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RESEARCH ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Identity Styles and Religiosity: Examining the Role of Identity Commitment

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ABSTRACT

This study observed the role of identity styles, identity commitment, and identity statuses in predicting religiosity in a sample of undergraduate students attending a Seventh-day Adventist university ($N=138$). Two structural models were evaluated via path analysis. Results revealed two strong models for the prediction of religiosity. Identity styles explained 24% of the variance in religiosity, with the relationship mediated by identity commitment. Religious identity status explained 56% of the variance in religiosity, with the relationship not mediated by identity commitment. Implications of these interactions for understanding religious identity development are discussed.

Background

Sense of identity is the outcome of an evolving process that begins in childhood and progresses throughout the life cycle (Elder & Shanahan, 1998). One's identity is a sense of self that is developed through the interaction of all experiences past, present and future (Erikson, 1968). Identity functions as a "frame of reference people use to interpret personal experiences and negotiate the meaning, purpose, and direction of their lives" (Berzonsky, 2003, p. 131). Thus, one's identity provides him or her reference and guidance (Eryigit & Kerpelman, 2011).

Freud (1965) introduced the study of identity development with his proposal that parental introjection impacts the earliest stages of children's personality and ego development. Erikson (1950) then expanded identity development beyond early childhood with his psychosocial stage theory. He proposed that identity formation results from successfully negotiating a number of identity crises across the lifespan. Building on Erickson's framework, Marcia's (1966) identity status theory viewed identity development as the degree of an individual's identity exploration and commitment. He posited that a mature state of identity development is attained when an individual

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has made a commitment to personal morals and aspirations after experiencing a period of exploration (Marcia, 1966). However, Marcia's model is a character typology rather than an identity development theory (Schwartz, 2001). Therefore, both Berzonsky's (1989) social-cognitive model of identity formation and Veerasamy's (2002) experiential/rational model of religious identity development expand Marcia's work into identity development theories (Schwartz, 2001).

Berzonsky's model of identity formation

Identity styles

Berzonsky's (1989) theory focused on differences in the social-cognitive processes and strategies that are used in engaging or avoiding the tasks of maintaining present identity, changing present identity, or constructing a new identity. Identity processing styles are not the outcome, but rather are the process by which individuals form their identities through exploration and commitment activities (Eryigit & Kerpelman, 2011).

Berzonsky's (1989) identity processing model identified three identity styles "that describe particular sets of strategies for dealing with identity-related issues, making decisions, and solving problems" (Eryigit & Kerpelman, 2011, p.45). First, informational style entails exploration, elaboration, and evaluation of relevant information before making decisions. Individuals utilizing an informational style "deal with identity issues in a relatively deliberate and mentally effortful manner, intentionally seeking out, evaluating, and relying on self-relevant information" (Berzonsky, 2003, p. 132). Second, the normative style involves reliance on prescriptions, standards, and expectations of significant others or socially respected groups to make decisions. Individuals using normative style "deal with identity issues in a relatively automatic fashion by internalizing the values and beliefs of significant others with little deliberate self-evaluation" (p. 132). Lastly, the diffuse-avoidant style represents reluctance to deal with identity issues and the avoidance of identity conflict. Individuals utilizing a diffuse-avoidant style "strategically try to avoid dealing with personal problems, conflicts, and decisions" (p. 131).

Identity commitment

Berzonsky (2003) further proposed that the predictive power of identity styles on any outcome variable is mediated by identity commitment. *Identity commitment* is "the strength or clarity of the self-relevant standards, goals, convictions, beliefs, and the like that one holds" (p. 132). This personal self-certainty or commitment stabilizes behavior in circumstances when individuals are tempted to change because it provides "people with sense of purpose and direction" (p. 132). Thus, Berzonsky echoed Marcia's emphasis

on commitment, but separated identity commitment from identity processing styles.

