A STORY OF VIRTUE: MORAL IDENTITY IN STUDENTS ATTENDING A

MIDWESTERN EVANGELICAL COLLEGE

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study discussed the essence of moral identity and provided an

understanding of the context in which it was experienced by emerging adults attending a

Midwestern evangelical college. Since a primary objective in Christian education today is the

formation of moral character in students, this study provided a rich description of moral identity

within the emerging adult and a deeper understanding of moral identity formation during

adolescence by examining the life narratives of 11 students attending an evangelical college in

the Midwest. This phenomenological study used semi-structured interviews and document

analysis to describe the essence of the moral identity experience. A textual description and a

structural description were used with the analytical process of finding significant statements and

grouping these statements into meaningful units. Narrative coding was also used to build a

holistic description covering the depth and complexity of an individual's understanding of the

self. This interpretive study used qualitative methodology to form a thick and rich description

regarding the essence of moral identity and its formation in the emerging adult. Significant

findings include the ability of emerging adults with high moral identity to possess well-

developed self-narratives regarding moral events. Further, these narratives included themes of

connection to a higher purpose or story, alienation toward current culture, and admiration toward

a moral individual.

Descriptors: moral identity, moral development, Christian education

Acknowledgements

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

For millennia, education has aimed at instructing the whole child. Today, true educators continue to strive to educate children academically, physically, and morally, with moral education receiving increased interest (Sommerville, 2010). Historically, moral education has focused on three areas: cognitive or moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1969), affective (Gilligan, 1982; Hoffman, 2000) and behavioral (Smith, 2009). Recent research (Aquino et al., 2009; Frimer & Walker, 2009; Hardy, Rackham, Olsen, & Walker, 2012) has examined the role of moral identity as a moral motivator that can provide a link between moral decisions and moral behavior. While several studies have examined the role of moral identity during adolescence (Reimer, DeWitt Goudelock, & Walker, 2009; Zaha, 2010), a rich description of both its essence and its development is lacking. Sommerville (2010) found that moral development had become an area of emphasis within leading academic publications, and several researchers (Bouldon-Lewis, Brownlee, Walker, Cobb-Moore, & Johansson, 2011; Frey, 2010; Schuitema, TenDam, & Veugelers, 2008) have begun to stress the need for further examination of this area due to a lack of intentional instruction on moral development within education.

Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development was groundbreaking in extending Piaget's theories to the moral reasoning of children and adults. Piaget (1932) defined morality as a cognitive process in which individuals identify values and perspectives and then prioritize them into a logical hierarchy. Kohlberg (1969) then emphasized the essential role of conflict or crisis advocating the use of moral dilemmas to move students from one moral stage to another.

Power, Roney, and Power (2008) defined adolescence as the period in which individuals reach a moral crossroads because during adolescence, they develop moral self-understanding,

moral reasoning, and a growing sense of purpose and meaning. Adolescence is a time when individuals develop the capacity to understand deeper epistemological and ethical reasoning. During adolescence, an individual's schema begins to connect personally chosen beliefs to rational and moral concepts and decisions. This stage begins in early adolescence and often ends during the college years.

A study by Power and Khmelkov (1997) identified sequential levels of moral identity development in children ages seven to 16. These developmental levels were based upon their self-descriptions of their ideal, real, and dreaded moral self-identities. Within these studies, four levels of development were noted. The youngest participants consistently described themselves with stereotypical labels constructed by parents or other authority figures. When participants described themselves as morally good (level two), the development involved action or behavior but was still defined by an outside authority. As participants grew older, they began to define themselves using moral traits or characteristics instead of specific actions, and began to value independent, self-authored moral thought or action (level three). Finally, some older participants (15-16 year olds) spoke in terms of ideals or moral goals and displayed a more unified moral identity. At this stage of moral identity development, self-consistency was sometimes given as a reason for moral behavior.

Zaha (2010) and Reimer et al. (2009) conducted quantitative studies on moral development in middle school students. Zaha examined the correlation between volunteerism and moral development during adolescence. Reimer et al. studied 1,550 adolescents to consider the interaction of moral traits and moral identity in the creation of moral maturity. Reimer et al. also stressed the need for future research to examine the developmental processes of adolescents as they become morally mature through the formation of their moral identities.

Volunteerism has been shown to be both a characteristic of moral maturity and a factor leading to moral identity, moral self-understanding schemas, moral empathy, and moral behavior (Billing, Jesse, & Grimley, 2008; Gaines-Hanks & Grayman, 2009; Lakin & Mahoney, 2006; Seider, Gillmor, & Rabinowicz, 2012). However, several factors have been found to influence its effectiveness. While individual choice (Moely, Furco, & Reed, 2008) and teacher attitudes (Ohn & Wade, 2009) are influential, the opportunity to use personal reflection has shown the greatest statistical impact (Conway, Amel, & Gerwien 2009; Correia & Bleicher, 2008; Marichal, 2010; Meinhard & Brown, 2010).

One difficulty in researching moral development is the varied definition of terms. Especially in regards to value characteristics, different programs choose different and even conflicting values as desired end results. For the purposes of this study, moral maturity will be defined as "commitment to principled and caring behavior characterized by dependability, integrity, fairness and confidence" (Reimer et al., 2009, p. 373).

Current literature has demonstrated that moral behavior depends upon the interconnected relationships between moral reasoning, emotions, traits, and moral identity (Hardy, 2006; Marichal, 2010; Wang & Rodgers, 2006). Inadequate research has examined the context in which adolescents establish their moral identities by attaching meaning to moral ideals and by defining their moral selves. Blasi (1984) connected moral understanding to moral responsibility and argued that the link between the two develops during late adolescence. Therefore, this stage of moral development deserves further research in order to provide a rich description of this stage of moral identity development.

Problem Statement

Adolescence is viewed as a pivotal period in an individual's moral identity development (Blasi, 1984). Recently, there has been renewed interest in moral development and ethical studies within college institutions (Sommerville, 2010). Colleges have been called upon to increase both their ethical training of students and their research on how to best achieve this goal (Mayhew & Engberg, 2010). Yet colleges are not succeeding. One recent study reported that 75% of college students confessed to cheating, 70% confessed to stealing, and 89% confessed to lying (Schlender, 2008). Because moral identity has been shown to be a pivotal factor in moral behavior, this study provides a description of moral identity within emerging adults attending an evangelical college and identifies factors impacting its development. By interviewing college students from an evangelical school in the Midwest, this research has provided a thorough description of the moral identity stage found in emerging adulthood and uncovered factors affecting its formation. Further, by examining both male and female students this study analyzed the effect gender has on moral identity. This study also adds to the growing body of research indicating that females have a more empathetically based morality, and provides insight into the role of gender based cultural expectations upon moral identity formation.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe the moral identity of college students at a Midwestern evangelical college. By understanding students' perceptions of their moral identities through an analysis of their uses of moral self-descriptors and life narratives, and by connecting that understanding to established theories in moral and normative adolescent development, this study has provided both additional understanding and a description of this phenomenon. This study investigated a student's self-assessment of his or her own moral

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identity. Power, Power, and LaVoie's (2005) study indicated a strong correlation between a

college student's self-description of moral identity and moral behavior, indicating that students

who use pro-social moral terms as self-descriptors (used as indicators of their moral identities)

were significantly more likely to be involved in pro-social civic behavior. Because previous

studies have demonstrated this correlation between moral identity and moral behavior, this study

examined how moral identity is formed and how students raised within an evangelical setting

describe it.

Significance of the Study

Good education has always sought to improve the moral character of students. Dewey

(1916) emphasized the need to include this dimension within education. However, a consensus

on how to create moral citizens, or even what defines a moral citizen, is harder to find. Some

researchers followed Kohlberg's (1969) lead, which examined the role cognitive reasoning plays

in moral development, while others studied the traits of moral exemplars (Reimer, 2003) and the

role of moral emotions (Hoffman, 2000).

Developmental research views the college years as an important stage in moral formation

(Perry, 1999). Students develop the ability to reason (Piaget, 1932), the ability to use moral

reasoning (Kohlberg, 1969) and a sense of their own identity (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1966)

during this time. However, the majority of research on morality focused on the aspects of

cognitive and epistemological development alone (Perry, 1999). Further research is needed to

discover if other factors, such as moral identity, may impact moral behavior in college students.

The role of moral identity is a more recent area of research (Aquino et al., 2009; Frimer

& Walker, 2009; Hardy et al., 2012) and has been identified as one aspect of moral development

(Blasi, 1984). Some researchers have connected it to adolescent development (Pratt,

Hunsberger, Pancer, & Alisat, 2003).   However, Schlenker, Miller, and Johnson (2009) stated

"we currently know relatively little about how people develop a moral identity" (p. 320). This

study aimed to describe one stage of moral identity development and the context within which it

is experienced, with the purpose of understanding "how people develop a moral identity"

(Schlenker et al., 2009, p. 320).

The majority of research on moral identity equates it to maturity. However, there is a

great need for further qualitative research to adequately describe the developmental process in

which individuals achieve this maturity. According to Narvaez and Lapsley (2009) "the relative

paucity of work on the development of the moral self is striking" (p. 248).

A foundational desire of evangelical educational institutions is to develop ethical

motivation and encourage moral behavior. The mission statements of various evangelical

colleges provide examples of the emphasis they place upon moral development. For example,

Liberty University has stated its desire to build "men and women with values" (Liberty

University, 2010, para. 5), and Judson College has encouraged students to "embrace Christian

ethics for lifelong growth and behavior" (Judson College, 2012, Educational Goals: # 1).

Within evangelical educational institutions, moral development is a priority yet often an

area that receives little intentional implementation of well researched methods (Langer, Lewis

Hall, & McMartin, 2010). By examining the process of moral identity formation and the factors

that impede and advance its development, Christian educators may be better able to impact this

pivotal developmental area.

Glanzer and Ream (2009) stressed the need for Christian educational institutions to

promote character education programs that include more than just the cognitive approach.

Programs advocating moral development must influence a student's emotional, cultural, and

spiritual dimensions and impact his or her physical activities and environment. The program must transform a student's personal and moral identity, change his or her desires and value orientation.

This study is significant because it has provided Christian schools with a deeper description of moral identity in the emerging adult and of the environment in which this identify can be fully developed. By understanding the stages of moral identity development and the process students experience in its formation, educators can guide their students to greater moral development. This study will enable educators to support students in the development of their moral identities, moral reasoning, and moral behavior.

Theoretically, this study has provided a partial answer to the request made by previous researchers (Hardy & Carlo, 2005; Narvaez & Lapsley, 2009; Puka, 2003) to advance the knowledge of developmental stages in moral identity formation and the factors that moderate it. Hardy and Carlo (2005) stated that current research regarding this theory has not adequately described the "developmental processes and antecedents" (p. 238) involved in moral identity development.   This study hopes to further delineate the interdependent nature of an individual's moral identity.

While insights from this research are limited to college students attending an evangelical school in the Midwest, wider application may be found in an increased awareness within Christian education of the need for intentional programs that address moral development and are firmly grounded in empirical research. There are also implications for parents or caregivers of adolescents, providing them with researched descriptions of moral identity development and possible environmental factors that may facilitate its development.

The following questions guided this study:

Research Question One: How do select students at an evangelical college describe their moral selves?

