The Impact of Organized Christian Religion on Identity Development in Adolescents

by

Heather Gordon Gunn

B.Sc., University of British Columbia, 1985

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We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard.

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Department of Counselling Psychology
The University of British Columbia
Vancouver, Canada

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ABSTRACT

A significant number of youth today affiliate with organized Christian religion. This research explores their experiences within that setting, experiences which either facilitated or hindered their identity development.

Fifteen participants who were involved in organized Christian religion during their adolescence were interviewed. The critical incident technique was utilized to assess their experiences. 175 critical incidents were identified including 111 positive, or facilitating factors, and 64 negative, or hindering factors. Eight categories emerged from the 175 incidents. These were:


Several writers identified religion as a significant factor in shaping the identity of both men and women. Some went further and suggested that religious factors are more powerful in relation to identity than any one of the following: occupation, politics, sex-role beliefs and sexual expression. The study explored a range of experiences as indicated above.
with a view to isolating those positive and negative influences that were determinants in the lives of the fifteen participants.

The results of the study confirm both the general assertions, such as those listed above, as well as the more specific claims that are recorded in the literature. Both Shelton (1990) and Erikson (1964) stress the value to adolescents of belonging to a community. It provides security, it is a place where one can explore ideas among peers, and it gives the young person a certain sense of identity by virtue of membership in a particular group. If the group includes adults to whom young people can easily relate, then there is the additional advantage of mentoring, a highly desirable resource for adolescents as Hendry, Roberts, Glendinning, and Coleman (1992) have pointed out.

More generally, the literature supports a range of social activities that contribute to identity formation. Among these are the value of having fun, and the need to be free from direction in order to make independent choices, Peters (1992). Furthermore, as Goldman (1965) has shown, these choices need to be exercised in the context of a young person's world view so that thinking about values is not compartmentalized but rather is established in the total life setting.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE OF CONTENTS</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FOREWORD</td>
<td>viii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational for the Study</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definitions</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Assumptions</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Outline</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity and Religion</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Incident Technique</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Participants</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Demographics</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Interviews</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data Analysis</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation Ratio</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expert Perspective</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability of the Categories</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal Validity</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehensiveness of the Categories</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER IV: RESULTS</strong></td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Categories</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION</strong></td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications for Practice</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significance of the Study</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of this Study</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations for Future Research</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary and Conclusions</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>REFERENCES</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>APPENDIX</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Example of Documented Incidents</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 1</td>
<td>PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 2</td>
<td>RELIABILITY OF THE CATEGORIES</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TABLE 3</td>
<td>PARTICIPANTS AND INCIDENTS</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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To my father, Angus, my mother, Ruth, and my brother, Angus, thank you for your practical support and your encouragement. I especially want to thank my father who gave many hours of wise counsel which helped me complete this thesis.

Thank you to my fiancé, David, who provided a huge impetus to complete this project! I am also thankful for his support and encouragement through the final stages.

Finally, I have been privileged to hear the stories of fifteen individuals' experiences. Thank you for your honesty, openness and willingness to make this study possible. My hope is that your stories will open our eyes to see how we can better allow adolescents to crystallize in their own minds their uniqueness within the context of learning the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.
Throughout my adolescence I was involved in organized Christian religion in one form or other. I have numerous vivid memories of situations some of which I believe hindered my identity development and others which facilitated it. For the past twelve years I worked with young people at summer camps and throughout the year in organized Christian religion. It has been a focus of mine to encourage adolescents to discover who they are as individuals within the context of organized Christian religion.

As an adult I often meet people who were at one time involved in organized Christian religion but now look back on that time as a negative influence in discovering their true identity. These experiences have created in me a desire to learn how individuation occurs within the lives of adolescents during the time they are involved in organized Christian religion.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"Who are you?" said the caterpillar. Alice replied rather shyly, "I - I hardly know, sir, just at present - at least I know who I was when I got up this morning, but I must have changed several times since then."

(Carroll, 1995, p. 53)

As a young person passes from childhood into the teen-age years, the quest for personal identity deepens. Prior to this time, parents and others in the family circle provided all that was needed for the semi-autonomous life of home, school, and community. Now the question "Who am I?" is given new priority and relationships with both peers and family are scrutinized afresh.

It is at this new stage of searching that ideologies become significant. These are fixed, unambiguous formulas, and they provide a degree of certainty that is hard to find in the variety of normal living conditions. For the young person who finds it difficult to move beyond the comfort zone of home, yet feels the impulse to search out a personal identity, an ideology can be an easy answer to the quest. It can also be a trap, leading susceptible adolescents into dead ends, even into harmful cults.
Religion can be a liberating experience or a deadening ideology. In either case, or in its many forms between these two extremes, it is a popular avenue of exploration among youth as witness the large numbers that affiliate with organized Christian religion. It is attractive for at least three reasons: first it offers ultimate answers for the larger designs of life. Second, it enhances one's feelings of importance and purpose in life. Third, religion promotes a sense of belongingness (Erikson, 1964). Erikson (1965) views religion as crucial during adolescence because religion becomes the institutional support for identity.

It is a common sight to see large crowds of young people in traditional church settings enjoying the singing and getting involved in a variety of community activities. However, at heart, each one of these young people is focused on the values and goals that might give him or her a sense of direction in life. In other words, individuation is their primary task as they seek to discover who they are.

This study deals with some of the ways in which Christian faith impacts identity development in Christian adolescents and how we can deepen our understanding of this process. Richards (1972) underlines the importance of the process by urging youth workers to focus on the experiences of the youth they serve, not just to sympathize with them as they cope with the pressures of adolescent life, but also to recognize their
own important role in guiding youth into an understanding of themselves.

Rationale for the Study

Because one of the main tasks of adolescence is seen to be individuation (Erikson, 1959), it is professionally desirable for counsellors working with Christian adolescents to take advantage of any study which might help to deepen an understanding of how organized Christian religion impacts identity development.

The study described in the following pages deals with some of the concerns expressed by Richards. In particular it addresses the things that shape the thinking of Christian adolescents and thus influence, positively or negatively, the formation of their identities. It proposes to answer the following question:

What events or experiences among adolescents within organized Christian religion have facilitated or hindered identity development?
Definitions

As Shelton (1983) indicates, it is important to define the term adolescence.

