our study, participants were placed in the foreclosed category when the ratings for their role salience scores within the dimension of spirituality were high, indicating strong commitment (e.g., high motivation, high degree of affect, perception that spirituality highly impacted their sense of self, and significant time commitment relative to other roles); and their ratings for past reflectiveness and past behavioral change were low, indicating little exploration. Five men and six women fit this description in our study.

A summary of research utilizing Marcia's identity status conceptualization, along with studies that utilize a comparable theoretical lens, offers insight into the functioning and outcomes of those reflecting foreclosure. For example, foreclosed individuals may become increasingly attached to current circumstances and those who have put them in place, uncritically adopting someone else's prescriptives (Schwartz, 2001). These "borrowed beliefs" and linkages to sources of approval and authority provide students with a sense of ideological and relational security, but may also diminish their uniqueness and foster a brittle, dualistic world view (Van Wicklin, 1994). Foreclosed individuals are often resistant to change and thus are associated with some degree of closed-mindedness, smug self-satisfaction, rigidity, and authoritarianism (Marcia, 1966, 1993).

As an extension of Marcia's identity statuses, Berzonsky developed a process model of personal identity development that denotes the way individuals approach the decision-making process (Schwartz, 2001). Corresponding closely to the foreclosed status in Marcia, Berzonsky describes the "normative style" as one that represents imitation and conformity and the suppression of exploration. Normative individuals facing important decisions overly rely on the counsel of authority figures and significant others on whose standards they have based their self-evaluations. Religious doubts and questionings are resolved by conformity to prescriptions and/or the expectations of significant others. If counsel is sought, it is almost always within an anticipated, belief-confirming context. Thus normative individuals *deflect* dissonance in their thinking (Kroger, 2000) and resist identity change.

Contextual Influences

When we analyzed the interviews of those participants who fit the spiritually foreclosed status, dynamics similar to those described by Berzonsky emerged (Schwartz, 2001). For these participants, the expectations of significant others largely determined the contours of the role of their spiritual identity. Behaviors, beliefs, taboos, guidance, images of the ideal girl or boy that wins divine approval, and religious activities derived from contextual prescriptives became internalized as something they "should be and do." Rather than a faith owned via critical reflection, the faith of foreclosed individuals was closely akin to compliance born of seeking continuity with respected others. Foreclosed participants listed as spiritual role models a parent or grandparent, the originator of their religion, or other carriers of the tradition (e.g., teacher, professor, priest, preacher).

Participants in the foreclosed category often talked about their faith as something that seemed organic. They named with affinity early life experiences primarily within their family and/or the traditions of their upbringing as the most significant factors in their spirituality. The language of intimacy and emotional attachment associated with the presence and provision of love, security, acceptance, and/or approval in the parental relationship was strikingly similar to the imagery and language used to talk about what was sought and cherished in relationship with deity.

Faith or spirituality for the spiritually foreclosed was not dissimilar to one's ethnicity and carried with it a quality of inheritability. Typical responses included "I was born with it," "I considered myself Christian before I was one," "I've always been . . ." or "because that's the way I was taught." Similarly, when asked what the consequences would be if they neglected or abandoned this part of their lives, foreclosed persons frequently contested that it would be as unfathomable and improbable as changing one's DNA—"[you] couldn't get away from it," "[I] couldn't totally abandon [it]."

Perhaps the word *beholden* best describes the affective quality of the spiritually foreclosed. Almost universally, a sense of gratitude and positive emotion pervaded the comments of these participants. Habituating oneself according to the ideals of significant others provided the psychological and emotional benefit of profound belongingness and a continuity within themselves and with previous generations. They had protected themselves from identity diffusion, avoided the anxiety of overchoice amid complex relationship matrices, and generally prevented the deepest experiences of shame.

Religious Doubts

Those who fit most purely into the foreclosed status experienced very little questioning of their own sense of spirituality. For example, one respondent admitted raising questions of theodicy but quickly dismissed them as "little questions." Another said she desired a childlike faith because "a child never questions."