Berzonsky (2003) confirmed the association between commitment and identity processing styles and suggested that commitment accounts for variation between identity processing styles and outcome variables. For example, he tested a moderated-effect model with commitment moderating the effect of identity styles on psychological hardiness. His findings indicated that the identity styles accounted for 10% of hardiness variance. Identity commitment alone did not have a significant effect, but the interaction between the styles and commitment explained an additional 5% of the variance (p. 137).

Connection between identity development and religiosity

Identity formation includes a religious aspect in which individuals explore and commit to a set of religious beliefs and/or practices (Griffith & Griggs, 2001). For example, Kiesling and Sorell (2009) evaluated the methodological assumption that spiritual identity can be characterized by the same processes, structures, and outcomes as other identity domains. Indeed, they found that an individual's capacity for spiritual identity development is related to his/her developmental stage and competencies. However they found that "spirituality is more discretionary than other domains of identity and less ontogenetic than is implied by a linear, normative, biological ground plan" (p. 268).

As noted previously, Marcia (1966) proposed that a period of exploration and questioning one's identity is necessary in order to achieve identity maturity. Similarly, Baltazar and Coffen (2011) suggested that doubt "may be one of the fundamental elements necessary for attaining religious identity achievement" (p. 188). Therefore, religious identity development is a process in which an individual makes religion meaningful for him/herself without being alienated from the society (Veerasamy, 2002).

Religious identity development

Identity theorists recognized spirituality/religiosity as an important domain of identity formation following Erikson's thinking about life-span psychosocial ego development. Erikson considered that expressions of religion and spirituality contributed to or curtailed the healthy formation of ego identity (Erikson, 1958, 1969). Some psychologists prefer to distinguish *religion* from *spirituality*. Religion is viewed as an organized system of beliefs and rituals (Koenig, McCullough, & Larson, 2001), whereas spirituality is viewed as a way to construct understanding, comfort, and guidance (Yarhouse & Tan, 2005). However, this dichotomy "dismisses the reality that for millions of people formal religious participation, the content of collective ideals, and religious practices are deeply intertwined with the experiential and formative components of

their self-definition” (Kiesling & Sorell, 2009, p. 254). Thus, *religiosity* is defined as the scope and intensity of one’s religious beliefs and practices, with spirituality at the heart of religiosity (Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999).

Allport and Ross (1967) attempted to operationalize the construct of religiosity by categorizing individuals in two groups: those who used religion for social standing and self-serving purposes as extrinsic oriented, and those who genuinely lived the tenets of their religion as intrinsic oriented. As Veerasamy (2002) noted, these “orientations are discrete types of religiosity” (p. 20). Following the Allport and Ross’s intrinsic orientation definition, Dollinger (2001; Dollinger & Malmquist, 2009) developed a 6-item Brief Religiosity Scale (BR-6) to capture the behavioral, cognitive, and affective aspects of intrinsic religiosity. The BR-6 also includes an item in regard to religious affiliation and an item about spirituality making it easier to recognize and observe the overlap between religion and spirituality.

Veerasamy’s model of religious identity development

Veerasamy (2002) proposed the experiential/rational model of religious identity development. Veerasamy attempted to improve Fowler’s (1981) six stages of faith theory, which has a primarily cognitive emphasis, by developing a model which incorporates the influence of cognition, individualism, affect, and community on religious identity. To develop his model, he drew from Kohlberg’s (1969) stages of moral development, Erikson’s theory of identity development (Erikson, 1950, 1959), Marcia’s work in measures for different identity statuses (Marcia, 1966), and the two system Epstein’s cognitive-experiential self theory (Hedwig & Epstein, 1998). In his resulting model, Veerasamy suggested that religious identity develops through six statuses: concrete, relational, confusion, cognitive-rationalization, exploration, and acceptance.