Power et al. (2008) conducted a qualitative study with 48 middle school students to understand students' perspectives on moral identity. Open-ended questions were used in semi-structured interviews to discover students' descriptions of their real selves, their ideal selves, and their dreaded selves. Power et al. (2008) found a relationship between moral self-descriptors and a student's moral reasoning and moral behavior. Continued research on students' moral self-understanding and the process involved in its development was advocated.

Research Question Two: How, if at all, do volunteer service experiences impact the moral identity development of students at an evangelical college?

Youniss (2009) based moral development not upon the moral reasoning theories of Kohlberg (1969), but upon the formation of moral identity and personal empathy through relationships. Youniss (2009) stressed the importance of service learning oriented toward political action or traditional values. Research has indicated that institutions that reinforce values from civic, religious, or moral traditions are essential to moral identity formation in adolescents (Youniss & Yater, 1999). Thus, moral identity during adolescence may be developed within communities of value and through service learning opportunities (Youniss & Yater, 1999).

Several studies examined service learning opportunities as a factor that promotes moral development in adolescents (Billig, Jesse, & Grimley, 2008; Correia & Bleicher, 2008). Volunteering was based upon Dewey's (1916) Theory of Active Learning and emphasized the need for students to take part in real world experiences. Correia and Bleicher (2008) stressed the

importance of volunteering and the importance of reflection as a moderator in the effectiveness of volunteering in establishing significant, long-term moral changes. This study examined factors that students perceive as components and turning points in their moral development to gain a deeper understanding of the meaning students associate with these experiences.

Research Question Three: What factors do students at an evangelical college designate as deterrents to their moral identity development?

Puka (2003) stressed the need to examine deterrents to moral development. While research has shown a correlation between the lack of moral development and urban poverty due to its limited opportunities (Hart, Atkins, & Ford, 2010), inept parenting or negative peer influences (Patterson, DeBaryshe, & Ramsey, 1990), and unbiblical worldviews (Brickhill, 2010), little research has described how individuals have viewed the impact of these issues on their moral development or on its relationship to how they perceive their moral selves.

Research Question Four: How, if at all, do the descriptions of moral identity given by male participants at an evangelical college compare and contrast to the descriptions of moral identity given by female participants at an evangelical college?

"One of the most controversial issues in management involves gender differences in ethics" (Yurtsever, 2010, p. 515).   Since Gilligan's (1982) seminal work that challenged Kohlberg's (1969) justice based system of moral reasoning as being too oriented to the male perspective, researchers have questioned the correlation between moral perspective and gender. While the view that women have a more care related perspective of morality as opposed to the justice related perspective of morality held by men has been challenged (Walker, 2004), recent studies have indicated that women score higher on scales measuring moral imagination (Yurtsever, 2010), possess a more integrated sense of self (van Goethem, van Hoot, Raaijmakers,

Boom, & Orobio de Castro, 2012), and are more likely to have care as a defining characteristic of their identity (Dolnicar & Randle, 2007).

Limitations and Delimitations

There are significant limitations to this study. One area involves the reliability of students attending a Christian institution to provide honest self-assessments. Students in such an environment are highly motivated to give the religious or right answer. Students are often taught to give respectful answers to adults, which may impact their openness. This may increase the difficulty of discovering what students truly believe in regards to their moral self-understanding. The use of complete anonymity and multiple methods of data collection increased this study's reliability, but honesty was an area of constant concern.

The use of volunteerism as a factor in moral development has been criticized in other research (Billig et al., 2008) because of the various motivations students may have regarding volunteerism. Little research regarding the efficacy of volunteering to create self-centered motivation was found. However, student motivation, specifically the reasons that caused them to volunteer, may impact the effectiveness of the volunteer experience in developing their moral character.

Moral development covers all of an individual's life and is influenced and defined by several interconnected factors. Research on character education covers ethical reasoning, exemplar moral traits, moral identity, and the role of empathetic and caring emotions. For the purpose of this study, the age of the participants was limited to college students, and the factors comprising morality was limited to moral identity. College students were selected due to their important developmental level since it is expected that by the early college years some moral identity integration has been achieved. Damon (1984) stated "the split between morality and the

self is resolved during adolescence" (p. 109).   Students within this study were between the ages of 18 and 29. The use of students from a homogeneous group only provided insights into the developmental stage of late adolescents.

Purposeful, criterion sampling was implemented, since participants who have demonstrated both altruistic career aspirations and previous volunteer experiences were selected. Criterion sampling is a qualitative method that is ideal for phenomenological research since it "works well when all individuals studied represent people who have experienced the phenomenon" (Creswell, 2007, p. 123).

The questionnaire (see Appendix A) was used to assess each participant's perception of his or her moral self. Participants were rated on their use of moral descriptors and their use of moral descriptors oriented toward others instead of themselves (Power et al., 2008).   While participants in the study by Power et al. (2008) were middle school students, emerging adults may be able to better critique their moral selves during high school due to their growing ability to assess themselves (Damon & Hart, 1988) and deeper levels of critical thinking. Emerging adulthood is also the time "people put their lives together into stories" (McAdams, 2005, p. 122). Identity is developed in late adolescence as the individual experiences the integration of selfhood (McAdams, 2005). By selecting emerging adults with a higher level of volunteer experiences and greater interest in future altruistic endeavors, a wealth of data was collected to develop a full description of this level of moral identity development and to delineate any factors that impede or accelerate its development.

Finally, the results from this study are limited to one evangelical school in the Midwestern United States. Students were primarily from evangelical families, limiting this study's use in describing moral identity formation outside of evangelicalism. An evangelical

school was chosen due to limited previous research in this area. An individual's identity is formed by its interaction with the surrounding culture; therefore, the impact of evangelicalism and the biblical metanarrative it is based upon will be a formative factor in the moral identity development of individuals raised within this sub-culture. While these participants provide a depth of understanding regarding the complexity of the moral identity formation in college students within an evangelical environment, they provided little information on the moral development of students within a public institution or from a different culture dominated by a different metanarrative. Also, since only emerging adults were part of this research, emerging adults is the only stage of moral identity development this study addressed. Moral development is a complex interdependence of several characteristics; however, this research created a more complete description regarding one stage of moral identity within the subculture of evangelicalism today.

Research Plan

This phenomenological qualitative study used systematic procedures to develop a thorough description of moral identity development in late adolescence. Creswell (2007) recommended that to achieve descriptions rich enough to formulate theoretical propositions, data be collected through multiple avenues. Therefore, data was collected through a questionnaire, interviews, and the reflective writings of students. Eleven students participated in this study, as Creswell recommended a homogenous sample group of six to12 participants.

These participants formed a purposeful, criterion sample as suggested by Creswell (2007), because all participants were attending an evangelical Bible college, were between the ages of 18 and 29, and had experience within volunteer service opportunities and an interest in pursuing vocational service ministries. Moral identity was initially identified through their use

of moral self-descriptors given in the initial questionnaire. These self-descriptions were used to describe their moral identity development. Since this study sought to understand the phenomenon of moral identity, participants were interviewed and asked to fully describe their perception of their moral identity and the personal meaning they attached to it.

The data collected was read several times in its entirety to obtain a holistic interpretation of the data. Significant sentences were then identified and grouped into meaningful clusters based upon common themes and descriptions of the phenomenon. This data regarding how the participants experienced the phenomenon was used to formulate a textual description (Creswell, 2007).

Creswell (2007) identified four qualitative worldviews—"postpositivism, constructivism, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatism"—that will "inform qualitative research" (p. 19). I came from the postpositivism qualitative paradigm, which "view[ed] inquiry as a series of logically related steps, believe[ed] in multiple perspectives from participants rather than a single reality, and espouse[ed] rigorous methods of qualitative data collection and analysis" (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). Within this qualitative framework, the "intent of reporting these multiple realities" (Creswell, 2007, p.18) was pursued to develop an understanding of the multiple aspects of truth as demonstrated through the study of multiple perspectives.

Definition of Key Terms

Biblical worldview: The cognitive acceptance of foundational, all-encompassing truths that are based upon the central reality of God and the Bible as the ultimate authority for all of life.

Epistemology: The study of what knowledge is, how it can be defined, and the meaning, moral or otherwise, individuals associate with it.

Evangelical: Religious denominations and groups that historically began in England and the

United States after a series of religious revivals during the eighteenth century. While trans-denominational, they generally support four core beliefs: the need for a born again experience, the Bible as ultimate truth, the importance of publically demonstrating personal faith, and an emphasis upon the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Eskridge, 2011).

Identity: Individuals possess an internalized, evolving life narrative that forms a psychological structure that provides unity and purpose. It is an emerging self-understanding that integrates conflicting roles, relationships, and experiences.

Moral agency: Individuals' "understanding and experience of themselves (and others) as agents whose morally relevant actions are based in goals and beliefs" (Pasupathi & Wainryb, 2010, p. 55). It includes both moral and immoral influences that cause one to consciously make a moral decision.

Moral behavior: Behaviors are considered moral if they are in agreement with accepted moral norms within the larger social environment or with higher, religiously oriented ethical norms.

Moral identity: Moral self-assessment and the use of pro-social characteristics when they are used to define an individual.

Moral judgment: Evaluations made with regard for a set of values or beliefs, usually including conscious, cognitive activity that lead to a decision.

Moral motivation: An intrinsic desire to choose to behave according to moral values, even if this behavior will cause personal loss or harm.

Pro-social behavior: Positive, voluntary action that benefits others and is based upon empathy, justice, or moral values.

Service learning opportunities: Organized student activities in which students behave in pro-social activities. These can be rural or urban, international or neighborhood, humanitarian or political, or religious.

Worldview: An all-encompassing set of presuppositions that significantly affect an individual's thoughts, beliefs, and actions. A worldview is a foundational matrix through which an individual interprets reality.

Summary

Research has called for additional studies to provide a deeper and more complete description of the essential qualities of moral identity in the emerging adult (Hardy & Carlo, 2005; Reimer et al., 2009; Schlenker et al., 2009). There is also a recognized need for studies regarding moral identity formation during late adolescence (Power et al., 2008; Narvaez & Lapsley, 2009). This phenomenological qualitative study has provided a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of moral identity within the emerging adult by examining self-perceptions and the meanings associated with these perceptions. By comprehending the self-descriptions and life narrative stories of emerging adults attending an evangelical college, a thick description of this phenomenon has been created.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Moral reasoning (Kohlberg, 1969), moral emotions (Hoffman, 2000; Wilhelm & Bekkers, 2010; You & Rud, 2010), moral traits (Matsuba & Walker, 2005), and moral identity (Hardy & Carlo, 2005; Narvaez & Lapsley, 2009) all influence moral behavior. A recent study emphasized the complex interdependence of cognition and emotions in promoting pro-social behaviors (Carlo, Vicenta Mestre, Samper, Tur, & Armenta, 2010). Sherblom (2012) called for a holistic integration of cognitive ideology, emotionally mediated virtues, and moral self-conceptions with a greater emphasis upon defining moral development as a dynamic, unending process instead of a static, final stage. While significant research has described the effects and delineated the factors involved in the developmental stages of moral reasoning, research has not adequately described or defined the process of moral identity development. The Self Model of Moral Functioning (Blasi, 1984) is based upon Erikson's Theory of Identity Development (1968). Erickson's theory emphasized the developmental nature of identity and the critical role it plays in adolescent development. Power et al. (2008) hypothesized that moral identity development correlated with the adolescent development found in identity development (Erikson, 1968), however little research has described the various stages within this developmental process.