A definition of adolescence might concentrate on chronological age, intellectual development, social behaviour, or psychological growth. "adolescence" refers to a developmental period that begins with puberty and stretches through the secondary and undergraduate college years. (p.2)

Goldman (1965) defines adolescence in the following way:

I am using adolescence in a very general sense to mean the period, beginning with puberty, when the body of the child begins to grow into the body of an adult. (p. 160)

For the purposes of this study, adolescence will be defined as the period from age 13 through age 19.

By organized Christian religion, I am referring to denominations of the Christian church such as Anglican, Baptist, Catholic, etc. and para-church youth organizations such as Young Life or Inter-Varsity Christian
Fellowship. Para-church organizations function alongside churches, organizing weekly events and summer camps for adolescents. The weekly events may be a structured Bible study or an activity such as a car rally. Young adults working for these organizations take it upon themselves to be mentors for the teenagers they contact.

According to Schlenker (1985):

Identity is "a theory (or schema) of an individual that describes, interrelates, and explains his or her relevant features, characteristics, and experiences". (p. 68)

Marcia (1980) sees identity in the following way:

Identity refers to an existential position, to an inner organization of needs, abilities, and self-perceptions as well as to a sociopolitical stance. (p. 159)

Finally, Erikson (1968) thinks of identity as follows:

...what I would call a sense of identity seems to me best described by William James (1920) in a letter to his wife: (p. 19)

'A man's character is discernible in the
mental or moral attitude in which, when it came upon him, he felt himself most deeply and intensely active and alive. At such moments there is a voice inside which speaks and says: "This is the real me!" (p. 99)

In this study, identity will be defined as an inner commitment to identify with certain behaviours, ideas or beliefs while alienating from others.

**Research Assumptions**

In carrying out this research, I assumed the following:

1. that participants would be able to recall significant incidents over a period of time as long as 30 years.

2. that participants would be able to articulate descriptions of the incidents in detail.

3. that carrying out the interviews in the participants' homes would elicit more significant incidents as they might feel more comfortable there.
4. that one week was enough time to allow the participant to reflect on his or her adolescent period in order to recall significant events.

5. that if a participant remembered an event in detail, it must be significant.

Study Outline

The literature is first reviewed in chapter two. There is a very large volume of published material on the general subject of identity, particularly North American material perhaps because of the multicultural nature of society and contemporary reactions to a long history of "melting pot" philosophy. This review examines only those aspects of identity that relate to the study research question listed above. First, the references that relate to identity per se are noted, then those relevant ones that refer to both identity and religion.

Chapter three documents the methodology employed. Central to this methodology is the critical incident technique, a procedure that has experienced widespread successful use in other settings and is eminently suited to this study. Characteristics of the participants are listed in considerable detail and this is followed by evaluative statements about different aspects of the technique. At the end of this study, in an appendix,
there is a sample of the way in which the critical incidents were documented.

The results of the study are detailed in chapter four. They include descriptions of the eight categories of critical incidents which were abstracted from the interviews together with illustrative quotations from each of the eight categories: mentors, inclusivity and belonging, challenged to think for themselves, growth through success, given a choice, faith integrated throughout life, having fun, and family support.

Finally, in chapter five, the implications of the study for professional practice are given. Following a summary of the results and their relationships to the literature, the significance of the study is assessed and suggestions for future research are proposed.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Identity

Within the field of counselling psychology, identity formation has been established as the primary task of adolescents (Erikson, 1959). According to Kroger (1989):

Adolescence seems to be a time, at least in many technologically advanced western cultures, when one is confronted with the problem of self-definition. (p.1)

Mitchell (1992) speaks of adolescent identity as a struggle or a project which requires work. He stresses how important it is for adolescents to receive moral and spiritual guidance as they pursue self definition. He affirms that they achieve identity as they commit themselves to a stable set of beliefs. These beliefs then go on to guide actions and career goals. Adolescence is the time when identity development reaches its highest point.

According to Marcia (1993), identity formation involves the synthesis of many factors, including beliefs and identifications, into a
unique whole which in turn facilitates a sense of continuity with the past and a link with the future. He goes on to describe how people move from a conferred or a given identity to a constructed identity through making decisions of who one wants to be. In another reference Marcia (1987, p. 165) points out, “Adolescence is at least as crucial, and perhaps the critical period for the formation of the first full identity configuration.”

Identity in adolescents involves two demands - consistency and individuality (Mitchell, 1992). Continuity permits sameness of character from day to day while individuality reveals one’s distinctiveness from others. Those who tend to conform lean more to the demand for continuity while those who do not adhere to convention lean toward differentiation. (Mitchell, 1992)

Adolescence does seem to be the “age of identity” because it is then that one reaches a time of personal reflection. Personal history is recalled alongside present reality and future possibilities are assessed. (Mitchell, 1992) Certainly there are other times in life when thinking these things occurs but adolescence is the first time and, while it is true that identity formation begins at this stage, it is by no means completed within this time frame. (Mitchell, 1992)

Kroger (1993) writes that young people need to resolve issues around occupation, ideology and sexual values in the process of identity
formation. Erikson (1968) says it is the inability to settle on an occupational identity which disturbs adolescents the most.

Marcia (1964) developed a semi-structured interview to investigate levels of exploration and commitment of adolescent men in relation to occupational, religious and political values. Using the data gathered from the interviews, Marcia categorized each adolescent in one of the following four stages of identity development: Foreclosure, involving strong commitment without exploration; Moratorium, involving extensive exploration without commitment; Diffusion involving neither exploration nor commitment; and Achievement, involving both exploration and commitment. (Marcia, 1964).

Many studies have been conducted in search of factors affecting the process of identity development. Among the factors isolated, religion has surfaced as being significant. The following review of the literature focuses on studies which referred to religion as significant and demonstrates how the way has been partly paved for this study.
Identity and Religion

According to Erikson (1963), the two most influential factors in adolescent identity formation are occupation and ideology. Ideology includes areas such as political and religious beliefs. Erikson says the following on ideology.

To envisage a future, the young adult may also need something which Shaw called "a religion" and a clear comprehension of life of an intelligible theory....we would call this something-between-a-theory-and-a-religion as ideology. Whatever else ideology is and whatever transitory or lasting social forms is takes, we will tentatively view it here and discuss it later as a necessity for the growing ego which is involved in the succession of generations and in adolescence is committed to some new synthesis of past and future: a synthesis which must include but transcend the past, even as identity does. (1963, p.97)

Thus Erikson concludes that the degree of commitment in the area of ideology significantly determines the presence or absence of identity.