First, individuals in the concrete status are marked by a sense of religious devoutness by practicing religion, rigid and uncompromising behavior, a defensive self-righteous attitude, and perceptions of religion which are dependent on the views of authorities and significant others (Veerasamy, 2002). Second, individuals in the relational status have a growing tendency to do what is logical, but are limited to what is sensible to others. Third, individuals in the confusion status are distinguished by anxious thinking about religion due to feelings of anger and frustration associated with a sense of betrayal by significant others or to the realization that they allowed others to define their religion. Fourth, for individuals in the cognitive-rationalization status interpretation of religion is highly intellectualized, and any aspect of religion that does not make logical sense or cannot be encoded is rejected. Fifth, individuals in exploration status make a concerted and serious attempt to get to the true meaning and essence of religion, with willingness and an excitement to learn about alternative views and beliefs about religion. Lastly,

individuals in acceptance status are comfortable with their religion, do not feel a need to invest psychological energy in defense mechanisms, and sincerely accept and appreciate other religions (Veerasingam, 2002).

Purpose

Seventh-day Adventism is currently the fifth-largest Christian denomination worldwide with more than 18 million members globally (Zylstra, 2015). Yet, to our knowledge no previous research has examined the development of identity and religiosity in this population. As such, the purpose of this study was to observe the convergent validity of the identity styles model and the identity development statuses model in predicting the behavioral, cognitive, and affective aspects of religiosity in a religious homogeneous sample of undergraduate students attending a Seventh-day Adventist university. In addition, in keeping with Berzonsky's observed mediation pattern, we examined the role of identity commitment in mediating the relationship between identity development and religiosity. To this end, two structural models were developed describing the predictive role of identity styles on religiosity mediated by commitment (Model 1) and the predictive role of the religious identity statuses on religiosity (Model 2).

Rationale and hypotheses

Model 1

Berzonsky proposed that the predictive power of identity styles on any outcome variable is mediated by identity commitment. Given the religious component of identity formation, we predict that Berzonsky's identity styles will be predictive of Dollinger's religiosity, as mediated by identity commitment.

Model 2

Given the religious focus of Veerasingam's religious identity statuses, we predict that they will also be predictive of Dollinger's religiosity.

Method

Participants

This cross-sectional correlation study was conducted in November 2012 with 138 undergraduate students between ages 18 and 40 years. They were recruited from a confessional Christian university in Southwest Michigan. The median age of the participants was age 19 years and 58% of the participants were female. The largest racial group was Caucasian (34.8%), followed by

African-American (27.5%) and Latino (13.1%). Asian American, mixed, other, and American Indian yielded a smaller percentage than the other racial groups. Also, the majority of respondents (87%) indicated that they were born into a family of the same faith as their chosen faith. The majority of respondents indicated their religion as Seventh-day Adventist (91%), followed by Evangelical (6%) and Catholic (3%). Additionally, 30% of the sample indicated that they consider themselves as spiritual but not as religious. After IRB and institutional authorization, the participants from general course studies were invited to voluntarily participate.

Instruments

Three instruments were used in the data collection process: The Brief Religiosity Scale created by Dollinger (2001), the revised version of the Identity Style Inventory created by Berzonsky (1992), and the Religious Identity Development Scale (RIDS) created by Veerasamy (2002).

The Brief Religiosity Scale (BRS-6)

The BR-6 is an eight-item self-report measure, of which five questions address behavioral, cognitive, and affective aspects of religiosity, and one question concerns spirituality. Due to the religiously homogenous sample surveyed, two questions that address religious viewpoint were excluded from analysis. The emphasis of the content of the scale is on intrinsic rather than extrinsic religiosity. For example, “How often do you engage in solitary or private prayer?” (Dollinger, 2001, p. 78) Responses use a Likert-type scale with anchors 1 (Never/Not at all) to 5 (Very frequently/Extremely so). Coefficient alpha for the scale has been reported as 0.85 (Dollinger, 2001). Changes were made to question number two’s grammatical structure so that it read as follows: “Which of these statements comes closest to your beliefs?” Additionally, due to the high percentage of Christian young adults participating in this research, “God” was capitalized in option A of this same question.