Participants in the foreclosed category admitted to a high correlation between their beliefs and those of their parents, mentioning that their sense of spirituality may be greater in commitment, depth, or understanding. Typically, marker events or turning points were not self-initiated, but rather change evoked by developmental transitions in which socialization encouraged a deeper affiliation and internalization of the belief system in which they had been immersed. This bears some resemblance to the early findings of a CCCU study which reported that "approximately 70% to 80% of college freshmen enter college either identity diffused or foreclosed, and about 50% to 60% are in either moratorium or achieved four years later" (Van Wicklin, 1994). Although comparisons were not made between identity statuses, CCCU researchers report "considerable consistency" between freshman and senior years in the area of faith (Burwell, 1998). In our study, foreclosed participants described developing spiritual identity as "making a commitment," moving from a blind acceptance to a thoughtful ownership of one's faith, "really putting my whole life on the line," or "surrendering." Spiritual practices—usually consisting primarily of prayer and worship within like-minded community—were to take them "further up and deeper in." It was telling to note that when asked, "If someone wanted to develop their faith in the same way you have, what would you tell them?", several of these participants discounted themselves as reliable guides and said they would point the person to someone more knowledgeable.

Factors Inducing Change

As our study was not longitudinal, we can only speculate how one changes from within a foreclosed posture beyond simply the kind of deepening mentioned earlier. However, our interviews reveal three probable clues. First, concern was raised from one of our participants over raising a family in a location where the socio-cultural context no longer naturally provided the plausibility structure for maintaining their heritage (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Second, for some of the foreclosed who were embedded and entrenched in the ideals formulated by someone else, adulthood brought a need to find ideological as well as emotional independence. As the chrysalis that provided support and protection in earlier years was now being pried open, they experienced a sense of self bigger than, yet inclusive of, the way(s) a community or family had previously defined them. Third, change happened when an authority figure who was clearly recognized as trustworthy and within the "orthodoxy" of the tradition, and with whom there was a strong sense of identification, suggested changes.

These interviews suggest a social geography that contributes to a spiritually foreclosed identity and raises interesting questions for Christian educators and institutions of Christian learning. In creating the space of spiritual identity formation, it seems probable that common practices and contexts often unwittingly promote a foreclosing of identity. Is there a way to clearly articulate a divinely sanctioned way of being without requiring curricular experiences or creating communal expectations that encourage the student to become overly conformed to an ascriptive role, overly rigidified in his thinking, or overly identified with a particular mentor? For the sake of cognitive and moral development, it would seem imperative that while inducting students into established faith traditions that create continuity with previous generations, institutions of Christian education must tend to questions of how conventional practices/disciplines/ ethos statements/codes of conduct can be proscribed with a more meaningful rationale than simply a unilateral, authoritative "say so" (Wolterstorff, 2002). Practices of marking developmental transitions with rituals to promote deepening socialization and internalization of belief may paradoxically become perfunctory and/or terminal "commitments" that serve to maintain the form of religious activity with no real transformative or developmental power. Noting this risk, Erikson (1996) described conditions whereby ritual loses its capacity to promote a creative life and comes to correspond to compulsivity and a way for one to demonstrate her own righteousness.

As in so many areas, there appears to be a critical task of discernment for the Christian educator. One must determine whether the "foreclosing" of a student's commitment represents appropriate maturational development that will serve as a secure foundation for later growth and engagement, especially as students move beyond the belief-confirming context in which they currently reside. Alternatively, one must determine whether commitment represents a rigidification and dependency constructed to avoid any further disequilibrating and thereby resisting growth and engagement (Kroger, 1996). Discerning educators are often called upon to strike a balance in determining when their students are best served by a community that promotes and seeks solely to validate and strengthen one's plausibility structure of belief via support with like-minded people, and when or whether it can risk the challenges that occur when fostering encounters with "alternative interpretations of God and the Good" (Wolterstorff, 2002).