Some of the literature describes how, in adolescents, identity development impacts faith development. Although my study focuses on
the impact of religion on identity and not the reverse, I thought it important to refer to a few of the studies addressing the impact of identity on faith. These studies build a case for the close relationship between identity and religion. According to Shelton (1990, p. 91), "No other developmental need so profoundly captures the adolescent’s relationship with Jesus as does the adolescent’s quest for identity and intimacy." Fowler (1981) sees adolescents hungry for a god who knows:

Much of the extensive literature about adolescent conversion can be illuminated, I believe, by the recognition that the adolescent’s religious hunger is for a god who knows, accepts, and confirms the self deeply, and who serves as an infinite guarantor of the self with its forming myth of personal identity and faith. (p. 153)

McAdams (1981) found a strong connection between identity and the degree to which an individual had come to personal religious beliefs:

A strong connection is revealed between ego stage, measured via Loevinger’s sentence completion form, and the extent to which subjects have undergone concerted questioning and formulated personalized answers with respect to religious belief. (p. 234)
He concludes by saying that he sees strength of identity impacting the degree of concern with religion, but claims that more needs to be explored of the dynamics of how identity is formed within the religious context.

Tzuriel (1984) found that religiosity predicted commitment and purposefulness in identity. In 1982 Rogow, Marcia, and Slugoski reported that religion contributes significantly to the identity status of both men and women. Using Marcia’s four ratings of identity status (Marcia, 1980), Rogow, Marcia, and Slugoski (1982), claim that those in the status of Moratorium rank religion as the most influential factor of identity formation among occupation, religion, politics, sex-role beliefs and sexual expression. Those at the stage of identity diffusion ranked religion as the least influential factor. Those in foreclosure or identity achievement ranked religion equally with one or more of the other factors. Rogow, Marcia, and Slugoski (1982) suggest that religion may be a common igniter of the decision making period leading to subsequent identity development. Further study on the influences of personally relevant content (such as religious experience) on adolescent development is encouraged by them as the following quote indicates:

It is interesting to note that the majority of Moratoriums ranked religion as highest in importance on the self-evaluation ratings, while religion was of least importance to Identity Diffusions. This suggests that religion may be a common issue initiating an individual’s crisis experience, leading to subsequent development
of ego identity. In their study with college women, Schenkel and Marcia (1972) found that a combination of the sexual expression and religion interviews provided greater predictive utility than any other combination of interview areas. The same study was able to replicate its findings with men. As Schenkel and Marcia (1972) noted, religion and sexual attitudes toward expression can be seen to share a common ground, loosely termed “morality.” Since most religions in Western society have restrictions concerning sexuality, decisions about one’s sexual behavior are frequently tied to a consideration of one’s religious beliefs. (p. 397)


Those who attend church more frequently (on a weekly basis) scored significantly higher on interpersonal foreclosure and marginally significantly higher on ideological achievement. Clearly, the commitments of foreclosure and achievement are exhibited in the behaviour of church attendance. (p. 466)

They go on to recommend that further research be carried out on the connection between identity and religion.

A few of the specific influences of religion on identity development in adolescents have been reported. Parker (1985) states that adolescents
who engage in a gradual religious conversion process, have a higher rate of identity achievement that those whose process was more rushed.

Masterson (1988) and Duffy (1973) both write on how religion is often used by adolescents as a substitute for, or an avoidance of the task of identity formation. Shelton (1990) illustrates this point:

Some adolescents find substitutes for their diffuse identity state.
They can find gratification from a specific role .... An example of this substitution can be the college student who uncritically embraces a fundamentalist religious outlook toward life. This time-consuming devotion to dogma and Scripture offers the adolescent a socially-acceptable substitute for a secure identity. (p. 89)

Apart from these factors, the closest factor to religion in the literature is the influence of moral development on identity formation (Podd, 1972 & Rowe and Marcia, 1980). Clearly, there is a need for further study on the ways identity development is affected by involvement in organized Christian religion. Podd (1972) supports the role of morality as the following extracts show:

The results of the study generally support the position that moral ideology is related to identity status .... The finding that achievement of an ego identity was accompanied by the development of mature moral values supports Erikson’s view that moral ideology is a factor in identity. (pp. 504-505)
Strong words are found in the literature on the importance of understanding the role of religion in the process of identity formation in adolescents. Davis (1986) concludes that formal religious organizations while being in a position to facilitate individuation in adolescents often abdicate this role. Markstrom-Adams (1992) claims that organized religion, in some instances, may be at fault in failing to provide the necessary support and structure to adolescents who are attempting to successfully manage the task of identity formation. Within the context of professional counselling psychology, Peteet (1994) writes that clients prefer to be able to integrate their personal values and beliefs into the counselling process. He concludes by suggesting that more research be conducted on the role of spirituality and religion in the client's experience of counselling. Included within this research would be the impact religion has on adolescent identity formation.

The literature clearly supports the idea that religion plays an important role in identity development in adolescents. While a few of the influences of religion on the process of identity formation have been reported, several writers encourage further study in this area. Finally, the literature affirms the need for both youth workers and counsellors to gain a better understanding of the ways religion affects the process of identity development in adolescents.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The Critical Incident Technique

This research was conducted using the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954). This methodology was chosen for its effectiveness in gathering data which describe the experiences of adolescents within organized Christian religion. According to Rice and Greenberg (1984) critical incident studies fall under the discovery more than the verification stage of research. Woolsey (1986, p.252) states, "Critical incident studies are particularly useful to the early stages of research because they generate both exploratory information and theory or model-building."

Flanagan (1954, p.327) describes an incident as, "Any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act." To be precise he goes on to say that "its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects." In this study, if an event were recalled with detail and passion, ten, twenty or sometimes thirty years hence, it was deemed to be a critical incident whether or not its effects could be identified.
The critical incident technique has been used in a wide variety of studies of which the following are examples: the impact of informational interviewing on an individual's career development (Post, 1996); exploring healing among First Nations people (McCormick, 1994); high school counselling trends (Neely & Iburg, 1989); success and failure in university students (Schmelzer, Schmelzer, Figler, & Brozo, 1987); and improving quality of life (Flanagan, 1978). Woosley (1986, p.242) states, "The critical incident technique should contribute significantly to the development of a unique methodology for the discipline of counselling."