After providing a theoretical framework by examining Blasi's (1984) Model of Moral Identity and more recent modifications to this theory, this literature review includes a section on the history of moral education, current research on moral development programs, current research on moral identity, gender differences in moral development, the role of biblical worldview integration within Christian education, Perry's (1999) theory of moral development in

college students, and the role of service learning within moral development. This background in moral development and in moral identity theory provides the foundation for research examining the role of moral identity in an emerging adult.

Search Strategies

To locate appropriate literature, the following data collection resources were utilized: Academic Search Complete, Academic OnFile, Proquest, ProQuest Dissertation and Theses, and JSTOR. The majority of the articles could be downloaded in their full texts. Key words and phrases used in the searches included moral identity, moral development, epistemological development, biblical worldview development, moral development during college, adolescent moral development, character education, and service learning.

Conceptual or Theoretical Framework

Over the last century, the predominant theory of moral development has been Kohlberg's (l969) cognitive development theory, based upon Piaget's (1932) developmental stage theories. Kohlberg's theory reduced morality to moral reasoning, suggesting that as moral reasoning develops, moral action will follow. However, recent studies have indicated that there is not a statistically significant causal link between the cognitive ability to reason morally and the moral behavior of individuals (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2009).

Hoffman (2000) theorized that cognitive abilities do not dictate moral actions, but rather moral emotions control moral motivation, which in turn causes moral action. However, research has failed to verify more than a moderate link between moral behavior and moral emotions (Narvaez & Lapsley, 2009).

More recent studies (Wilhelm & Bekkers, 2010) have indicated that a care orientation will increase empathy and directly influence volunteer activities and helping behavior. This care

orientation toward helping others is positively correlated with caring mentors and strong family relationships and negatively correlated with stress and disruptions in family structure during adolescence (Wilhelm & Bekkers, 2010).

Recently, researchers have theorized that moral identity may be instrumental in motivating moral action (Blasi, l984; Gibbs, 2003). Moral identity is the extent to which individuals construct their self-image around moral values (Hardy & Carlo, 2005) and is identified as a possible bridge between moral reasoning and moral action. The primary model used within this body of research has been Blasi's (1984) Model of Moral Identity.

Blasi's Model of Moral Identity (1984) has three important components. First, each individual possesses a judgment regarding personal responsibility. Within this judgment, he or she will reason whether it is a moral act and judge if it is his or her responsibility to respond in any way. At this point, both moral cognition and the moral identity of the individual are involved, as he or she works to understand the personal responsibility to take action. Secondly, each individual compares the need for action with his or her moral self and ideals regarding moral worth. Finally, the component of self-consistency is shown, in which an individual is motivated to consistently act to reflect his or her moral identity or moral ideals. Blasi (l984) distinguished between two aspects of moral identity: the objective or identity content, and the subjective or identity experience. Objective moral identity defines "the specific contents around which one's sense of self is constructed" (Hardy & Carlo, 2005, p. 235). These would include physical characteristics such as relationships or behaviors.

 Subjective moral identity involves how identity is experienced and the meaning an individual associates with that experience. This understanding generally deepens and matures during adolescence (Blasi, 1984). It will lead the individual to perceive his or her moral values

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as central to identity. Reimer and Wade-Stein (2004) stated, "Moral and altruistic behaviors have been linked to self-understanding in a manner that suggests social responsibility, stability of the self over time, perspective taking, and the balancing of personal bias with the needs of others" (p. 229).

Moral identity theory has been further divided into two conceptual frameworks: the character framework and the social-cognitive framework (Shao, Aquino, & Freeman, 2008). The character framework is based upon Blasi's (1984) theory with an emphasis upon moral identity centrality and the motivational factor of self-consistency. Within this framework, self-control, integrity, and moral desire are essential for the creation and regulation of moral identity (Blasi, 1984). This framework promotes a view of morality that is stable, constant, and fits well with moral exemplar research (Shao et al., 2008).

A second possible framework for understanding moral identity is the social-cognitive model, in which moral identity is "an organized cognitive representation, or schema, of moral values, goals, traits, and behavioral scripts" (Shao et al., 2008, p. 517). Within this framework, moral identity is one of many competing self-definitions whose strength will depend upon the moral concept's accessibility (Abend, 2010) within the individual's schema. Within this framework centrality is defined as the "degree to which a person adapts a particular identity as a basis for his or her self-definition" (Frimer & Walker, 2009, p. 124-125). If an individual's moral identity is central to self-definition, defined as high centrality of moral identity, it will be easily accessible and therefore influence moral behavior (Walker & Frimer, 2007). However, whether the centrality of an individual's moral identity is strong or weak, environmental stimulus will affect an individual's ability to access his or her moral identity schema (Frimer & Walker, 2009).

In the social cognitive model of moral identity, environmental factors will interact with an individual's multifaceted self-concept to influence moral functioning (Aquino & Freeman, 2009; Aquino et al., 2009; Frimer & Walker, 2009). Aquino, McFerran, and Laven (2011) extended this model by demonstrating that individuals with moral identity centrality will experience emotional elevation in response to morally exemplary behavior. Furthermore, they will feel greater motivation toward moral behavior due to this emotional elevation and will have a "more positive view of humanity" (p. 703). Individuals who are unable to access their moral identity schemata will not experience emotional elevation (Aquino et al., 2011).

Compassion is also an emotion that may influence access to moral identity. Goetz, Keltner, and Simon-Thomas (2010) have defined compassion as a "moral barometer" (p. 366). Cameron and Payne (2012) demonstrated that suppressing compassion will "create dissonance between a person's moral identity and his or her moral principles" (p. 225). When participants denied their compassion toward those in need, an inconsistency was created in their moral self-definitions or in their moral flexibility regarding specific moral standards. Participants who retained their moral standards decreased their moral identities, and those who retained their moral identities reduced their agreement with their moral standards (Cameron & Payne, 2012).

This research also examined the role of service learning within moral identity development; therefore, an additional theory was needed to explain its possible role. You and Rud (2010) discussed Dewey's Moral Imagination Theory in regards to service learning. They suggested that Kohlberg's (1969) theory mistakenly placed all the emphasis upon moral reasoning, when according to Dewey (1934), "the imagination is the great instrument of moral good" (p. 350). It is through the imagination, the ability to imagine what another is experiencing, that individuals will develop ethical emotions, such as sensitivity and sympathy,

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and learn moral behavior. You and Rud (2010) stated, "It is not until we can share with the sorrows, joys, concerns, and hopes of the people at stake that we can really understand the situations they confront" (p. 38). Moral growth and civic participation do not rely solely upon cognitive understanding of ethical principles, but rather are integrated with aesthetic appreciation of the context of a social/moral situation and with an emotional empathy, composed of sympathy and sensitivity. As such, dramatic rehearsal, or moral imagination, must be utilized to achieve moral growth.

Moral Identity Theory can provide an explanation for understanding the complex interaction of moral cognition and moral emotions within a specific environment to produce moral behavior (Stets & Carter, 2012). Within this theory, individuals interpret the context of the moral situation within ways that are meaningful to them and reflect their self-concepts. This process proceeds from, and subsequently influences, moral identity (Abend, 2010).

Sachdeva, Iliev, and Medin (2009) furthered the discussion by adding the elements of moral cleansing and moral licensing to the self-regulating process involved in moral identity formation. Research on moral identity establishes a connection between how individuals morally perceive themselves and their moral behavior. Moral cleansing "refers to actions people engage in when their moral self-worth has been threatened" (Sachdeva et al., 2009, p. 523). However, when an individual's moral self-worth is greater than his or her ideal moral identity, moral license occurs, in which individuals will feel less of a need to behave in a pro-social manner because their reputation for moral action has already been established. Monin and Jordan (2009) have added the dimension of "moral compensation" (p. 341) in which an individual will behave ethically as a way to compensate for an unrelated perceived weakness in their lives. Within these conflicting aspects, moral identity becomes a dynamic process of

change impacting behavior.

Narrative Identities

Narrative identity is formed when individuals create a narrative story from their personal experiences. This narrative story integrates individuals' past experiences with their perceived present experiences and anticipated futures. It contains all the elements of a story including a setting, characters, plot, themes and a time orientation in regards to a beginning, a defining event or middle, and a conclusion. By forming random experiences into narrative stories, individuals give meaning, purpose, and a sense of unity to their existence. Rosenwald and Ochberg (1992) stated "Personal stories are not merely a way of telling someone (or oneself) about one's life; they are the means by which identities are fashioned" (p.1). McAdams (2013) referred to narrative identity as an internalized, evolving story that gives meaning and structure to an individual's self-understanding. A main mechanism of constructing a narrative identity is the construction and configuration of memories. Specific episodic memories become integrated into narrative scaffolding that can be transformed into autobiographical narrative. This narrative reconstruction of memories builds a narrative framework for the individual to tell stories, consequently forming the individual's moral identity (Lapsley & Hill, 2009). Memories are then shaped by the individual's identity and that identity then shapes memories.

Research on narrative identity during adolescence has demonstrated a correlation between strong narrative stories, a unified identity, and a personal sense of meaning and significance (McAdams, 2013; McLean & Breen, 2009). Identity status theory is significant to an adolescent's ability to achieve a unified identity (McLean & Pratt, 2006). McLean and Pratt (2006) speculated that individuals advance through four stages of narrative identity. In the first stage, diffusion, individuals have no exploration of identity options and no commitment toward

any option. Some individuals experience foreclosure, in which there is no exploration of

identity, but a commitment to a predetermined identity. Adolescents may reach the stage of

Moratorium, in which they continue to explore with no commitment, or in late adolescence,

reach identity achievement, in which they continue to explore while holding a firm and unified

commitment.

History of Moral Education

Socrates was one of the first individuals to teach that virtue contains "factual knowledge,

skill knowledge, and normative knowledge" (Qi, 2011, p. 139); therefore, it can be taught. Since

it is cognitive, the first level of virtue is the easiest to teach. This level develops into moral skill,

in which the instructor requires the student to repeatedly practice moral behavior. Finally, this

physical practice internalizes virtue, making it subconscious, intrinsic, and habitual (Qi, 2011).

Piaget's (1976) seminal work on the genetic epistemology of children included research

on moral reasoning, the cognitive level of virtue. While Piaget identified the role of justice

within the morality of children, Piaget postulated that children initially experience a morality of

constraint, which develops into a morality based upon cooperation. Within an adolescent's

cooperative morality, rules are based upon this growing sense of justice. The child's initial

concept that morality is based upon obedience to rules naturally develops into a moral

understanding based upon the child's chosen ideals of fairness and reciprocity.

Kohlberg's (1969) longitudinal studies, initially only on males, researched the role of

justice within cognitive moral development. Gilligan (1982) challenged Kohlberg's (1969)

work, theorizing that women perceived issues other than justice, such as care and compassion, as

central to moral decision making. Kohlberg (1969) identified three levels and six stages of moral

development. Each stage is sequential and describes a child's developing sense of his or her

expanding social relationships. Elementary children are commonly at the pre-conventional level, in which reasoning is based upon consequences for disobeying laws, and perspectives are hedonistic. During early adolescence, students need to be encouraged through exposure to moral conflict to grow to the conventional moral reasoning level, in which they chose moral behavior without the influence of rewards or punishments. At this level, individuals view themselves as 'good' or 'bad' and base their moral choices on agreement with their authority figures. Finally, an individual grows into post conventional moral reasoning, in which universal principles and self-chosen moral ideals are used to cognitively understand and process a moral dilemma. Kohlberg's (1969) research was contingent upon Piaget's (1932) theories, since individuals must reach Piaget's cognitive developmental level before they can use this cognitive ability to solve moral dilemmas.