Identity research establishes that overly predefined social roles can inhibit the kind of exploration and reflection necessary to reach the farthest domains of development (Kroger, 2000). When the ideo-emotional consolidation of identity moves too quickly toward commitment and is constructed from external social presses, subsequent change in roles (e.g., from student to minister) may not be accompanied by further identity development. Christian education that unwittingly promotes foreclosed identity patterns may celebrate graduating a generation of convention-following Christians who are sufficiently trained to serve within their vocation as service professionals (Wolterstorff, 2002); however, the concern soon becomes whether these students can adequately engage and transform culture, practice genuine hospitality to the stranger, provide answers beyond "just have faith" to the complex questions confronting a wounded creation, and/or practice justice and civility in an increasingly pluralistic society.

Individuals in Moratorium

In Marcia's (1993) operationalization, individuals who fit the moratorium status were characterized as experiencing crisis, high in exploration, but without having arrived at a place of commitment. Two men and two women in our study were placed in this category, identified by their high scores for past reflectiveness and/or for past behavioral change but whose stories did not reflect a completed resolution or commitment formed out of this exploration. These participants used fluid language to describe their spiritual identity—"life as a creative process . . . self realization," "movement," "awakening." Whereas the affective set for individuals in foreclosure clustered around security, approval, grace, and divine favor, the affective aspects named by individuals in moratorium assumed less vertical relational posturing and included freedom, independence, inner peace, "letting go," and "wanting to share that exuberance." However, three of the four participants in the moratorium category also mentioned passage through a "dark night of the soul," "hitting bottom," or "darkness" that required a recomposing of themselves, who and what they relied on, who they permitted to enter into the inner space of their lives, and the way they comported themselves toward others.

Contextual Influences

In contrast to foreclosed conformity to a prescribed role, three of the participants in moratorium expressed asynchrony between the emerging, internal sense of self they were coming to own and the external expectations perceived to be implicit in the conventional, culturally offered spiritual roles mediated by organized religion or family custom. For the fourth individual, however, spiritual space was the discovery of a new world in which to become a pioneer resisting settlement.

Participants in moratorium reported crises and turning points that launched or accompanied spiritual investigation: losing a parent to death or divorce, a lack of religious participation on the part of their family, educational experiences that promoted a liberal education, or breaking the pattern of hiding an addiction. Whereas the participants in foreclosure in our sample emphasized intimacy and security especially in their relationship to God, motivational involvement for those in moratorium was driven either by psychological benefit (i.e., self-expression, personality change, recovery from crisis, purpose, etc.) or by philosophical/ethical concerns and intellectual pursuits (i.e., to be true to conscience). Less endowed with continuity and a seamless transmission of belief and practice from parents or from previous generations, these individuals came to rely on themselves either by choice or by circumstance to establish their sense of spiritual self.

Religious Doubts

With fewer affiliative ties to stabilize their spirituality, affect for these participants could fluctuate from hopefulness, self-acceptance, forgiveness, and love to monumental self-doubt, insecurity, and self-contradiction. Devoid of, or resistant to, conventional answers or authorities, moratorium exploration was reported as both diverse and welcomed. Dialogues over books, personal rituals of burning, sketching African artifacts, visiting different churches or traditions, or focusing mentally on a song were all mentioned as salient practices to participants in this status, largely because they expanded and challenged their beliefs and established religious experiences. Indeed, the active search of individuals in moratorium in other studies has been associated with high indications of critical thinking and open-mindedness (Schwartz, 2001). Rather than relying on or turning to authorities to resolve doubts, individuals in moratorium relied on themselves as sole arbiters of truth. On the one hand, restlessness led them to autonomy and adventure; on the other hand, it carried the weight of disappointment from significant others and internal insecurity and questioning.

Factors Inducing Change

For foreclosed individuals, disconnection and disapproval provided the social and divine restraints compelling them to avoid becoming shameful to God, their family, their tribe, or their ethnicity. Those in moratorium sought to avoid succumbing to fear, inauthenticity in a maladaptive role, addiction, or stagnation intellectually or existentially. Thus, spiritual identity served not so much to prohibit certain behaviors as it did to compel a perpetual morphing. The value being expressed was often that of restoration over a sense of identity previously experienced as distressful and painful, and/or the value of breaking new ground in self-exploration.