Research Participants

Participants were adults over the age of 21 who were involved in organized Christian religion during their adolescence and were in a position to articulate events of significance from that time. Adults were interviewed instead of adolescents to allow time for reflection on their experiences. Five of the fifteen participants volunteered to be interviewed. The remaining ten were referred to me through others who heard about my study.

Before interviewing the participants, I met with each one (or when this was not possible, spoke with them by telephone) and explained the interview procedure and types of questions I might ask. I gave each participant an opportunity to ask questions about the study.
Participant Demographics

The following chart outlines characteristics of the participants:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Descriptor</th>
<th>Demographic Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>8 males and 7 females</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>10 between the ages of 20 - 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4 between the ages of 30 - 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 over 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present Occupation</td>
<td>6 were university students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 were teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 were professional artists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 worked in business/sales/contract work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Affiliation During Adolescence</td>
<td>9 attended a Protestant church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 attended a Catholic church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 did not attend church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Involvement in Organized Christian Religion During Adolescence</td>
<td>11 attended a Christian summer camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 attended a church youth group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 attended a weekly Bible study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 witnessed or participated in a cross-cultural mission experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current Involvement in Organized Christian Religion</td>
<td>12 still affiliate with Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 no longer affiliate with Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grew Up in a Christian Home</td>
<td>12 grew up in a Christian Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home</td>
<td>3 did not grow up in a Christian Home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Interviews

The interviews ranged in duration from 45 minutes to 3 hours. I began by asking participants to describe in general how they were involved in organized Christian religion during adolescence. From there I asked them to recount any event of significance they remembered from that time. I asked for events which occurred within or as a result of being involved in organized Christian religion. Once I had grasped the description of the particular event I asked them to describe how they were affected by it.

Each interview was audio-recorded and thereafter I transcribed the details, listing each event, indicating what lead up to the events, and concluding what the result of each event was. I took the transcription back to the participant to read. I asked for corrections to be made by adding, deleting, or changing material. Fourteen of the fifteen made minor changes to the draft I had prepared. Subsequently, I made the necessary alterations to the transcriptions.

Data Analysis

Once incidents were transcribed, each one was recorded on file cards for ease of sorting. The critical incidents were categorized into themes which emerged from a process of successive sortings. There emerged eight
themes, each one indicating both positive (facilitating) events and negative (hindering) events.

Reliability

The issue of subjectivity is addressed by Anderson & Nilsson (1964):

It is clear that different people may systematize incidents in different ways. But one can always refer to the source material. The essential thing seems therefore to be that the category system chosen is an obvious one, and with as small a degree of arbitrariness and chance as possible. (p.400)

Andersson & Nilsson (1964) go on to recommend the use of independent raters.

Once the categories were defined, two independent raters were asked to sort a sampling of the incidents. The raters were given explanations of each of the categories. In total, the raters were asked to sort 35 incidents which were representative of all the categories and which included both facilitative and hindering incidents. Flanagan (1954) and Andersson & Nilsson (1964) suggest that agreement between researcher and independent rater should be at least 75%.
Participation Ratio

Categories composed of incidents from less than 50% of the participants were examined to ensure that enough depth was represented for the category to remain. Two of the eight categories were derived from participation ratios less than 50%. Both categories were kept for the following reasons. First, experts who read the data agreed that these two factors were significant in facilitating identity development in adolescents. Second, the degree of passion with which the participants described the incidents contained in these categories provided enough depth and significance for the categories to remain. Finally, the literature supports the need for the inclusion of at least one of these two factors in facilitating identity development.

Expert Perspective

Three independent experts in the area of adolescent counselling were asked to give their perspective on the categories defined. These were a school counsellor, a youth worker, and a high school teacher. The school counsellor highlighted the category “Inclusivity and Belonging” as being the key to identity development. The youth worker also emphasized “Inclusivity and Belonging” as well as “Mentors.” She de-emphasized the
importance of “Faith Integrated Throughout Life” saying this was true for some adolescents, but more true for adults. Finally, the teacher emphasized six of the eight categories and found “Mentors” and “Having Fun” slightly less significant than the other six. All three people found the eight categories to be valid and extremely relevant to adolescent identity development.

Reliability of the Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Judges</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rater #1</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rater #2</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Inter-rater reliability</td>
<td>76.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Internal Validity

Internal validity is shown in the following way: each category contained both positive and negative incidents. Thus, whatever facilitated identity development was shown to be the mirror opposite of what hindered identity development in each category.
Comprehensiveness

Comprehensiveness is established by the following procedure: after the eight categories were crystallized, the additional 10% of observations from the study were sorted. The given categories were sufficiently comprehensive to include this 10%.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

In all there were a total of 175 critical incidents including 111 positive or facilitating factors and 64 negative or hindering factors. Eight categories were formulated from both positive and negative incidents. The eight categories highlight the eight factors which facilitated identity development within adolescents involved in organized Christian religion. At the same time, negative incidents within the eight categories illustrate how the absence or the opposite of one of these eight factors hindered identity development.

Description of the Categories

The following chart summarizes the total numbers and types of incidents and the degrees of involvement on the part of the participants in each of the eight categories. The left column gives the number of participants who contributed a negative incident to each specified category together with the total number of negative incidents. For example in the category of mentors, 9 participants contributed 13 negative incidents and 13 contributed 27 positive incidents. In total 13 participants contributed 40 incidents to the category of mentors.
### Numbers of Participants and Number of Incidents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative Incidents</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Positive Incidents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of participants contributing (Number of incidents)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 (13)</td>
<td>Mentors</td>
<td>13 (27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13 (40)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (12)</td>
<td>Inclusivity and Belonging</td>
<td>10 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11 (30)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (5)</td>
<td>Challenged to think independently</td>
<td>9 (28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 (33)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 (6)</td>
<td>Growth Through Success</td>
<td>6 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 (17)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 (10)</td>
<td>Given a Choice</td>
<td>3 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9 (13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 (7)</td>
<td>Faith Integrated Throughout Life</td>
<td>7 (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8 (19)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>Having Fun</td>
<td>7 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7 (12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 (10)</td>
<td>Family Support</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 (11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mentors

Participants benefited from older people who took interest in and cared for them as individuals. As many as eleven members spoke of the positive significance for them of an adult paying personal, one-on-one, attention to different individuals in a variety of ways. Two people commented on the positive benefits they gained in observing leaders as role models displaying exemplary behaviour. The opposite aspect of mentoring was listed by four participants who felt they had been rejected by their leaders. One member commented on a leader whose actions failed to back up his words. A further two, on the negative side, talked about a leader who made them feel they were being pressured to be something they knew they could not be. One person described an experience in which a group of high school students tried to form a group without a leader yet felt they needed one. This group never really got started and eventually dissolved.