Erikson's (1964) work on the development of an individual's identity is central to the history of moral identity development. Erikson believed that during adolescence, the construction of a personal identity is critical. An individual must form a meaningful and unified self-concept which incorporates the past, present, and future. Through a period of experimentation and interaction with individuals who are relationally significant to them, adolescents form a unified self from their real and idealized self-concepts.

Turiel (1974) advanced Kohlberg's theories by stressing Kohlberg's emphasis upon the role of crisis within moral development. Turiel (1974) emphasized the role of conflict, and established the important role of an individual's need for equilibrium. This motivation toward a personal sense of equilibrium will motivate an individual to progress through the various stages of moral development.

Fowler (1981) explored the developmental nature of faith, the term used to describe the

process individuals use to add meaning to their lives.   Stage three, Synthetic/Conventional Faith, is used to describe the adolescent/young adult period during which individuals place strong emphasis upon community and upon significant individuals. Moral authority is found in external sources with only limited ability, or interest, in personal reflection or moral reasoning. His or her institution, community of peers, and leaders define an individual's self-concept during this stage (Fowler, 1981).

Greene and Haidt (2002) proposed the Social Intuitionist Model to contradict the view that moral action relies upon reasoning alone. Moral emotions directly cause moral action, and moral action is caused by intuitive, reflective decisions. Moral reasoning, which is therefore slower than the emotional response, follows moral emotions and often the actions themselves. "Intuition occurs quickly, effortlessly, and automatically, such that the outcome but not the process is accessible to consciousness, whereas reasoning occurs more slowly, requires more effort, and involves at least some steps that are accessible to consciousness" (Greene & Haidt, 2002, p. 819).

Research on care exemplars also yielded important information regarding moral development and the role of moral identity (Hart & Fegley, 1995; Matsuba & Walker, 2005; Reimer & Wade-Stein, 2004). Care exemplar research studies adolescents that are considered exemplary in their moral behavior to delineate their perceptions regarding social relationships, compassionate behavior, and self-concept. Through qualitative research on care exemplars, self-descriptions of moral individuals are formed and factors that may impact moral development are discovered.

Recent research examined moral development not as the linear, logical, rational development of cognitive reasoning, but as "emergent and self-organizing" (Kim & Sankey,

2008, p. 296). Moral education then becomes an individualized process of dealing with complexities and paradoxes within a shifting and unstable paradigm. Especially within the dynamic changes of adolescence, reflection upon these changing complexities becomes the path for a paradigm shift within the developing adolescent to move from a cognitive to a metacognitive orientation (Kim & Sankey, 2008).

In a study by Barriga, Sullivan-Cosetti, and Gibbs (2009), empathy also correlated with moral judgment maturity and consequent moral behavior. However, the correlation with moral identity was less significant, possibly due to self-serving cognitive distortions that separated empathy from moral self-concepts. Participants in this study were juvenile delinquents who may have developed the ability to disengage feelings of empathy and due to cognitive distortions such as blaming others or self-centeredness, may have had an erroneous moral self-identity (Barriga et al., 2009).

Kettenauer, Malti, and Sokol (2008) examined the relationship between moral identity and moral emotional expectancies and found that moral emotions, both pride regarding pro-social behavior and guilt regarding antisocial behavior, can be anticipatory or consequential. Anticipatory emotions will lead to moral behavior while consequential emotions will reinforce behavior. Lapsley and Hill (2009) theorized that in predicting antisocial behavior, the emotional expectancy of guilt was a significant predictor of behavior while pro-social behavior was better predicted by moral identity. Goetz et al. (2010) proposed that moral emotional expectancies, when combined with the emotion of sympathy, are significant predictors of pro-social behavior.

Moral sensitivity is the ability to perceive the moral importance of a choice or situation (Lovett & Jordan, 2010). While individuals may be classified into one of four distinct levels, these levels form a progressive continuum. In the initial level, individuals have non-moral,

subjective opinions. The personal level is next, with moral sensitivity based upon subjective

moral decisions that are considered private. At the next stage, moral choices are considered

more universal and objective, but are still only held privately, while at the final level individuals

publically identify with and support a specific moral position. Moral escalation, an individual's

ability to grow into higher levels of moral sensitivity, is influenced by his or her personal

authority or power and by peers in agreement with the individual's moral standards. Moral de-

escalation can be moderated when an individual commits a moral transgression or identifies

himself or herself as a hypocrite when he or she perceives others committing a transgression.

This can be experienced through seeing a transgression, hearing about it, or even reading

statistics regarding its prevalence (Lovett & Jordan, 2010).

Moral emotions, both emotional expectations and consequential emotions, are impacted

by physical action. "The expectation of self-evaluative emotions following actions was stronger

relative to emotions following inactions" (Krettenauer & Johnston, 2010, p. 485). The influence

of action verses inaction regarding a moral decision appeared to be constant through the stages of

adolescent development (Krettenauer & Johnston, 2010).

Johnston and Krettenauer (2011) observed that within the process of moral decision-

making, moral emotional expectations motivated an individual to reflect his or her moral

identity. As such, they are a mediator between moral identity and moral behavior. The effect of

moral emotional expectations increased in the area of antisocial behavior as adolescents grew,

but age demonstrated limited significance in moderating the effect of moral emotional

expectations on pro-social behavior (Johnston & Krettenauer, 2011).

Moral Identity

Frimer and Walker (2009) described moral identity as an orientation, a framework through which an individual can integrate morality with his or her sense of self in a meaningful way. When morality is "motivated by an enlightened self-interest" (Frimer & Walker, 2009, p. 1669), an individual is expressing moral centrality, further described as when morality becomes "central to an individual's identity" (p. 1669). Schlenker et al. (2009) stated that moral identity development occurs when "self goals and moral goals become fused" (p. 319). When this occurs in moral exemplars, pro-social behavior becomes a form of self-expression as opposed to rigorously obeying external rules. The relative centrality of an individual's moral identity will lead to positive moral behavior, while a peripheral moral identity will allow an individual to behave in a morally inappropriate way without incorporating the unethical behavior into his or her moral self-identity (Wowra, 2007).

Moral identity proponents stress that while various individuals can share a cognitive moral code, each individual will attach various degrees of personal identity to that code. By continuing a process of "making moral commitments that are central to their self-definition and self-consistency" (Vitell et al., 2009, p. 602), moral principles become central to individuals' self-concepts.

Several factors influence moral identity development, including interactions with social institutions and traditions, moral reasoning, social relations, self-perceptions, and personality, including individual traits (Leonard, 20l0). Family relationships and parenting styles have also been shown to influence the process of moral identity (Hart, Atkins, & Ford, 1999). Aquino and Reed (2002) hypothesized that when individuals incorporate moral traits such as service learning into their habits and activities, those traits will be more likely to define their moral identities.

Aquino and Reed (2002) also proposed that the link between moral behavior and moral identity was the individual's perception of specific moral traits. The more these moral traits were used to define his or her identity, the greater the degree of actual pro-social activity.

Vitell et al.'s (2009) research showed a correlation between the role of self-control and religiosity with an individual's moral identity. This study added evidence to previous research on the positive correlation between self-control and moral identity (Baumeister & Vohs, 2007) and the positive correlation between religiosity and both self-control and moral identity. Self-control, defined by Baumeister and Vohs (2007) as "a matter of pursuing enlightened self-interest over immediate or myopic self-interest" (p. 120), is an antecedent of both moral actions and moral identity because it provides individuals with the moral muscle to overcome negative tendencies and to act in an ethical manner (Vitell et al., 2009). Self-control is an essential part of moral development because individuals possess both good and bad intrinsic impulses (Gilead, 2011). Individuals can grow to be controlled by either the impulse for vice or the impulse for virtue; this process can be influenced through the development of self-control, a vision of human flourishing, and a conception of the virtuous individual (Gilead, 2011). Religion can be an antecedent of both self-control and moral identity, possibly due to its ability to provide a vision of human flourishing (Glanzer, 2012) and moral standards for individuals to accept and follow (Vitell et al., 2009).

Hardy (2006) found that pro-social identity was positively correlated with pro-social behavior in 91 graduate and undergraduate students from a Midwestern university. Pro-social identity, reasoning, and empathy were correlated with six forms of pro-social behavior, including emergency situations, emotional situations, anonymous situations, altruistic motivation, hedonistic motivation, and civil liberties. This quantitative study found that pro-social identity

positively predicted pro-social behavior in college students even when pro-social cognitive reasoning and empathy were not factors. An individual's moral identity and centrality of moral virtues will significantly influence his or her positive moral behavior. As such, moral identity is the third creator of moral action, along with moral reasoning and moral emotions. This study recommended a longitudinal study on moral identity formation in late adolescence.

Power et al. (2008) found four strategies that increased moral identity development in middle school students. These strategies include service learning, promotion of school unity and culture, hidden curriculum that advocates empathy, and teachers who understand the developmental aspect of moral development. During the middle school years, there is a growing development of the moral self as shown through students' use of self-descriptors that are other-oriented as opposed to self-oriented. Adolescence is the time during which a student's self-understanding and individual identity develops (Aquino & Reed, 2002). It is also the beginning of the student's efficacious moral self, including the ability to self-criticize according to moral ideals.

Moral identity plays a self-regulatory role in moral behavior (Miller & Schlenker, 2011). Yang (2013) found that moral identity was the link connecting moral imagination, defined as an understanding of what is moral, to moral behavior.

While various traits can define morality, an individual with a strong moral identity will define himself or herself by a moral standard, use moral themes as self-descriptors (Aquino & Reed, 2002), and use moral concepts when describing heroes (Schlenker, Weigold, & Schlenker, 2008). In a quantitative study by Miller and Schlenker (2008), the Integrity Scale was used to positively correlate moral identity to an individual's belief in his or her ability to be moral, choice of moral friends, and preference for high integrity teachers and evaluators. Strong moral

identity impacts relationships by affecting the perceptions of individuals as they select friends and mentors. When individuals have strong moral identity, their friends will also view them as high in moral integrity (Miller & Schlenker, 2008).

Identity conflict occurs when an individual identifies with multiple aspects of his or her character. Winterich, Mittal, and Ross (2009) studied the effects of moral identity and gender identity on donation behavior, and found that generosity was affected more by gender identity in males and more by moral identity in females. Moral identity formation includes the process of verifying one's identity within mutually verifying situations in which an individual's moral behavior will be validated or condemned by others (Burke & Stets, 2009). Stets and Carter (2012) stated that "women were more likely than men to report guilt and shame when behaving immorally" (p. 138). Women's increased ability to experience moral emotions may be influenced by societal gender roles, or may be due to a greater orientation toward personal relationships (Brody & Hall, 2008).

Moral identity development is an ongoing process influenced by participation in self-regulation and self-reflection (Sandlin & Walther, 2009). Self- regulation occurs when individuals routinely practice their moral standards. Self-reflection takes the form of questioning one's moral motivation, redefining one's moral traits, and participating in group discussion (Sandlin & Walther, 2009). Group moral identity is reinforced when a collective moral standard, one that is different from that advocated by society, is created. This group moral identity is reinforced until it "becomes synonymous with one's identity" (p. 308). However, group moral identity development may be hindered if the group advocates a 'no blame' subjective moral code (Sandlin & Walther, 2009).