In an age of increased pluralism, postmodernity, expressive individualism, and denominational skepticism, it is likely that Christian educators will encounter more and more students who hold suspicion or even contempt for organized religion and/or who experience conventional, culturally offered ministerial roles as overly constrictive and inauthentic. Their spiritual motivation may not center primarily on seeking divine favor, and they may combine elements of recovery from addiction, therapeutic or psychological benefit, self-exploration, or a philosophical quest. They may resist making ideological, denominational, or creedal commitments, not because they are opposed to the content, but because commitment of any kind feels existentially stagnant, stifling, or entrapping. How do Christian educators and those preparing students for Christian ministry regard and respond to individuals in moratorium who are likely to be in their midst?

If convictional commitment is born of ideological exploration and if we consider the narratives of these participants in moratorium, it behooves Christian educators to recognize that growth often originates from disequilibrium, anxiety, suffering, or complexity and that transition to higher levels of functioning may be accompanied by intermittent contempt, doubt, cynicism, or even agnosticism. Individuals in moratorium may regress if the exploration reflected in a concerted questioning of fundamental religious beliefs is punished or discouraged (Kroger, 1996). Such symptoms can easily be pathologized, feared, or suppressed in Christian educational settings and institutions rather than honored as essential aspects of transformation and growth (Kegan, 1994). On the other hand, one must hasten to ask, "How many unconventional, uniquely expressive, moratorium-oriented students could an educational faith community really tolerate?"

Kroger (2000) reports that most students who graduate from college have not reached an achieved identity. Further, some identity research suggests that adults move in and out of moratoria as they establish commitments, creating a sort of moratorium-achieved-moratorium-achieved (MAMA) cycle through adulthood (Marcia, 2002). Presuming then that subsequent identity exploration is likely, how and what can Christian educators provide and equip students with for these latter adult transitional journeys? At a minimum, it seems important that spiritual direction in educational and spiritually based settings equip students with theological constructs that yield self-understanding, guidance, and meaning for "dark night of the soul" experiences where customary prescriptives from religious authorities feel trite and uncaring. Often seasons of crises that developmentalists associate with movement from a more passive, externally referenced, imitative posturing to one that is more agentic, self-authored, empowered, and facilitative of finding one's voice are regarded as a threat to orthodox Christian belief and practice. It is as if the inevitable outcome is a rational autonomy devoid of anything transcendent. Toward this end, it seems appropriate to encourage students to explore spiritual practices to determine which are most consistent with their temperaments, expressive of their individual preferences, and which they find personally meaningful. This could be done in conjunction with providing formulaic patterns for those means of grace well established by Scripture and tradition. Further, the role of the Christian educator in engaging individuals in moratorium necessitates coming alongside of those individuals when they are recomposing their sense of spiritual self and finding that the prohibitions and aspirations that once were cherished now seem maladaptive. Part of this task seems to be providing the emotional scaffolding and honoring the space that supports such explorations, while at the same time encouraging students not to discard the vertical dimension of faith or relativize sources of authority for the sake of their growing independence.

Our research, taken together with other studies (Marcia, 2002), suggests that there may be more than one type of moratorium, and that exploration may be compelled by a diversity of inclinations. Finding further distinctions among individuals in moratorium may be essential in discerning how to respond. Marcia's operationalization was intended to describe adolescents and assumes that exploration is in the service of making later commitments and arriving at the point of at least a provisional destination that can declare "here I stand" (Bainton, 1978). However, some of the adults in our study seemed to regard exploration not instrumentally but as an end in itself—as chronic moratorium or perpetual questors (Marcia, 2002). If an important aspect of spiritual identity is memory and sameness across time, the task of the Christian educator may be to secure anchor points and/or anchor persons through the period of moratorium—a delicate task when a student's identity structure tends to avoid sources that push toward religious commitment.