Examples of Incidents within the Mentors Category

A. Positive Incidents

"I remember my Sunday school teacher took me to see the geology lab where he worked. I thought this was really great. I was impressed that he took the time to spend with me."
"I remember when my leader showed me her bedroom in her parent's house. I loved her room. We had tea and sat on her bed. I felt special because a leader actually wanted to spend time with me."

"I remember this one day at camp feeling overwhelmed at the responsibility I had been given. I was very tired. I remember this other leader coming up to me and handing me a package of M&M's and a note which said, "You are appreciated and I'm praying for you." This note just blew me away. I looked up to this other leader she was older and she was one of those star camp leaders."

"This was one of my more positive experiences within organized Christianity. The cabin leader I had and I became friends and really respected his integrity and his knowledge of his experience of struggle himself. He was open to seeing me for who I was. I felt like this opened an opportunity for a relationship of real accountability."

"I remember my summer at boys camp when I was 13. I had a cabin leader who spent a lot of time with me and would talk with me like I was a peer. I would just hang out with him and we would have these long conversations. I came away feeling important like I mattered."
B. Negative Incidents

"I remember how my cabin leader at camp would take each of us away individually and have one-on-one chats with us. I remember for some reason, the cabin leader really took a liking to my friend who had just become a Christian. When it was my turn to have a conversation with him. I remember distinctly feeling like he didn't really believe me. For some reason I didn't elicit the same response that my friend had from the cabin leader. I was left feeling stung and jealous."

Inclusivity and Belonging

The participant felt like he or she was included in or belonged to a larger community while others had the opposite kind of experience. A group singing experience proved to be critical for three out of the fifteen who found themselves on the positive side of this outcome. Their personal contributions to such a beautiful and harmonious sound elicited feelings of inclusion in the community. A similar positive sense of inclusion was described by three other participants after making contact with a Christian community. They felt they had, in their own words, "come home," so they could relax and be themselves. On the negative side, three people commented on feeling so different from the group of Christians with whom they associated that they felt excluded. A second negative experience was described by three people after they were given
some teaching, followed by instructions, all of which explicitly excluded individuals or groups from that community.

Examples of Incidents within the Inclusivity and Belonging Category

A. Positive Incidents

"I felt included and like I was involved in contributing to something worthwhile."

"I remember singing at church. I loved the feeling of being in a room filled with people singing. It sounded so beautiful. The music filled my whole being. This was a powerful and an important experience for me to be a part of a community activity like this."

"I remember one evening we decided to make the study an all girls study. I was glad because I wanted that sense of community. I came away with a sense of belonging to a small community."

"I remember coming home from youth group the first night being struck by the community feeling I had there."
B. Negative Incidents

"I remember feeling mixed about whether I fit in or not. I felt a little on the outside like I didn't fit in. I felt unattractive."

"So, I felt really different from other people around me at church. I thought I was a Christian, but when I heard this sermon which seemed to go against the values I had learned at home and like I was confused. This contributed to my feeling of being outside the church community."

**Challenged to Think Independently**

Participants needed to be challenged to think for themselves in order to make decisions about what they believed and why they believed it. Five people commented on the importance of being free to raise questions about the teaching they were being given, material they were reading, as well as things they were hearing or experiencing. Six people mentioned the positive value to them of thought-provoking teaching and discussion sessions with a respected leader. Negative aspects were outlined by two participants who described experiences in which questioning and thinking were not encouraged but thoughtless emotionalism was rewarded.
Examples of Incidents within the Challenged to Think Independently Category

A. Positive Incidents

"I remember this one time I think a nurse came in to talk about abortion. I think she gave me the first inkling that there were gray areas of faith. She raised the possibility that it is not always black and white for that issue."

"I remember making an appointment to talk with the youth leader who I had only met about 3 weeks previously. We met in the church in a very open place. I had some pretty set ideas of all the paths leading to God and this leader was one of the first people to take my thoughts seriously and to challenge my thinking. He got me thinking about why I believed what I believed."

"My leader had a big book collection. I remember having a big conversation with this leader about this one book. I don't remember what this leader said but I was satisfied with the answer he gave. I remember feeling listened to and how frank and honest he was. I felt heard and challenged."

"I remember this one debate on evolution and creationism. I was challenged and fascinated. Both people were Christians arguing for
different sides. I remember the debate being amicable which I was not used to at all. They respected each other and each other's opinions. I came away with a sense that there is room to explore and have different opinions within the Christian church."

B. Negative Incidents

"I remember going to my first Bible study at University. It wasn't a very open study. You know. Let's reiterate what we already know. There seemed to be a lack of inquisitiveness. It didn't seem to me like they genuinely wanted to learn anything."

**Growth Through Success**

Participants described growth as a result of succeeding at some challenge. Five people gave details of how they were stretched, and grew thereby, because of new positions of responsibility. One person talked about being honoured at her confirmation, yet she felt that the whole event was significantly less important than it was being treated. Another felt that all his hard work was not being given the accolades it deserved.
Examples of Incidents within the Growth Through Success Category

A. Positive Incidents

"I remember arriving at the camp with my guitar and the director asking if I would like to lead music that week at camp. I was excited and also kind of freaked about leading by myself. This was a great experience for me cause that's the sort of stuff that pushes you onwards I guess. I had never lead music like that before and I learned that I could do it."

"I remember this camper phoning me up during the school year and asking if I would be able to lead a Bible study with him and about 4 or 5 friends. I kind of swallowed and said, "Ya. Sure." It was a great experience. People kept coming and the Bible study kept building week by week. I was challenged to talk about my faith and humbled in needing to trust God for His guidance."

"I was invited to be a Eucharistic minister when I was 17. I took this role very seriously and therefore felt nervous. I was honoured to be invited to do this."