Within adolescent moral development, some researchers (Broderick, 2009; Bronk, 2012)

have established a need for a connection to a higher, nobler purpose. Bronk (2012) considered it one of the components of a moral identity, and Broderick (2009), who studied individuals that made self-defined, immoral decisions, stated that these individuals "evidenced a disconnection with a higher purpose" (p. 123). Because they had no higher or nobler purpose giving them a sense of identity, it "made it difficult for them to perceive of morality as anything beneficial to themselves; rather, they viewed it as nothing more than an unnecessary, external, untrustworthy constraint which, in this case, contradicted their self-interests" (Broderick, p. 123).

There is a positive correlation between integrity, defined as self-consistency with one's moral ideals or moral self, and commitment, responsibility, and self-efficacy (Schlenker et al., 2009). While privately thinking about moral traits has little impact upon moral identity, publically proclaiming the adoption of a moral characteristic, or publically committing to a moral ideal or goal, produces a significant shift toward that virtue within the moral self. Physically demonstrating a virtue will also positively impact the centrality of that virtue within the moral identity (Schlenker et al., 2009).

Sandlin and Walther (2009) speculated that a strong collective subculture would influence moral identity development and can be created when the subculture is in opposition to the hegemonic culture, there is a feeling of shared solidarity, there is a shared collective moral and interpretive framework, and there is a shared vision of the future. This strong collective subculture can then be a powerful influence on the moral identity of its members. In their study on moral differentiation, O'Fallon and Butterfield (2011) emphasized the need for a strong collective moral subculture. They demonstrated that the perceived unethical behavior of one group member will negatively impact the moral behavior of everyone in the group; however, individuals with a strong moral identity will be less influenced by the unethical example of

others.

Moral Education

Within every educational institution, moral development occurs (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2006). Regardless of whether it is desired, planned, or even recognized, students will be morally influenced by their academic environment, since even "value-free" curriculum holds a foundational ethical standard (Kiss & Euben, 2010). Several recent studies examined character education programs to ascertain the factors that effectively promote the development of moral maturity. Araujo and Arantes (2009) researched a Brazilian ethics and citizenship program. This program was based upon the four themes of ethics, democratic coexistence, social inclusion, and human rights. A community and school wide approach was adopted to create educational communities that reflected democratic principles. The program used three main methods of implementation including teacher professional development, community forums, and ethical projects. Students lead and participated in these projects, including radio broadcasts, dance groups, and service learning. Within the classroom, textbooks were used as reference points and routine reflections and discussions regarding the meaning of moral decisions were practiced. The program was based upon constructivist principles, critical pedagogy, project based learning, and service learning. Both the service learning and the use of reflective discussions were shown to have significant impact with the greatest impact coming from a combined use of service learning with reflective responses.

Araujo and Arantes (2009) used qualitative and quantitative methodology on two schools that volunteered to be part of this assessment. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with students, teachers, parents, and school employees. Written teacher reports and written questionnaires were also used. The questionnaires were given to 289 sixth through ninth grade

students in three categories. The success of this program was primarily based upon cognitive

moral improvement. Students gave better answers on a written questionnaire regarding their

moral decision-making. Unfortunately, while this study successfully delineated several factors

important in adolescent moral development, it again placed too much emphasis upon cognitive

moral changes alone. While cognitive moral change is the easiest to achieve, cognitive moral

change has not been shown to significantly impact behavioral moral change.

There are limited formal research studies examining the role of evangelicalism within

moral development. Since this study was limited to students within an evangelical educational

institution, it is important to include this area. Ovwigho and Cole (2010) examined the role of

reading the Bible, attending church, and denominational preference on relational and anti-social

behavior. Their survey to a random sample of 1,009 American children between the ages of

eight and 12 found no correlation between church attendance, a born again experience, or

denominational preference with behavioral anti-social behavior. However, there was a 54%

decrease in anti-social behavior if the student read the Bible at least four days per week

(Ovwigho & Cole, 2010).

Religious affiliation was shown to have a mediating role on moral identity development

during adolescence (Hardy, Rackham, Olsen, & Walker, 2012; Vitell et al., 2009). Religiosity

was an antecedent to moral identity in its ability to internalize moral characteristics and increase

self-control (Vitell et al., 2009). Religion also played a role in providing incentives to motivate

individuals to define themselves in moral self-concepts (Walker & Frimer, 2008). Hardy et al.

(2012) found that religious commitment, defined as "devotion to religious principles and

practices" (p. 4), positively correlated with empathy and predicted the centrality of an

individual's moral identity. Research has also illustrated that "religious schools can make a

positive and valuable contribution to citizenship education of pupils" (Willems, Denessen, Hermans, & Vermeer, 2010, p. 215).

Schlenker et al. (2009) demonstrated that integrity had a positive correlation with intrinsic religiosity and a negative correlation with extrinsic religiosity. Intrinsic religiosity was defined as a personal commitment to the truth and value of religious beliefs and extrinsic religiosity was defined as an individual's desire for religious association because of its social and personal advantages. This study also demonstrated a negative correlation between materialism and integrity. Schlenker et al. (2009) found that integrity was positively correlated to an individual's attitude regarding the concept of salvation and negatively correlated to an individual's desire for a comfortable life. Vitell et al. (2009) differentiated between intrinsic religiosity, which increases moral identity, and extrinsic religiosity, which decreases moral identity.

In a study on the L'Arche communities for developmentally disabled individuals, Reimer (2009) found a growth in moral development and in moral identity within caregivers when there was a deeper understanding of the concept of hope. Within these Christian communities, hope regarding developmentally disabled individuals was practiced through reconciliation and emotional healing. Reimer's (2009) study of moral exemplars found the dynamic for moral development often through close relationships involving suffering and caring. This study helped to shift the moral development landscape from one emphasizing the justice-oriented approach of Kohlberg (1969) to one with an emphasis upon caring.

Pike (2009) researched what was considered to be one of the worst schools in England, both academically and behaviorally, that was transformed through a character education program based upon Judeo-Christian sources. Research has established a strong correlation between the

adoption of a school wide character program and strong academic success (Benninga et al., 2006; Pike, 2009; Strahan & Layell, 2006). This may be due to the selection of character traits, such as perseverance, that are beneficial to academic success.

Overway et al. (2009) highlighted three strategies that influenced character development in adolescence. These strategies were the creation of a caring community, positive affective self-regulatory efficacy, and empathic self-efficacy. Overway et al. (2009) also contended that a caring community would impact personal self-regulation and empathic self-efficacy, and that the three abovementioned factors were interconnected. Since self-regulation and empathic self-efficacy are also interdependent with a positive moral identity, their development may be correlated with moral identity development in late adolescence.

A teacher's moral self-efficacy and belief in his or her students' abilities to grow morally is a significant factor in positive moral development and the development of an ethical culture in the classroom (Narvaez, Khmelkov, Vaydich, & Turner, 2008). Teachers who demonstrated reasoning to make moral choices, modeled caring, and reinforced moral behavior within the classroom were more likely to establish a caring community. Moral self-efficacy can be developed through mastery experiences, social persuasion, emotional excitement, and vicarious experiences (Narvaez et al., 2008).

Moral agency, the ability to self-regulate moral behavior, can be inhibitive or proactive (Gano-Overway et al., 2009). This self-enforced moral regulation can be motivational or cognitive and moderated by affective self-regulatory efficacy or social self-efficacy. Affective self-regulatory efficacy is the belief in one's ability to resist social influences, which reduces the actual influence of peer pressure. Social self-efficacy is an individual's perception of the community and his or her role in that community (D'Arripe-Longueville, Corrion, Scoffier,

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Roussei, & Chalabaev, 2010). If an individual believes he or she belongs to a caring, moral community, he or she will have stronger affective self-regulatory efficacy, which will help to predict both empathic efficacy and moral behavior (Gano-Overway et al., 2009).

In a study conducted on moral development in sports, Steinfeldt, Rutkowski, Vaughan, and Steinfeldt (2011) found that within the aggressive and violent world of football, moral atmosphere was a dominant influence in a student athlete's moral development. This moral atmosphere was created indirectly through the coach's selection of team members and directly by creating a perception within each player of a moral code of behavior. Coaches who taught athletes to compartmentalize aggressive actions increased the moral development of their athletes.

Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, and Smith's (2006) quantitative study used a random sample of 120 schools with effective character education programs to identify six characteristics found in successful schools. These characteristics were emphasis upon core ethical values, involvement of parents and the community, intentional interdisciplinary promotion by all of the school staff, the modeling of these core ethical values by the adults in the school, and a caring and safe environment and opportunities for students to practice the values they have been taught. Long, Pantale, and Bruant (2008) researched the effect of organized verses self-directed sports activity on the development of personal responsibility and moral self-concept. Organized sports had no impact on moral development, but self-directed sports developed a student's moral identity because a student will learn to take responsibility for his or her moral decisions and moral standards, and will experience empathy with other players.

Hardy, Padilla-Walker, and Carlo (2008) examined the effects of three parenting dimensions including involvement, structure, and support of personal autonomy on the moral

development of children. This quantitative study of 101 adolescents found a correlation between parental involvement and the internalization of the parents' values within the child. It also found that when parents utilized a controlling, authoritarian structure, the child was less likely to internalize their values. When children experienced personal autonomy from their parents and stated that their parents were significantly involved, values internalization was high; however, when high personal autonomy was associated with low parental involvement, values internalization was low (Hardy et al., 2008).

Four strategies found to increase moral identity in adolescents include service learning, promotion of school unity and culture, hidden curriculum that advocates concern for others, and teachers who understand the developmental aspect of moral development (Power et al., 2008). In this qualitative study, self-evaluation interviews with students from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds attending public and private schools showed an increase in the development of the moral self, or moral identity, during adolescence.

Effects of Gender on Moral Identity

While a woman's emphasis upon caring and a man's emphasis upon justice regarding moral reasoning have been refuted (Walker, 2006), studies have indicated possible gender differences in this area. Agerstrom, Bjorklund, and Allwood (2010) found that women and men utilized universal, abstract principles such as justice in moral reasoning when a significant temporal distance was present. However, when the moral dilemmas were more immediate, women tended to perceive them in terms of context and interrelationships, while men continued to judge them from an abstract perspective. When given hypothetical moral dilemmas, both male and female participants responded with a justice-oriented perspective. In responding to more concrete and personal examples of moral dilemmas, women alone became more care

oriented than justice-oriented (Agerstrom et al., 2010).

Moral disengagement is the ability to disengage from a moral dilemma or moral standard through rationalizations or other cognitive functions. One study found that males exhibited greater moral disengagement than females (Gano-Overway et al., 2009) but another study indicated no difference between male and female participants in affective self-regulatory efficacy, or the ability to believe in one's emotional ability to resist peer pressure (d'Arripe-Longuevill et al., 2010). Welch and Mellberg (2008) found that females displayed greater internalization of moral concepts and identity.

Women tend to have heightened moral imaginations due to their stronger senses of self and deeper understandings of the "network of interrelationships" (Yurtsever, 2010, p. 521). Women may also be more capable of understanding social context clues due to the ability to view situations from various perspectives. Regarding the impact of volunteering on moral identity, Dolnicar and Randle (2007) theorized that females were more likely to volunteer as a way of achieving peer approval and more likely to volunteer with friends. In contrast, males were more likely to volunteer independently, with the goal of adventure or exploration. Another study showed that males were less reflective regarding their volunteer experiences (Klimstra, Hale, Raaijmakers, Branje, & Meeus, 2010). All of these factors can influence the ability of a volunteer experience to change an individual's moral identity or moral self-concept, which may be the reason van Goethem et al. (2012) found that male participants were less likely to be influenced by volunteer experiences and less likely to achieve moral identity integration through volunteering than female participants.