Achieved Individuals

Achieved identity is constituted in Marcia's scheme by those who have navigated through a period of exploration or crisis and have subsequently made commitments toward a new identity. Six men and seven women were categorized as achieved in our study. Participants were regarded as fitting this category if they received high scores on past reflectiveness and behavior change coupled with normative or little expected change in the present or future, and if their narratives represented a period of searching followed by a settled sense of being at home in their spiritual/ideological commitment. Achieved individuals could typically elaborate their own process of identity change and could name and distinguish a past sense of self from their present sense of self.

Contextual Influences

The achieved participants in our sample were neither dependent on, nor antagonistic to, the spirituality reflected in their familial background. Rather, they named experiences and beliefs that were different from or more intentional than those of their parents, indicating that the ascriptive self had been relinquished, modified, or built upon. Their spiritual identity was one they had exercised some choice to gain, and there was a quiet, internally referenced assurance that what was found was indeed the correct path.

Further, achieved individuals appropriated community in ways different from participants in other statuses. Whereas individuals in foreclosure looked to a homogenous community to derive a sense of validation and affirmation of their sense of identity, some of the achieved individuals mentioned treasuring the heterogeneity of a community in which they could encounter voices different from their own. Similarly, when asked who modeled for them what they would most like to become spiritually, participants in the achieved status named people on the basis of their possessing particular qualities they wanted to emulate in enhancing their own goodness rather than simply choosing to imitate the recognized leaders of their own tradition.

Religious Doubts

With the period of exploration mostly resolved, religious doubting for achieved participants was now less in the service of compelling an ideological or experiential search and more productive of an epistemological humility and respect for those who differed in belief and practice. The capacity to formalize both the questions asked and the means by which to resolve the role-related doubt was uniquely elaborate for those in an achieved status. These participants spoke of becoming more accepting of themselves and more at ease with a way of comporting the self toward deity. Words such as "deep rest," "holy leisure," "settledness," "confidence," "freedom," "real and true," and "thankful to it" were invoked when giving description to this cherished space.

Paradoxically, despite this greater acceptance of self, achieved participants spoke with no uncertainty regarding the consequences of abandoning or neglecting the spiritual domain of their life, saying it would invoke "absolute damnation," "hell in this life and the next," or commenting that "I wouldn't give a damn about anything." In individuals for whom spirituality came to constitute the ontological reality of their sense of identity, a loss of this sense of spiritual self would constitute the greatest of all tragedies.

Factors Inducing Change

For many of the achieved participants, the impetus for their spirituality involved liberation from a false sense of self, appropriating a way of gracing part of their identity, or finding resolution and a way of making meaning of what life forced them to endure. The catalytic event or context was varied: unwanted divorce, a mother's death at an early age, a car accident in which one faced death, sexual abuse, financial bankruptcy, an abortion imposed by a demanding husband, disillusionment with organized religion, alcoholism and depression, the deprivation associated with being an ethnic minority, etc. Crisis and pain produced spiritual reflection and identity construction that in the long run seemed to serve them well. Achieved individuals gained acquaintanceship with parts of themselves that were named in various ways as "vacant spots," "wandering desires," "damaging and shameful" parts of my past, or the "dark side" of themselves.

Gaining greater acceptance of themselves seemed also to open the achieved to discovering more compelling ways of interrelating. These participants mentioned the importance of not having to put on a face and still being accepted, loving people in soulfully deep but concrete ways, "sitting with" others in focused meditation, "going up" when engaged in spiritual conversation, or writing poetry to bridge cultures and religions.

However, the practices the achieved participants named as contributing most to their ongoing growth and change appeared to be chosen not because they were prescribed by an authority or because they constituted what it meant to be part of a homogenous community, but because they had taken on personal significance. The themes of epistemological change, differentiation, and valuing of heterogeneity in community that were articulated by those in the achieved status do not readily suggest easy pragmatics. Growth in these areas is not to be equated with Christian conversion or sanctification; rather, the conceptualization of identity statuses offers process descriptors that may accompany lifespan development and provide insight into educational directives. For example, broad parameters that may aid identity formation in the classroom might include the following: group processing that promotes a high locus of control within the student; reflective writing that objectifies and reconstructs the internalized narratives that shape a person's sense of spiritual self; theological constructs and practices focused on liberating one of alienation from themselves, others, and deity; finding personal significance and suitability in the means whereby one practices her faith; and working at hospitality within the institution whereby heterogeneity is valued in community and living encounters with multiculturalism are supported. These recommendations resonate with CCCU conclusions that "students in postcrises status were more likely to have had cross-cultural experience, challenging mentors, advanced learning styles, and majors in the social sciences, arts, or humanities" (http://cccu.org/resourcecenter).