The Identity Style Inventory, revised version (ISI3)

The ISI3 is a 40-item self-report instrument that measures Berzonsky’s informational, normative, and diffuse-avoidant identity styles as well as identity commitment. For example, “I know what I want to do with my future” (Berzonsky, 1992, p. 2). Responses use a Likert-type scale with anchors 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Test-retest 2-week interval correlations range from .83 to .89 ($N=94$), and the alpha coefficients of internal consistency range from .64 to .76 (Berzonsky, 1992).

The Religious Identity Development Scale (RIDS)

The RIDS is a 28-item self-report instrument that measures Veerasamy’s religious identity statuses from the perspective of the experiential/rational

model of religious identity development. It consists of six scales that measure the concrete, relational, confusion, cognitive-rationalization, exploration, and acceptance identity statuses. For example, "I think I need to learn about the relationship of my religion to other religions." (Veerasamy, 2002, p. 198) Responses use a Likert-type scale with anchors 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Alpha coefficients for the subscales ranged from .72 to .88. Test-retest reliability for the subscales ranged from .61 to .81. Construct validity evidence of the RIDS was established through factor analysis. Factor loading for the subscales ranged from .42 to .88, suggesting strong factor loadings for each of the subscales. Beginning evidence for concurrent validity was demonstrated through theoretically expected relationship between RIDS subscales and intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation. Additionally, convergent and discriminant validity was demonstrated through theoretically consistent correlations between RIDS subscales and anxiety and dogmatism (Veerasamy, 2002).

Procedures

In a regular class session, teachers gave a General Instruction and Informed Consent letter to each student, asking the student to complete a demographic form, the BR-6, the ISI3, and the RIDS and bring them back in the next class if they were willing to participate. This process was conducted in one general course of the School of Behavioral Science and another in the School of Health. The teachers offered extra points for participation in the survey. Students were instructed not to write their names as to keep the confidentiality of their answers. On the next class day, a list of those students who brought their anonymous completed survey and deposited it in a drop box in front of the classroom was made by the teacher in order to identify those who should receive the extra points. Surveys were then submitted to the researcher.

Results

Identity styles and commitment description

Table 1 describes the characteristics of the identity styles and commitment observed in the sample. Both variables were measured on a 5-point scale in which higher scores indicated higher involvement. The highest mean score

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for identity styles and commitment.

Style	N	Min	Max	Range	Median	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Informational	138	2.09	4.73	2.64	3.64	3.54	.53	.433	.302
Normative	138	2.33	4.67	2.33	3.44	3.44	.51	.057	.575
Diffuse/Avoid	138	1.20	4.20	3.00	2.50	2.53	.59	.229	.092
Commitment	138	2.20	5.00	2.80	3.90	3.84	.63	.544	.237

is for identity commitment (3.84), and the lowest is for diffuse-avoidant style (2.53). Standard deviations, skewness, and kurtosis figures suggest that the normal distribution assumption of the variables is satisfied. A repeated measure test (within subject) shows significant differences ($F(3, 411) = 144.539$, $\rho = .000$, $\eta^2 = .513$) between the styles. Commitment was the highest score, informational and normative were next, and diffuse-avoidant was in the lowest level.

Identity status and religiosity description

Table 2 describes the characteristics of the identity statuses and religiosity observed in the sample. Both variables were measured on a 5-point scale in which higher scores indicated higher involvement. Religiosity has the highest mean (3.75), followed by exploration (3.07) and concrete (3.04) statuses. The lowest mean score is for cognitive-rationalization (1.71). No significant difference was observed between concrete and exploration statuses, nor between relational and confusion statuses.

Association between variables

Bivariate correlation between the variables in the study (Table 3) shows significant positive correlation between commitment and religiosity ($r = .46$). There is significant negative correlation between religiosity and confusion status ($r = -.68$), cognitive-rationalization status ($r = -.51$), and diffuse-avoidant style ($r = -.20$). There is also significant negative correlation between commitment and diffuse-avoidant style ($r = -.37$), confusion status ($r = -.47$), and cognitive-rationalization status ($r = -.42$). Religiosity was not significantly correlated to normative style, relational status, or acceptance status.