Empathy influences moral behavior (Skoe, 2010) and some studies have indicated that women have a greater capacity for emotional empathy than men (Silfver, Helkama, Lönnqvist, &

Verkasalo, 2008). While cultural stereotypes may influence research results on adults, Malti, Gummerum, Keller, and Buchmann (2009) found that at age six, females already displayed greater other-oriented behavior and empathy than males. Therefore, other-oriented empathy displayed by many females may be caused by factors other than cultural influences.

Service Learning

A recent study examined the process of moral identity development within adolescence and theorized that voluntary service experiences are important because they give adolescents the "opportunity to extend values into relationships" (Reimer, DeWitt Goudelock, & Walker, 2009, p. 385). Further, this study suggested that multiple experiences in which adolescents physically demonstrate a desired ethical trait within diverse social circumstances might eventually create a self-referencing behavior pattern and define their moral identities. Through physical activity, a moral trait becomes a "consciously articulated self-understanding schema" (Reimer et al., 2009, p. 385), which then further develops into moral identity. Through "goal oriented moral action" (Reimer et al., 2009, p. 372) an individual develops a sense of life purpose, which then defines his or her moral self-concept because of the personal meaning attached to the event. Bronk (2012) also connected a maturing moral identity to the development of a strong noble purpose, defined as an intense commitment that constructs and ensues from a strong sense of identity with that purpose.

Zaha (2010) studied high school and college students and examined the relationship between moral identity and the frequency of and motivational reasons regarding volunteering. While this study did not find a statistical correlation between moral identity and volunteerism, it did find several significant outcomes regarding moral identity, and statistically less significant outcomes regarding the role of service learning in late adolescence. This research found that

individuals with positive moral character volunteered frequently (Zaha, 2010). It also showed that the participants' given reasons for volunteering were civic engagement, utilitarianism, religious conviction, and peer continuity. There is a self-consistency within the moral expectations of the individual, which is one aspect of moral identity. Zaha (2010) recommended further research in moral identity formation within late adolescence to discover the factors within moral identity that influence moral action, and to further describe the relational expectations affecting moral identity and service learning. A narrative inquiry on college students' perspectives on the relationship between moral identity and service learning was recommended (Zaha, 2010).

Felten, Gilcrhist, and Darby (2006) proposed that character education has placed too much emphasis upon rational and cognitive activity and has ignored the importance of emotions in moral development. They examined the biological, educational, and cognitive role of emotions and reached the conclusion that since emotions are an essential part of all aspects of learning, education in moral development must include this aspect. By including personal reflection in all service learning opportunities, students heightened their emotional empathy and deeper understanding of contextual factors (Felten et al., 2006). When using reflection in service learning, facilitators must utilize questions that provide both cognitive and emotional scaffolding for student learning. Felten et al. stated, "reflection acts as a bridge between conceptual understandings and concrete experiences" (p. 38).

Cox and McAdams (2012) researched the relationship between the use of reflective service narratives after an international service learning opportunity and future volunteering. Students who described their volunteer experiences as transformational were more likely to volunteer immediately after their experience and three months later. However, written

expressions of empathy and sympathy only had a short-term impact upon volunteering and did not predict volunteering three months after the initial volunteer experience. Expressions of helplessness and a lack of moral self-efficacy regarding positive results negatively affected a student's likelihood of volunteering again (Cox & McAdams, 2012).

Several factors correlated with positive moral identity development and pro-social moral behavior. Specifically, service learning with reflection significantly impacted moral identity development and therefore moral behavior (Billig, Jesse, & Grimley, 2008; Conway, Gainer-Hanks, & Grayman, 2009; Correia & Bleicher, 2008; Marichal, 2010; Meinhard & Brown, 2010). These studies demonstrated a strong correlation between moral development and service learning when reflection was required, but it is unclear if service learning, reflection, or an interaction between the two impacts moral development. Some researchers have theorized that reflection on any moral decision, action, or even upon the moral example of another individual, has a psychological impact upon identity development (Smith & Sparkes, 2008). International service learning may also give students a global perspective, impacting the development of personal independence, moral identity, sense of purpose, commitment to philanthropy and social change, and management of emotions (Chickering & Braskamp, 2009; Seider, Gillmor, & Rabinowicz, 2012). When combined with critical self-reflection, international service learning impacted moral development and the development of attitudes of responsibility and caring (Shafik et al., 2010).

Service learning positively correlates with moral identity (Marichal, 2010); however, it is unknown if positive moral identity is the result or cause of service learning. Volunteering affects identity integration by supplying a variety of moral identity contexts. These diversified contexts will broaden an individual's identity horizon and create a stronger integration of his or her moral

identity (van Goethem et al., 2012).   Van Goethem et al. (2012) also stated that reflection on

personal responsibility increases moral commitment and the likelihood of future volunteering

opportunities. However, male participants displayed a negative correlation between identity

integration and volunteer involvement, possibly due to a lack of personal reflection (van

Goethem et al., 2012).

Perry's Study on Moral Reasoning in College Students

While Perry's (1970) seminal study on morality in male college students attending

Harvard University remains the dominant theory in moral development in college students,

several factors make it problematic for use in this research. The study is based upon the theory

that a student's cognitive development is achieved through connecting new knowledge to old

patterns or schemas. Perry's (1970) Stages of Undergraduate Cognitive Development outline

nine intellectual stages a college student will progress through to reach cognitive moral maturity.

According to these stages, incoming freshmen will begin with an authority-based epistemology

in which truth is absolute and morality is legalistic. Throughout their academic career, and life,

they will progress through nine stages, through relativism, and finally to a personal commitment

to their chosen truth. At this final stage their epistemology is based upon rational thought and

evidence, and their view of truth is subjective, contextual, relativistic, and continually changing

to fit new information.   Nine levels were formatted, the first five covering changes in

epistemology and the final four covering how the epistemological change established by the fifth

stage develops into moral reasoning.

However, this study is influenced by Kohlberg's (1969) theory that moral behavior is

based primarily upon moral reasoning, or epistemological development. It has no relevance to

the development of moral emotions or the development of an individual's moral identity. Also,

this theory has several flaws that limit its use in a study on moral identity development within evangelical or religious colleges.

Domain Specific Epistemic Beliefs

Several studies have shown that Perry's (1970) scheme is not universal, but dependent upon several variables, such as the student's field of study. This is because various disciplines can be divided by how they construct and validate knowledge (Palmer & Marra, 2004). As such, some disciplines have been shown to develop a student's cognitive ability (as shown on Perry's scheme), and others are less likely to influence change. The social sciences and applied fields tend to view knowledge as isolated opinions, while science and engineering will view knowledge as unchanging, certain, and universal. Therefore, students are taught to view epistemology and knowledge in a more objective way, which puts them in the less developed category (Stage two or three) of Perry's development model.

Kaartinen-Koutaniemen and Lindblom-Ylanne (2008) conducted a qualitative study of interviews using semi structured open-ended questions with 52 students majoring in theology, pharmacy, or psychology. Students showed a different level of development on Perry's scheme based upon their major and the educational methodology used by their instructors. A student's belief in the truth value of the information given was greatest for students in pharmacy, with students showing the greatest epistemological development (according to Perry) in psychology. Professors who implemented constructionist techniques were viewed as less reliable sources of truth, while instructors who taught the scientific method were viewed as possessing expert authority on the subject being taught. In Perry's scheme, lower levels demonstrate greater acceptance of the instructor's expertise and authority, while higher moral levels view the instructors as fallible.

Brownlee and Berthelsen (2006) examined the effect of the epistemological level of instructors on the students' epistemological development. They found that teachers who defined their occupation as transmitting knowledge scored lower on Perry's scheme and had students with lower developmental levels. Teachers who defined their occupation as that of a facilitator or guide scored higher on Perry's scheme and had students with higher developmental levels. Yang (2005) also studied the effect of a student's personal epistemology on his or her perception of truth and showed similar results.

Mayhew and King (2008) in a longitudinal, comparative, quantitative study of 423 undergraduate students taking five college courses, illustrated the effect of select pedagogical strategies in developing cognitive moral reasoning according to Perry's scheme. Pedagogical strategies that view all truth as subjective lead to a higher level of epistemological development, or cognitive moral reasoning, when a higher level is defined as having a more relativistic and contextual view of truth.

The Effect of Religious Belief on Perry's Theory

Sabri, Stavrakopoulou, Cargas, and Hartley (2008) used Perry's (1999) scheme to evaluate a small group of first year theology students at Oxford University in England. Semi-structured, recorded interviews were used in this qualitative study. The researchers studied the effect of a faith stance upon a student's epistemological development. The findings illustrated that students began their first year with personal faith and a deep moral commitment to truth. By the end of this first year, students questioned the honesty and reliability of their teachers, and there was a shift in perception from faith-based inquiry to academic-based inquiry in religious studies. As incoming freshmen, the students' theology was defined by personal experience, but after completion of their freshman year, their theology was defined by historical and literary

interpretation and was therefore open to various opinions. This occurrence demonstrates that theology students attending a secular college began in Perry's beginning stages in which religious knowledge and morality could be seen as absolute, and developed into Perry's fourth stage, in which students believe moral certainty can be experienced in limited areas only. Some of the students interviewed chose to live with the dissonance caused by their questioning of ultimate authority by creating a dualism of beliefs, while others tried to resolve it (Sabri et al., 2008).

These studies indicate that the moral epistemological growth toward relativism is achieved only when students attend a secular college and may be dependent upon the cognitive teaching that epistemology is relevant and not absolute. Therefore, within an educational system in which the Bible is seen as ultimate truth, such as an evangelical college, Perry's theory (1999) will have limited use. However, a goal within Christian education has always been helping students reach self-authorship of their religious beliefs. This is achieved at a higher level of epistemological maturity, in which individuals can view the Bible as ultimate truth within an understanding of subjective opinion and paradox. As individuals mature within their faith, they move from a concrete, literal understanding of truth, to a deeper understanding in which doubt, paradox, and conflict can be tolerated and truth is seen as multidimensional and complex. This deeper understanding is often reached through personal reflection caused by the experience of personal doubt (Fowler, 1981).

Biblical Worldview

A theory of moral development used within most Christian educational institutions is the biblical worldview theory. A worldview is a conceptual way of thinking or a cognitive interpretation of the world. Most Christian educational institutions advocate the adoption of a

biblical worldview as a major method of achieving spiritual and moral development (Spears & Loomis, 2009).

Deckard and Dewitt (2003) defined a "worldview as the sum total of the feelings, beliefs, memories, knowledge and experiences that are used to interpret events and make decisions" (p. 3). A worldview is a set of presuppositions, or core beliefs, that define how an individual can know and interpret reality, and how that interpretation influences one's existence. Historically, Dilthey, a philosopher considered the father of worldview theory, believed that individuals have a schemata or comprehensive, systematic structure for interpreting reality (Sire, 2004). These schemata will adapt new knowledge, forcing it to fit in with the thought structure or worldview that defines how an individual accepts new information. Theoretical systems, beliefs, and facts are all filtered through the intellectual construct of a worldview and are the result of the worldview, not the cause or foundation of (Sire, 2004). Sire (2004) called a worldview a "fundamental orientation of the heart…about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and more and have our being" (p.122). Nash (1992) stated, "A well-rounded worldview includes beliefs in at least five major areas: God, ultimate reality, (metaphysics), knowledge (epistemology), ethics and humankind" (p. 205).