Where the interaction between the student and her/his psychosocial context creates a culture marked by "warmth and structure" (a phrase borrowed from the way a recent report called *Hardwired to Connect* from the Commission on Children at Risk describes an "authoritative community"), the potentiality for formation of achieved spiritual identity is most probably actualized. Christian educators yearning to promote achieved spiritual identity would do well to live into a question posed by Parker Palmer (1983) years ago: How can the places in which I learn to know also be the places in which I learn to love? It may be that in the contemplation of such we will find our-selves nearer the reality toward which Erikson was pointing in arguing that in order for a people to have an adequate sense of *I*, it must cohere from a collective *We* (Erikson, 1996).

Conclusions

In this article, we have advanced a methodological approach for identifying and distinguishing social geographies of spiritual identity and have shown how they are appropriated into the foreclosed, moratorium, and achieved identity patterns. By utilizing a grounded, praxis approach, we have moved from phenomenological self-reports of a person's sense of spiritual identity to ascertain the societal and contextual factors that contributed to its construction. From these gleanings, we have raised questions and suggested probable resolutions pertinent to the field of Christian education. Four fundamental questions have presented themselves from such analysis: (a) what social factors contribute to particular patterns of spiritual identity construction?; (b) what criteria constitute an "achieved" sense of mature spiritual identity?; (c) how might these criteria change as one moves through the adult years with increased spiritual maturity?; and (d) what psychosocial and curricular elements within educational contexts optimize spiritual identity development?

Although any theory offers only a partial understanding of that to which it points, and although this is especially true when describing the metaphysical, the predominant influence of the psychosocial in the construction of one's sense of spiritual self cannot be denied. Christian educators can glean much from identity research as it focuses beyond simply what is said in the classroom or on the internal processing of students and places attention on the psychosocial interactions between the person and environment as productive of development. The endowment or imposition of an ascribed role consciously or covertly sanctioned by family or community; negative identity fragments that elicit taboo ways of being and/or evoke feared potential selfhood; intersubjectivity that validates and encourages the development of one's role-related spiritual identity; and the understanding of deity mediated via human personality, gestures, and symbols all give credibility to the utility of Erikson's psychosocial stage theory and Marcia's status approach as viable theoretical lenses for understanding Christian education and its influence over the formation of a person's sense of spiritual self.

As scientific research, our project is rooted in a descriptive enterprise. Identity theorists actively construct conceptual itineraries for the lifespan, holding in dynamic tension our yearnings both for independence/uniqueness and for connection/attachment (Kegan, 1982). Adams and Marshall (1996) suggest that to be overly differentiated is to be socially aberrant, but to be overly integrated is to be normatively based. Our discussion of this tension has focused on individually appropriated self-identity and socially structured role analysis, seeking to comprehend educational practices that (a) avoid patterns that foreclose identity exploration, (b) provide anchors to those whose search may become chronic, and (c) profile what may constitute mature spirituality.

Nicholas Wolterstorff, in his provocative series of essays entitled *Educating for Shalom* (2002), contends that whereas the assumptions that historically oriented and legitimated action in the social formations of society in North America were distinctly Judeo-Christian, this is no longer the case. As such, Wolterstorff regards it as imperative that Christian education equip students for engaging culture with a capacity for critical discernment, enabling them to function beyond simply the received role covertly sanctioned by culture. Our hope is that by framing our research within a kerygmatic prototype, inclusive of valid social scientific elements, we contribute to the illumination of the psychosocial influences that enable and inhibit such spiritual identity formation.

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