Model 1

The present path analysis focused on predictors of self-reported religiosity among undergraduate students. The predictors, informational identity style, normative identity style, and diffuse-avoidant identity style, were configured into a hypothesized model with religiosity as the dependent variable. Degree

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for identity statuses and religiosity.

Status	N	Min	Max	Range	Median	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Concrete	138	1.40	4.60	3.20	3.00	3.04	.62	-.277	-.024
Relational	138	1.00	4.40	3.40	2.6	2.54	.59	.259	.224
Confusion	138	1.00	4.67	3.67	2.33	2.58	.87	.315	-.612
Cogn-rationalizat	138	1.00	3.60	2.60	1.6	1.71	.64	.873	.194
Exploration	138	1.00	4.60	3.60	3.00	3.07	.77	-.471	-.034
Acceptance	138	1.00	4.00	3.00	2.40	2.35	.66	.214	-.296
Religiosity	138	1.33	5.00	3.67	3.83	3.75	.74	-.554	.163

of identity commitment was placed as a mediator between the identity styles and religiosity. The model was evaluated via IBP SPSS Amos 19 (Arbuckle, 2010). Based on five criteria used to assess the model (Chi-square, GFI, NFI, CFI and RMSEA) our original model failed to fit the data. Based on modification indexes, one additional correlational path between informational and normative styles, and one direct effect of informational style to religiosity were included. The respecified model is shown in Figure 1. The chi-square assessing model fit, with a value of 2.178 (4, $N = 138$), $p = .703$, was not statistically significant. Thus, the respecified model appeared to be a good fit to the data. The goodness-of-fit index yielded a value of 0.99, the normed fit index yielded a value of 0.98, and the comparative fit index yielded a value of 1.00. The obtained RMSEA value was 0.000 with a 90% confidence interval of 0.000 to 0.097. All of these fit indexes indicated that the model was an excellent fit to the data.

The path coefficients are displayed in Figure 1 and are summarized in Table 4 under Direct Effects. All three identity styles had significant small direct effects on commitment, together explaining 32% of the variance in commitment. There was also a small direct effect (0.22) of informational style on religiosity. Overall, the effect of identity styles as mediated by commitment plus the direct effect of informational style explained 24% of the overall variance in religiosity.

Model 2

The present path analysis focused on predictors of self-reported religiosity among undergraduate students. The predictors, concrete identity status, exploration identity status, acceptance identity status, relational identity status, confusion identity status, and cognitive-rationalization identity status

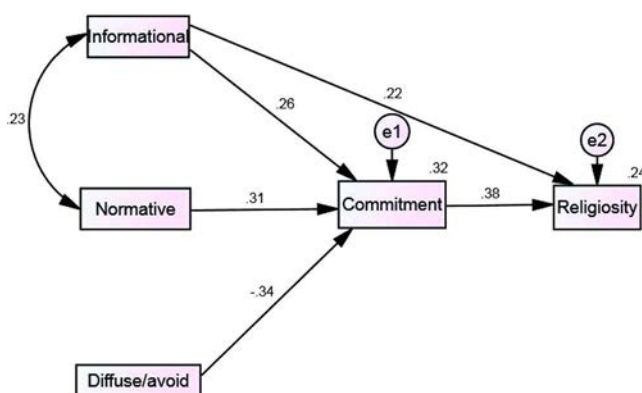


Figure 1. Respecified Model 1 to explain the predictive role of Berzonsky's identity styles on Dollinger's religiosity as mediated by Berzonsky's identity commitment.

Table 3. Correlation coefficients between variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Religiosity										
2. Commitment	.457**									
3. Normative	.141	.372**								
4. Informational	.354**	.365**	.229**							
5. Diffuse/Avoid	-.203*	-.371**	-.017	-.101						
6. Relational	-.010	.033	.291**	-.007	.131					
7. Concrete	.416**	.326**	.328**	.095	-.010	.288**				
8. Confusion	-.682**	-.486**	-.164	-.128	.367**	-.041	-.371**			
9. Cogn-rationalizat	-.515**	-.424**	-.209*	-.090	.146	.034	-.309**	.528**		
10. Exploration	.336**	.187*	-.132	.430**	.055	-.037	.104	-.101	-.087	
11. Acceptance	-.083	-.043	-.189*	.137	.178*	.096	-.124	.130	.318**	.292**

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$.