Hofer (2004) defined epistemology as "how knowledge occurs, what counts as knowledge, and how knowledge is constructed and evaluated" (p. 1). Epistemological development allows students the use of increasingly more complex thought processes, abstractions, and their combinations in solving problems or making moral decisions. Regarding epistemological development, students begin at the absolute level in which knowledge is certain, progress through the transitional in which only some knowledge is certain, and reach the stage of independent knowing in which all knowledge is characterized by its uncertainty because

everyone has his or her own beliefs (Hofer & Pintrich, 1997).

Benson, Roehlkepartain, and Rude (2003) stressed the need to increase research in the field of spiritual development, especially as it intersects with a student's developing moral reasoning ability. Children grow from knowing through sensory experience to receiving truth from authority figures. They further develop as they experience internal and external factors from which they will accept and justify knowledge. However, as a child grows, internal factors will begin to have greater influence (Reich, Oser, & Vanlentin, 1994). Ideally, individuals with a biblical worldview should reach the stage where personal self-reflection and logical reasoning are used to understand and evaluate sources of knowledge and bring greater consistency to their underlining suppositions. From here, an epistemology is developed that uses multiple and complex strategies for evaluating truth, and implements a process of critically examining one's worldview by comparing it to the worldview discovered in the Bible, the Christian's source of ultimate truth. As individuals develop through worldview formation stages, different epistemological methods of acquiring and confirming their knowledge will be implemented (Henze, 2006).

Within Christian educational institutions, moral development is significantly tied to biblical worldview development (Brickhill, 2010; Wilhelm & Firmin, 2008); however, research has not demonstrated a significant correlation between the biblical worldview of a college student and his or her moral behavior. Perhaps this is due to the emphasis of biblical worldview theory upon the cognitive aspects of moral behavior alone. Smith (2009) commented that moral education must not be "primarily about the absorption of ideas and information, but about the formation of hearts and desires" (p. 18). If, as Smith (2009) contended, education is more of a "formative rather than just an informative project" (p.18), then moral education needs to include

identity formation and the development of moral emotions, not just a cognitive agreement with

ontological ideals defined as a biblical worldview.

Role of the Evangelical Institution

Sommerville (2008) stated that the secular university is becoming morally irrelevant to

contemporary culture because it has failed to define the human and human flourishing and to

provide viable answers to the fact/value dichotomy. Sommerville (2008) proposed that religious

scholars may be able to advance the moral development discussion because of their ability to

address these areas. Glanzer (2012) furthered the discussion by contending that evangelical

colleges and universities are ideally suited to advance the moral development discussion "due to

their ability to establish common beliefs regarding human function and flourishing" (p. 381).

Because of this ability, they have "the tools to define the human and therefore properly overcome

the supposed divide between facts and values" (Glanzer, 2012, p. 381).

The fact/value dichotomy states that facts are rational and objective, and values are

subjective opinions. Facts are what is done, which have no significant connection to what ought

to be done, or values. When this philosophical idea became prevalent, moral value and a unified

conception of human flourishing lost the ability to be true, rational, or universal (Wills, 2009).

Within secular universities, learning facts became the central focus. Values were then eliminated

or labeled as opinions that were left to individual professors or specific disciplines to define.

The earliest colleges within the United States, such as Harvard and Yale, began with a

firm understanding of human identity, purpose, and human flourishing that was based upon the

Christian tradition. This provided each college with a unified moral philosophy and allowed it to

require each student to take a capstone course on moral philosophy to complete his or her

education (Glanzer, 2011). This was viewed as essential, because the purpose of the college was

to create moral, productive, and good citizens. However, as these early colleges became disconnected with their religious heritage, it became increasingly difficult to define morals, values, or even what constituted a moral, productive, and good citizen. Colleges became secularized, defined by Marsden (1992) as a bracketing of religious values and beliefs so that truth could be more objectively pursued. Because of secularization, non-theological truths regarding life and successful living were viewed as superior, resulting in the supposition that religious faith is a deterrent to a successful life. Students are then left without a metanarrative or a life philosophy to provide them with a moral identity, a definition of the good life, or a sense of personal destiny. Without a unified definition of the type of individual that moral education was to create, and without a universal definition of human flourishing, colleges dropped the moral philosophy capstone course to instead offer vague moralizations or to add separate courses on pro-social behavior within each specific profession (Glanzer, 2012). Unfortunately, these are insufficient to create a moral identity within students because they lack a universal concept of what defines a human identity or human flourishing.

"Evangelical schools place spiritual growth as their highest educational objective" (Paredes-Collins & Collins, 2011) and strive to create "a powerful and rich moral community" (Rhea, 2011). Through an emphasis upon religious traditions and practices, evangelical colleges instill a firm understanding of human identity, purpose, and human flourishing that is needed to provide a deeper, philosophical understanding of moral identity. Required classes on the Bible and theology, compulsory chapel services, faculty spiritual advisers and mentors, accountability groups, opportunities for service learning, and community prayer meetings are all examples of various methods and programs created by evangelical institutions to integrate spirituality into all aspects of a student's life (Paredes-Collins & Collins, 2011). Evangelical institutions seek

"specific ways in which mature faith can be intentionally developed at Christian universities" (Welch & Mellberg, 2008).

By establishing the holistic goal of developing the whole student within the concept of a unified moral definition of human identity and flourishing, these institutions hope to train the student to integrate his or her faith and moral standard with everything he or she may learn throughout the school's formal and informal curriculum. Human flourishing is achieved by educating students to understand their place in God's creation and their role in fulfilling his purpose, and by training students to thrive with God and thrive in life (Spears & Loomis, 2009). Evangelical institutions believe that by formulating these theological concepts of human identity and human flourishing, a framework for a moral foundation and for a student's moral identity is established (Paredes-Collins & Collins, 2011). However, there have been few qualitative or quantitative studies to verify these theories.

Summary

While the importance of moral development within education has never been denied, research has been slow due to a lack of consensus regarding values and methods and because of issues involving the separation of church and state. However, these issues do not negate the need for quality research based programs that build moral character. Much of education in moral development has been limited to cognitive development alone, including the work of Kohlberg (1969), Perry (1999), and recent biblical worldview theories. These have been shown to be inadequate in fully impacting the manifold nature of moral development. While historical and current literature has highlighted several factors that impede or facilitate moral development, it has inadequately addressed the role of moral identity and failed to research the context in which students experience their moral identities, as they attach meaning to moral ideals and learn to

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describe, and thereby define, their moral selves. By fully describing the stage of moral identity in the emerging adult and the context within which moral identity is experienced, this study provides information that will help to identify various factors impacting moral identity development so that students may develop the interrelated characteristics that will help them to become morally mature individuals.

CHAPER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study focused on the lived experience of moral identity in the emerging adults attending an evangelical college. This description provided insight into the moral understanding of these adults and the meanings they associated with it. A phenomenological research design was used because of its ability to build a thick description of this stage of moral identity and of the context surrounding this phenomenon as it is lived out in everyday life. It also sought to describe the roles of gender, volunteer experiences, and other influential factors within moral identity formation. Within phenomenological research, the use of interviews, questionnaires, and document analysis is supported (Creswell, 2007).

Data was analyzed using qualitative techniques since "the methods used by qualitative researchers exemplify a common belief that they can provide a 'deeper' understanding of social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data" (Silverman, 2000, p. 8). Since the use of a research methodology depends upon the type of knowledge being researched, it is appropriate to use qualitative, phenomenological methodology if the researcher is "concerned with exploring people's life histories or everyday behavior" (p. 1). The goal of this research was to develop a deeper understanding of the meaning college students attach to their perceptions of their moral selves. Phenomenology is a primary research method used to uncover a participant's emotions and thoughts regarding his or her lived experience; therefore, it is well suited to the purpose of this research.

Spiegelberg (1965) identified the steps used in phenomenological research as soliciting descriptions and information regarding the phenomenon, identifying the essence of the phenomenon, finding associations within the setting in which the phenomenon is experienced, uncovering the participants' perceptions, discovering and removing personal biases from the

interpretation process, and interpreting the meaning participants attach to the phenomenon. The meaningful statements of the participants were analyzed and then synthesized, creating a description of the structure of the phenomenon. By rigorously adhering to these steps, this research has provided a deeper understanding of the meaning students attending an evangelical college associate with their understanding of their moral selves.

The triangulation of data and analysis has given this research added credibility and trustworthiness (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). Since bias is an issue within qualitative research, a section on my background and possible biases was included (Charmaz, 2006). Within educational research, ethical considerations must always be paramount; therefore, all aspects of IRB approval and ethical obligations were followed.

Research Design

This basic interpretive study utilized qualitative methodology to create a depth of understanding regarding the stage and process of moral identity development in late adolescence. A qualitative study is an appropriate avenue to explore the process a student utilizes to understand his or her moral self-perceptions, as he or she attaches meaning to personal experiences (Creswell, 2007). This study used a phenomenological design to describe this specific developmental stage and the context within which moral identity development is experienced. A structured design was used to focus the inquiry into specific areas supported by the literature review. The focus of inquiry was the descriptions regarding moral self-concepts college students in a Midwestern evangelical school used to describe their moral identities and the context within these identities develop. Phenomenological analysis was chosen because of its emphasis upon meaning within a phenomenon and its emphasis upon depth of understanding rather than breadth (Giorgi, 1994).

Research Question One: How do students at an evangelical college describe their moral selves?

Research Question Two: How, if at all, do volunteer service experiences impact the moral identity development of college students at an evangelical college?

Research Question Three: What factors do students at an evangelical college designate as deterrents to their moral identity development?

Research Question Four: How, if at all, do the descriptions of moral identity given by male students at an evangelical college compare and contrast to the descriptions of moral identity given by female students at an evangelical college?

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Participants

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A purposeful, homogeneous convenience sample was chosen from students attending Hilltop Christian College (pseudonym). Criterion sampling was used to find participants "who can contribute to the development of a theory" (Creswell, 2007, p. 120). Ary et al. (2006) stated that participants "are chosen because they have been through the experience being investigated and can share their thoughts and feelings about it" (p. 461). A questionnaire was used to find students who fulfilled the required criteria (see Appendix A).

Three criteria were utilized for this student selection. First, all participants attended an evangelical missionary college. Second, all were between 18 and 29 years of age since developmental theorists have designated the later stages of adolescence as the primary stage for identity development (Erikson, 1968). Finally, "a sample where each individual has had the experience and can contribute to theory development" (Ary et al., 2006, p. 463) was selected through the use of a questionnaire. This questionnaire (see Appendix A) was used to select participants who have experienced volunteer service opportunities.

This research studied the phenomenon of moral identity; therefore, all participants had the opportunity to describe their identity using moral terms. This is the definition of moral identity given by Power et al. (2008). This study did not attempt to further elaborate the correlation between a moral identity and moral behavior, since several other studies have already demonstrated this correlation (Hardy & Carlo, 2005; Narvaez & Lapsley, 2009). Power et al. (2005) showed a correlation between college students' use of moral self-descriptors and their civic involvement. This study interviewed participants who demonstrated an understanding of their moral identities through their use of moral self-descriptors, asking them to further describe the moral self-conceptualization that provides them an ethical framework for their decision-making.