"I remember doing one of the hardest out trips at camp one summer. Because the leader knew me a little through my older brother, the leader leaned on me a little bit for help. I remember feeling this tremendous sense of satisfaction that first of all the
leader chose me to be his helper but also that I could do it. This was the first time I had accomplished something big. I came home amazed at what I had done."

"I remember one night when I was a junior cabin leader and I had to get angry at the campers. I was learning how powerful it was to save your raised voice for certain situations. I remember this being a very positive experience of being able to develop in a different way."  

"The confirmation thing was on Sunday morning and there were a lot of people there. I felt a sense of accomplishment like I had completed my goal."

B. Negative incidents

"I remember being asked to lead a Bible study in that year. I had had no formal leadership training up until that point I think the reasoning was that I had just returned from this great missionary experience and probably had something great to share with others. I failed miserably. I showed up for one Bible study and was totally unprepared. I arrived at the study and had no questions to ask and no research completed. I remember one person did pick up the ball
that evening and made something out of the time. I was preoccupied with sorting out what to do with my life too much to focus on preparing a Bible study. I felt like I should lead this study. I ended up feeling like I had failed miserably.

**Given a Choice**

Participants benefited from the opportunity to choose whether or not to be involved in organized Christian religion. The one positive incident in this category involved a participant saying no when asked to accept a Christian leadership position. He was proud of himself for not being drawn into one more activity for which he did not want to take responsibility. Four participants described negative incidents related to parents forcing them to go to church and giving them no choice in the matter. Five others outlined circumstances in which they were coerced into some kind of Christian activity against their will. One person told of a situation where the teaching was manipulative, leaving everyone without a choice on how to respond.

**Examples of Incidents form the Given a Choice Category**

A. Positive Incidents

"I remember this one time toward the middle of the year when one of the senior students and the fellowship leader approached me to
get involved in the leadership. I was not sure how keen I was to support what they were doing. In a round about way I said, "No." I was proud of myself for not getting sucked into things."

B. Negative Incidents

"I remember once sitting out in the parking lot and my Dad doing the discipline thing. He said, "Every time you skip out of church, that will mean another month until you can get your driver's license." I did not want to sit through a church service."

"I remember one morning I finally said to my Mom I didn't want to go to church. My parents were very hurt and still to this day try to persuade me to go to church. At least I established that it was my choice to go when I wanted to go."

"I remember I had a softball tournament on the same weekend as my cousin's first communion. I told my Mom that I had a softball tournament. On the morning of the communion my Mom left me a note saying, "I really think it is important that you be there. Do what you need to do, but I know you will make the right choice.""

"I had been preparing for my confirmation and somebody realized that I had never been baptized. There was a big deal made about this. I was shoved into an evening service and baptized. I never
remember being given the choice of whether I wanted to get
baptized or get confirmed later at another time. I wished I had been
given a choice."

**Faith Integrated Throughout Life**

It was important to the participants that faith connected with all
aspects of life. Six of those who were interviewed recalled conversations
with friends who were not involved in organized Christian religion.
Many of these conversations left them feeling disconnected from friends.
At the same time, two members talked about some whom they admired at
school because they could talk about their involvement in organized
religion and still connect well with classmates at school. One person
relayed how good it was to be able to include family and friends in her
baptism ceremony. She felt that her whole community, Christian and
non-Christian, had been part of that event. Three participants said that
prayer and the support of the Christian community helped them survive
times of family illness. One person gave accounts of several incidents
where camp life seemed worlds apart from that of home, adding that it
was depressing to return home from camp, leaving all the fun and good
memories behind. This participant also described a time at camp when an
important event in world news was acknowledged. She found this to be
significant since it connected the real world with camp.
Examples of Incidents within the Faith Integrated Throughout Life

Category

A. Positive Incidents

"I remember this one girl at school. She was really popular and was always so confident about saying, "I am going to church tomorrow so I can't go out tonight." She would say this at school, at a party, or wherever ever. I looked up to her."

"When I was in Grade 9 my Mom got sick with cancer. All of a sudden spiritual matters took on a new importance in our family. I remember my Mom talking a lot more about God and my faith strengthened through that time."

"The camp director brought tons of televisions up to camp so we could watch Neil Armstrong walk on the moon. I think this was significant because camp wasn't too separate from the real world."

B. Negative Incidents

"Some friends of mine from college started coming to a Bible study I attended. This was very strange for me because I worked to keep these worlds separate. This experience was both good and uncomfortable, because I still found it hard to connect these two worlds of mine."
"My boy friend came to visit me at camp. We went off for a walk but it was like oil and water. I felt a conflict there between my two worlds. I was left feeling a tension between life at camp and life at home with my boy friend."

**Having Fun**

Participants benefited from a sense of having tons of fun. On one occasion, the values of this activity in a group situation were very much appreciated. For many of the six involved, they knew very few, if any, of the others who were present but this did not seem to matter. Two participants described leaders who knew how to make fun and who were ready to enjoy the process as well. The one negative incident related to a situation in which the participant and his friend were bored and decided to arrange their own fun venture. This meant that they were excluded from the planned programme.

**Examples of Incidents within the Having Fun Category**

A. **Positive Incidents**

"I remember this song that some of the leaders would sing sometimes before the evening camp fire time. It was a little routine and I thought it was a lot of fun. I remember their song to this day. It
was vitally important to me that God was part of a picture which was packed with fun and wasn't gekey."

"On Halloween of Grade 8, one of my friends invited me and 3 or 4 of my friends to a youth group at his church. I still remember it as one of the best times of my life. That was the first time church had ever been fun."

"I remember my first year at teens camp. I was in the best cabin of guys. We had a pile of fun together."

"I remember one night on our youth group retreat was just wildly fun and yet wholesome. I think some of the guys ate tea bags just so they could stay up all night. I had a lot of fun."

"I was in Grade 9 and my leader took me to a Halloween party. I just had a ton of fun and wanted to go to more events like this."

"I remember going to camp once in the winter. It was supposed to be a ski weekend, but there was no snow. So, instead we called it "mud teens". We had so much fun. I just remember having a ton of fun."
B. Negative Incidents

"Once a year in Vancouver, there is a huge missions conference and a friend and I went down to the conference. I remember being in a room with a speaker but I don't remember anything of what was said. All I remember is that my friend and I decided to make up our own fun otherwise we would have been completely bored."