Table 4. Summary of causal effects of respecified model 1.

Outcome	Determinant	Causal effects		
		Direct	Indirect	Total
Commitment ($R^2 = .32$)	Informational*	.263	-	.263
	Normative*	.311	-	.311
	Diffuse/Avoid*	-.343	-	-.343
Religiosity ($R^2 = .24$)	Informational*	.217	.098	.315
	Commitment*	.376	-	.376

* $p < .001$.

were configured into a hypothesized model with religiosity as the dependent variable. The model was evaluated via IBP SPSS Amos 19 (Arbuckle, 2010). Based on five criteria used to assess the model (Chi-square, GFI, NFI, CFI, and RMSEA) our original model failed to fit the data. Based on modification indexes, correlational paths were added between the statuses. Additionally, the direct effects of acceptance and relational statuses were not found to be significant, so they were excluded from the model. The respecified model is shown in Figure 2. The chi-square assessing model fit, with a value of

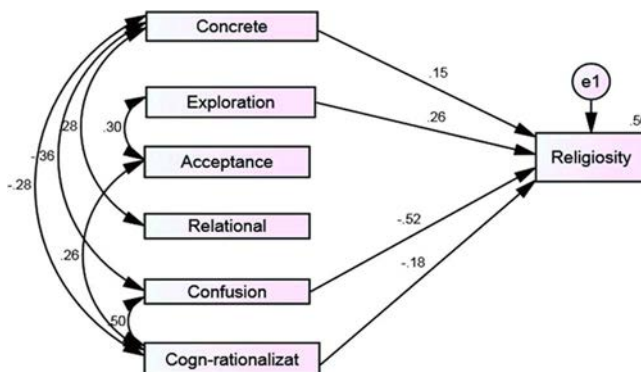


Figure 2. Respecified Model 2 describing the predictive role of Veerasamy’s religious identity statuses as predictors of Dollinger’s religiosity.

Table 5. Summary of causal effects of respecified model 2.

Outcome	Determinant	Causal effects		
		Direct	Indirect	Total
Religiosity ($R^2 = .56$)	Concrete*	.15	–	.15
	Exploration*	.26	–	.26
	Confusion*	–.52	–	–.52
	Cogn-rationalizat*	–.18	–	–.18

* $p < .001$.

13.757 (11, $N = 138$), $\rho = .247$, was not statistically significant. Thus, the respecified model appeared to be a good fit to the data. The goodness-of-fit index yielded a value of 0.97, the normed fit index yielded a value of 0.94, and the comparative fit index yielded a value of 0.99. The obtained RMSEA value was 0.04 with a 90% confidence interval of 0.00 to 0.10. All of these fit indexes indicated that the model was an excellent fit to the data.

The path coefficients are displayed in Figure 2 and are summarized in Table 5 under Direct Effects. Two positive direct effects were found: small direct effects of both concrete and exploration on religiosity. Two negative direct effects were found: a large direct effect of confusion and a small direct effect of cognitive-rationalization on religiosity. Taken together, the concrete, exploration, confusion, and cognitive-rationalization statuses explained 56% of the variation in religiosity.

Given the significant correlations observed between concrete, confusion, and cognitive-rationalization statuses and identity commitment, we also examined identity commitment as a mediator between the religious identity statuses and religiosity. However, this model was a poor fit for the data. So, results were not further reported in this article.