Family Support

Participants need to be supported by their family as they explore the meaning of experiences they have within organized Christianity. Three people told of parents who were in the habit of speaking derogatively about religion. They felt torn between the two worlds of organized Christian religion and family. Two others said they noted a lack of enthusiasm on the part of their families when they returned home from camp and wanted to tell their stories. The only positive incident in this category came from one whose family reinforced all that he was learning at youth camp.
Examples of incidents within the Family Support Category

A. Positive Incidents

"I remember this one time when our family tried to memorize this one psalm. Sometimes this seemed like a chore. I liked the feeling of the family being together."

B. Negative Incidents

"The director at camp reminded me of my Mom. I remember wishing my Mom and I could talk about stuff like the director and I did."

"I remember telling my Dad that I had become Christian. My Dad told me to get my head out of the clouds. I felt like my Christian beliefs separated me from my family."

"I remember a conversation I had with my Mom one Friday night as I was getting ready to go to youth group. My Mom suggested that I go to a party instead of to youth group that night. She didn't understand that this was the most important thing in my life."

"I remember leaving the dining room table at times because my Dad would make jabs at me about my faith."
"I can still feel the tension from when my family came to visitors' day. I was so worried that the day would go well and that it would impress them. I remember watching them during the singing and trying to figure out if they were enjoying themselves or if they were embarrassed by it. This contributed to my sense that my Christian beliefs separated me from my family."
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

A total of 175 critical incidents were elicited, including 111 positive or facilitating factors, and 64 negative or hindering factors. Eight categories emerged from the incidents: 1. Inclusivity and Belonging; 2. Challenged to think for themselves; 3. Mentors; 4. Having fun; 5. Given a Choice; 6. Faith Integrated Throughout Life; 7. Family Support; 8. Growth Through Success.

From a variety of reports and statements in the literature it is clear that many of the things which have been investigated in this study are known to be significant in the development of identity among adolescents. In fact, more than half of the particular categories that emerged from the interviews are recognized by different writers.

Both Sheldon (1990) and Erikson (1964) emphasize the first two of the categories listed above, that is “Inclusivity and Belonging” and “Challenged to think for themselves.” Both writers stress the vitality of peer relationships, pointing out how the sense of belonging to a community of peers provides both security and a risk-free forum where ideas and ideologies can be freely investigated.
Mentors are highlighted in the literature as being significant for youth. Hendry, Roberts, Glendinning and Coleman (1992) report that mentors play many significant roles in the lives of adolescents. Stiles et al. (1991) claim that adolescents desire relationship with adults who are easy to talk with and can be trusted. Peters (1992) says:

The implication appears to be that informal mentors may have significant contributions to make in the self-esteem of youth, especially those with problematic family backgrounds where normal and necessary self development has not occurred. (p.92)

Fun experiences among youth tend to solidify relationships within the group concerned and thereby facilitate interactions between members of the group. Peters (1992) found that experiences of this kind were remembered as positive influences in settings of the organized Christian religion type. Peters (1992) also says that the element of choice is an equally popular experience among adolescents. It makes them responsible for their own actions and thus moves them toward greater autonomy, an essential step in the process of identity formation.

Goldman (1965) takes a broad view of the problems experienced by young people in organized Christian religion. In some ways he identifies
what few others have recognized, that is the tendencies of Christian organizations to be authoritarian in their teaching. This is the very antithesis of the elements that contribute to identity formation.

Furthermore, perhaps again with an eye to the kinds of teaching that might be typical of organized Christianity, Goldman notes the need for young people to relate their Christian thinking to the wider issues confronting society at large. He mentions social justice, race relations, and the problem of pain as examples of these wider issues.

Two other considerations are listed by Goldman: one, the danger of emotionally-based decisions where young people can be bulldozed into some kind of conversion without a sound intellectual grasp of what it is all about; the second consideration focuses on the methods of teaching that are often employed in organized Christian religion, and the importance of giving as much attention to this aspect of things as might be given to the content of the teaching. This is how be summarized his thinking:

A final reason for negative feelings about religion in adolescence seems to be not only the content of teaching, but the way in which it is taught. Young people seem to resent authoritarian teaching and more and more wish to explore ideas and beliefs for themselves. Good permissive relationships,
allowing personal questioning and discussion, seem to be the best climate for religious education... (pp. 54-55)

For Rogow, Marcia, and Slugoski (1982), religion is the most influential factor of identity formation amongst those in the state of Moratorium. As those in the state of Moratorium have completed much exploration but little commitment to a decision, this suggests that religion somehow facilitates the necessary commitment side to identity formation. Within the eight categories defined in this research, two relate to the commitment side of identity. Allowing adolescents to make their own choices and encouraging them to think for themselves both relate to the need for adolescents to commit.

No direct comments were found in the literature concerning the need for family support or the need for growth through success. Three of the fifteen participants did not come from a Christian family. All three faced struggles of needing to justify beliefs to family members who often made derogatory comments about organized Christian religion. The adolescents' choices to align with organized religion separated them from their families and caused sadness. The remaining twelve participants did not struggle with the sense of separating from their families since the chosen beliefs were reinforced at home. It is, therefore, surprising to me that the literature makes no reference to the need for family support. For adolescents who choose to involve themselves in organized religion but
do not come from Christian homes, extra attention needs given to counselling around the issue of family support.

Five of the fifteen participants were inhibited from an opportunity to grow through succeeding at a challenge. These experiences ranged from denied opportunity to participate to denial of success ensuing from participation. Six of the fifteen did have the opportunity to grow through succeeding at a challenge. Not only did this impact the participant’s sense of self-confidence, but it shaped identity in the participant choosing to continue affiliation with organized Christian religion.

Based on the experiences of this study’s participants, I am convinced that family support and growth through success are critical influences in the development of identity. More research needs to be conducted on how to facilitate family unity when adolescents choose to align with beliefs not supported by the family. Further study should also be conducted on the implications of growth through success within the context of organized Christian religion.

Implications for Practice

At least four groups of adolescent helpers stand to benefit from this study: youth workers, parents, educators, and counsellors. Information
from this study could be integrated into training programs for any one of these groups of people. The research suggests the following may facilitate identity development in adolescents involved in organized Christian religion:

I. Because belonging and inclusivity seem so important, experiences within groups where the individual feels included are highly desirable. Activities of this type may be secured through group counselling, retreats, and weekend residential workshops.

II. In order to make sure that adolescents think for themselves, counsellors should challenge them to question why they believe what they do. They need to distill out the reasons that lie beneath the assumptions they make and the beliefs they hold. Adolescents will benefit from reading challenging literature and from learning experiences that include teaching and discussing life issues. Carefully-planned guidance classes and thought-provoking evening or weekend seminars would also be valuable in this connection.

III. Mentors need to be included in therapeutic practice with adolescents. In place already are such provisions as peer counselling programs, community youth workers who operate within the school system, community centers, and boys' and girls' clubs. Counsellors need to develop a pool of young adults who are willing to befriend adolescents in the role of mentor. Whether or not young people are in need of help, this
research suggests that they benefit from the care, guidance, and modelling given by mentors.

IV. Having fun has been shown to facilitate identity development. Counsellors therefore should recognize the value of this kind of experience, as well as the more formal aspects as in one-on-one interviews. Even better than sending adolescents to a youth camp or fun club are activities in which the counsellor interacts personally with them in a variety of more relaxed games. In the research findings of this study, it was those leaders who interacted both formally and in fun events with adolescents who were remembered in a positive light.

V. Choice is an important element in the development of identity. Parents need to be educated on the crucial nature of choice. Counsellors also need to help adolescents see how their behavior affects their parents' desire to give them the power of choice. Within the school setting, teachers need to give opportunities for choice, say in how they organize their classrooms and how they teach.

VI. There is a need for adolescents to see clear connections between (a) the teaching they receive within organized Christian religion and (b) all aspects of their daily lives. Thus counsellors and other leaders must be aware of what goes on in the other world, as it were, of the adolescents they lead. The young people themselves must be involved in this process
by being challenged to bring these two worlds together in a meaningful way.

VII. Parental involvement in activities with adolescents is highly desirable. All too frequently, perhaps for obvious reasons, the life of the school and its associated programmes are insulated from the home. If seminars and workshops for parents can be arranged to bring home to them the great value of their support, they can thereby be alerted to the range of activities in which their verbal and practical approval can be demonstrated - activities such as school work, youth group events, and camping.

VIII. In relation to opportunities to feel successful in a new challenge, counsellors should look for ways to involve adolescents in positions of responsibility and leadership. Good examples of such are: community service projects with children or elderly people. It could also take the form of assisting in the running of weekend and summer programmes for younger children. In these activities adolescents can feel they are contributing significantly, making a difference, and therefore succeeding by assuming responsibilities.

Significance of the Study

Organized Christian religion tends to operate using formal, structured teaching methods. This research shows how eight different
factors correlated with identity development in adolescents. The eight factors are not often incorporated in traditional, organized Christian religion. Without these factors, identity development may be hindered, resulting in foreclosure, diffusion or moratorium. This study is significant in that it provides suggestions for factors which may allow organized Christian religion to be more facilitative of adolescent identity development.

Limitations of this Study

Due to the wide age range in the participants, there is a time span between the present and the time when the majority of the incidents occurred in the lives of the different participants. As a result, younger ones may have included more events than some of the older ones for at least two reasons: one, time causes us to selectively remember those events of greatest significance while forgetting others; two, having had more time to distill the event, the older participants may be more selective than some of the younger ones in what they deem to be a significant event.

There was a range of articulation among the participants. Some incidents were described in more detail that others. This may have led to my understanding their statements with varied amounts of accuracy.
The demographics of the fifteen participants does not permit extensive generalization to the population at large. Despite the variance in age, family background, and church affiliation, there was no balanced distribution of these factors nor were these factors used in analysis of the data.

Inevitably there are biases on the part of the interviewer which become evident during data collection. These biases can encourage participants to disclose certain incidents while withholding others.

It is not possible in a study such as this to determine causation links between the events and outcomes since it is not possible to isolate variables. Thus in this study I am limited to reporting events and outcomes without linking them through causation. Nevertheless, the aim of this study was to investigate the factors which hindered or facilitated identity development among adolescents within organized Christian religion and this aim was accomplished.

Recommendations for Future Research

In terms of future experimental work on theories of adolescent identity development, this research paves the way for the following investigative questions:
I. How do variables such as age, gender, socio-economic background, or church affiliation affect the relative importance of each of these eight factors in the adolescent’s life?

II. How do these eight factors impact identity development in adolescents of other faiths?

III. How do these eight factors play a role in determining Marcia’s four stages of identity achievement in adolescents?

Summary and Conclusions

This study, employing the critical incident technique to gather data, identified eight factors of experience that significantly affect identity development in the fifteen participants I interviewed. They are listed at the beginning of this chapter. Both the personal experiences of the participants who were involved in the study, and the extensive evidence of the literature make it clear that attention needs to be given to the power of these factors in shaping the inner lives of adolescents.

Additionally, it may be necessary to give consideration to the nature and importance of identity development as religious programmes and activities are being planned. Finally, this study has by no means exhausted the needed research on factors that influence identity development among adolescents within organized Christian religion. Some recommendations for further study are listed at the end of the review of results and the literature.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX

Lead-up: I grew up being quite antagonistic to Christianity. When I was fifteen and a half a friend of mine invited me to her youth group. I had been in a bad relationship which had just ended and I was pretty depressed. Both of my parents had split up and had remarried which left me without a close sense of family.

Event: I remember my friend coming up to me at school and asking, "What are you doing tonight?" I said dejectedly, "Nothing, I have no life." Then she said, "Well. We're having a big Bar-B-Q out at somebody's house and I would really like it if you would come. No pressure. I'd just like it if you would come." I said, "OK." The place was a way out in Delta at this farm. So we took the sky train out together and got there early. I met a number of people in the youth group many of whom lived out in Delta. We were in this barn and it was just beautiful. It was late May and one of the girls took me up to the very top of the barn so I could help her with the hay. There was this big window where you could see for miles. I remember it was so quiet and peaceful. Everybody was so inviting and friendly. The people were all a bit different. They were a bit eccentric and dressed like hippies. Which I liked because I was very eccentric at that age. So we had a Bar-B-Q, a dance, and then
we all filed into the barn and we lit candles and we sang songs. I remember I felt like crying because the sound was so beautiful. I had never been in a group of people singing like that.

Outcome: I felt liked and immediately accepted. I came away with a strong sense of the beautiful sound which came from the group singing together. I felt very strongly that I was the new girl that everyone wanted to talk to.