Discussion

Model 1

Berzonsky proposed that the predictive power of identity processing styles on any outcome variable is mediated by identity commitment. Given the religious component of identity formation, we predicted that Berzonsky's identity styles would be predictive of Dollinger's religiosity, as mediated by identity commitment. Indeed, we found that Berzonsky's model fit our sample. For, when religiosity was placed as an outcome variable, the impact of the input variable of identity styles was mediated by identity commitment. As proposed, all three identity styles had direct effects on commitment. Informational style and normative style had positive effects, whereas diffuse/avoidance style had a negative effect on commitment. Additionally, both commitment and informational style had positive direct effects on religiosity. Together, identity styles and commitment explained 24% of the variance in religiosity.

Model 2

With this in mind, we were curious as to whether Veerasamy's religious identity statuses would explain more variance in religiosity, given the religious content of his statuses. Indeed, we found that concrete, exploration, confusion, and cognitive-rationalization identity statuses together explained 56% of the variance in religiosity. Concrete status and exploration status had positive effects on religiosity, whereas confusion status and cognitive rationalization status had negative effects. However, acceptance and relational identity statuses were not significantly predictive of religiosity.

Comparing models

Overall, we found that Veerasamy's statuses explained 56% of the variance in religiosity observed in our sample, while Berzonsky's styles and commitment explained only 24%. However, all elements of Berzonsky's model remained significant, whereas only four of Veerasamy's statuses remained significant. So, while Veerasamy's statuses explained more variance in our sample's religiosity, Berzonsky's styles and commitment better characterized our sample's identity development.

For our sample, it appears that there is no effect of acceptance or relational status on religiosity. This is particularly interesting given that acceptance status is proposed by Veerasamy to be the ideal, or most mature, religious identity status. It may be that in the largely Seventh-day Adventist population we sampled, religious reflexivity is not associated with overall religiosity. The religious community may be built more upon acceptance of rules and norms, as indicated by the other statuses. However, in Berzonsky's model, the most mature style, informational, was predictive of overall religiosity. As such, more information is needed to explain this discrepancy. We are currently analyzing data from a replication of this study with a similar religious sample in South America, so we are interested to see if the results are similar.

As for our question, does commitment mediate the relationship between identity development and religiosity? In our sample, indeed commitment did mediate the relationship between Berzonsky's identity styles and religiosity. However, commitment did not mediate the relationship between Veerasamy's religious identity statuses and religiosity. So, our study suggests that though both were drawn from Marcia's model, perhaps Veerasamy's model does not incorporate commitment in the same way that Berzonsky's model does. We would be interested in a measure of commitment developed specifically in relation to Veerasamy's statuses. Overall, we have two very sound and interesting models for the role of identity development in religiosity. We recommend choosing between them, according to your level of interest in commitment.

Strengths and limitations

Our data were collected among a religiously homogenous sample of undergraduate students in southwest Michigan. Thus, our results may not reflect the broader population. Future research could retest these models in different religious groups, different age groups, and different geographic locations. Our study was strengthened by representation of diverse racial groups. We are also currently analyzing data from a similar religious community in South America, which should shed light on cultural differences.

In our sample, Veerasamy's acceptance and relational religious identity statuses were not significantly predictive of religiosity. Further research should investigate the validity of these two statuses among different populations. Additionally, the religious identity statuses were intercorrelated. Future research might investigate these correlations through the use of multilevel structural equation modeling.

Implications for Christian education

Parents and religious educators may be surprised when youths who were raised in religious environments choose to separate from their religious backgrounds as they mature. The observed role of commitment as mediator between identity development and religiosity may have an important contribution to understanding and explaining these unexpected outcomes. In this study, informational style had a direct effect on religiosity, which suggests that exploration, elaboration, and evaluation of relevant information before making decisions is associated with higher religiosity. Similarly, increased commitment was associated with increased religiosity. This suggests that having a sense of self-certainty and clarity regarding their goals and beliefs is associated with higher religiosity among youths. Taken together, our results suggest that youths' continued religiosity is associated with exploring and evaluating information and reaching personal clarity regarding their religious beliefs. Thus, parents and religious educators may do well to encourage knowledge and exploration of religious doctrines and behaviors as well as some level of commitment in order for youths to develop a positive and meaningful religious identity.

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