Criterion sampling advocates the use of participants who have experienced the phenomenon under investigation. Also, since this research was specifically oriented toward Christian education, it looked into if specific "religious motivations play an important role in their [participants'] moral lives" (Peterson, Spezio, VanSlyke, Reimer, & Brown, 2010, p, 156).

The initial sample included college students from a Midwestern evangelical college. This initial sample supplied a group from which to select a criterion sample via data collected from a questionnaire (see Appendix A) that added to the study's trustworthiness. Students read a letter of introduction (see Appendix B) regarding this study on the school's website, and were then sent a questionnaire for them to complete. The questionnaire was used to identify students' moral identity development and included biographical information such as age, religious background of their family, church attendance, and attendance at an evangelical private school.

From the initial sampling, 11 interview participants—five male and six female—were selected based upon their willingness to participate in the study and the three criteria listed

above. Eleven participants were selected for interviews since this number would "achieve detail in the theory" (Creswell, 2007, p. 121) and be attainable in the time frame of this dissertation study. Due to convenience and time constraints, one interview with each of the 11 participants (necessary for depth of information) was used, with a second follow up interview scheduled if and only if specific questions remained unanswered from the first interview. These participants were interviewed in the fall of 2012 through Christmas 2013 after they signed the consent form (see Appendix C). All participants were immediately given pseudonyms to provide anonymity. There was an attempt to select an even number of male and female participants in order to examine the role of gender in moral identity development.

Transcripts of the interviews were analyzed to find codes and meaningful themes as the interviews progressed. At the end of 2013, it became apparent that, while the sample size of 11 participants had provided diverse views and meaningful themes, no new themes or codes were being discovered in an analysis of the additional transcripts. It is possible that the high level of homogeneity in the sample from Hilltop Bible College provided a saturation of data at an earlier point (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). A thick, rich description of moral identity in emerging adults had been achieved by interviewing a homogeneous sample of individuals with experiences in the area under investigation, and analysis at that point showed a repeating of previous themes with no new information. Qualitative research is concerned with discovering meaning. An excess of data does not necessarily facilitate meaning; therefore, my investigation ended when saturation of data had been achieved and no new codes, information, or themes were found in additional interviews (Mason, 2010).

Setting/Site

An evangelical, missionary college in the Midwest was utilized in this research study. This is purposeful in that it is an evangelical college, and convenient due to its location within a two-hour drive of the researcher's residence. College students were chosen due to the level of their identity development (Erickson, 1969). An evangelical college was selected because, as Glanzer and Ream (2009) advocated, Christian colleges should be examples of moral development to secular institutions and therefore need to utilize researched based programs.

Hilltop Bible College was selected because its stated purpose is to "establish believers in the foundational truths of the Bible with an emphasis on church planting among people groups without the Gospel" (New Tribes Bible Institute website, 2014). The school began in 1955 with the specific goal of training individuals to reach tribal people groups with the gospel of Jesus Christ. While not all students decide upon a career in cross cultural evangelism, the emphasis of the school is upon religion and life-long service to others. This is further demonstrated by the school's application process, in which students must agree with the foundational beliefs of evangelicalism and demonstrate their dedication to its standards. Further, Hilltop requires students to major in Bible, and teaches the Bible as an overarching metanarrative. The Bible is taught in its entirety because it is described as the story of God. The students are then encouraged to adopt this story as their life story. By selecting students from Hilltop, I had number of students who perceived themselves as "moral" individuals. A letter on Liberty University letterhead to the school detailing the intentions for this study was mailed, followed by contact with the President of the Bible College by phone to set up an interview during which permission to conduct the research was attained (see Appendix B).

Hilltop Bible College is an interdenominational, evangelical Bible college with 200 students. The classes at the time of study were evenly divided according to gender, but Hilltop is 95% Caucasian and represents primarily middle class, evangelical families. This evangelical influence is dominant in the culture of the college, with classes, relationships with instructors, and community events oriented around a theme of joining God in his story of reaching the nations with the gospel of Christ. Within this culture, each student is told that his or her destiny and purpose is to advance the Kingdom of God. The school emphasizes this metanarrative to provide students with a personal narrative that reflects an evangelical identity and faith.

Participants were selected after they completed the attached questionnaire (see Appendix A). The questionnaire was used to give demographic information and information on the use of reflective journals and mission trips. It was also used to qualify candidates for this research project, through their use of moral self-descriptors and selection of a moral hero. The questionnaire collected information regarding their personal heroes and the characteristics they used to define those heroes. Current research has demonstrated that individuals who use moral self-descriptors possess a high moral identity. Additional research has shown that individuals with a high moral identity chose moral heroes, and then use moral descriptors to define those heroes.

Researcher's Role/Personal Biography

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the primary investigative tool. It is therefore essential that I document several factors that may impact this research. I have only taught in Christian schools and believe this is my calling. I have taught for 10 years and have been an administrator for five years. Currently, I am the administrator at a small Christian school in central Wisconsin. The school is an interdenominational, independent, kindergarten through

12th grade school and a member of Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI). The

purpose of the school is college preparatory and to disciple students to become passionate

followers of Jesus Christ. During my years of teaching and administrating, I have seen students

brought up in evangelical homes, schools, and churches abandon their beliefs during or shortly

after college. In my experience, Christian schools place great emphasis upon moral

development, yet they seldom intentionally address its development through the use of well-

researched theories. It is a priority within Christian education because Scripture "encourage[s]

the development of character as a high priority both for the sake of pleasing God and of

flourishing in ordinary human life" (Langer, Lewis Hall, & McMartin, 2010, p. 337). To reach

this goal of helping students please God and flourish within their lives, Christian schools must

discover and implement researched methodologies that are based upon a biblical worldview and

foundational theories of moral development.

 I was a participant observer with theoretical sensitivity (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) based

upon my familiarity with the theories foundational to moral development. This sensitivity gave

me an expertise to code and categorize the data. However, it also gave me biases that needed to

be identified and monitored. To help with this process I practiced reflexivity through a reflective

journal during the entire research process. One specific bias I was aware of was my expectation

that these students would show more moral maturity because of their backgrounds. Therefore, I

needed to constantly reflect upon my coding of their use of moral identifiers to be sure that I was

not simply seeing what I wanted to see or what they wanted me to see.

 While my understanding of the process of Christian education within a private school

provided me with insights into the process of educational development, and knowing leaders

within the schools provided me with access, I was unknown to the participants in the research. I had never taught or interacted with any of the students in this study.

I developed a thorough description that was firmly grounded in the research and data. However, since I was examining the multiple perceptions of various students, I was also aware of how an individual's perceptions of reality, especially when that reality is regarding self-understanding, is influenced by social or environmental factors.

Within recent qualitative research on identity, especially research utilizing the methodology of personal narratives, five distinct perspectives have been identified (Smith & Sparkes, 2008). While these perspectives all agree that an identity is "shaped by the larger socio-cultural matrix of our being in the world" (Smith & Sparkes, 2008, p. 6), there is disagreement regarding the degree of influence that social relationships play in forming an individual's identity. Smith and Sparkes (2008) identified five basic perspectives forming a continuum between emphasis upon the individual and emphasis upon society as exerting the greatest influence upon identity formation. At one end of the continuum, the psychosocial perspective, identities are formed through an internalized process within the individual, dependent upon cognitive and psychological realities (Smith & Sparkes, 2008). At the other end of this continuum, in the performative perspective, identities are described as fluid action, constructed through social and relational factors alone (Smith & Sparkes, 2008).

For the purpose of this research, it is important to note that I adhere to the psychosocial perspective, in which I accept epistemological realism and seek to discover "the essential personal and 'real' nature of individual selves, identities," (Smith & Sparkes, 2008, p. 9). Within this qualitative research perspective, individuals were viewed as conscious decision makers and "identity making is a process of reflecting upon multiple facets" (p. 13) of an individual's

experiences. Through a developing schema or psychological structure, an individual builds a unified and coherent narrative that reflects his or her actual identity or identities. This internalized process evolves over time and is strongly influenced by the culture surrounding it. It is therefore paramount to remember that students within this present study developed their moral identities within the evangelical culture of Hilltop Bible College. This process of moral identity development "assimilates the wide range of different, and probably conflicting, roles and relationships that characterize a given life" (p. 11) and strives to achieve a sense of unity and purpose. While this development generally occurs throughout adolescence, it can be best studied in the emerging adult through personal narratives (McAdams, 2003).

Data Collection

Data collection procedures began with the approval of my dissertation committee and the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The use of pseudonyms, locked data files, consent forms from students (see Appendix C), and rigorous procedures assisted the approval process and helped this study attain high ethical standards.

After IRB approval (during the summer of 2012), I contacted the dean at Hilltop Bible College. The research was explained and permission to proceed was given, with the exception that I would not be able to contact students due to a school policy. However, the school agreed to inform students regarding this research, and students would be encouraged to contact me. The letter (see Appendix B) and the questionnaire (see Appendix A) were emailed to the dean and they were both placed on the school's website, encouraging students attending the college to contact me through electronic mail. Interested students would then be e-mailed the initial questionnaire for their completion.

The information on the questionnaire was used for demographic purposes and to select 11 participants. To find this sample of individuals with a moral identity, the questionnaire asked students to define themselves using one word descriptors (see Appendix A). If the student included at least one moral self-descriptor, he or she would be included in the sample, because the use of moral self-descriptors is a predictor of a student's self-understanding of his or her moral identity.

An in-depth, semi-structured, personal interview using open-ended questions was then scheduled with each of the selected students (see Appendix D). Each interview was one to two and a half hours long and was audio recorded, then transcribed by the researcher and coded with the names of the students being changed. As recommended, six to 10 questions were used (Saladana, 2009) to support description, analysis, and evaluation. The transcripts from these interviews were read in their entirety and then used to generate themes that became a description of the stage of moral identity within the emerging adult, focusing upon its development during adolescence. To create triangulation of data, students were e-mailed specific essay questions to solicit their reflections regarding their moral identities (see Appendix E) after their interviews.

Research questions two and three were designed to address factors students perceived as affecting their moral development. These questions were initially addressed through the semi-structured interviews and then through the e-mailed essay questions. By connecting these questions to issues raised through the semi-structured interviews, it was hoped that a greater depth of information would be achieved. However, constant consideration was given to the moderating effect of student peer pressure and the student's desire to give the standard expected answer.

Narrative approaches within qualitative studies "elicit a person's self-constructs and identify the self's core commitments" (Pratt, Arnold, & Lawford, 2009, p. 299). During the period of emerging adulthood, individuals can tell their personal life stories, especially as they relate to their moral experiences (Pratt, Norris, Hebblethwaite, & Arnold, 2008). By asking participants to relate five personal stories during an interview, a "narrative identity framework" is established (Pratt et al., 2009, p. 300). Within the study conducted by Pratt et al. (2009), participants related a moral narrative regarding an experience of moral victory, an experience of moral failure, an experience of moral courage or cowardice, and an experience in which they felt moral ambiguity. The interview within this study was based upon similar questions (see Appendix D).

Finally, question four compared and contrasted the descriptions of moral identity given by male and female participants. Within the group of 11 students, two subsets of participants were examined to find "similarities/differences among the participants' responses about the experience" (Ary et al., 2006, p. 462). The sampling strategy of maximum variation "is a popular approach in qualitative studies" (Creswell, 2007, p. 126). In this strategy, the researcher begins the study with a predetermined criterion that differentiates the participants, with the goal of further defining the phenomena by maximizing different perspectives. Since some research has indicated gender differences in moral reasoning (Agerstrom, Bjorklund, & Allwood, 2010; Gilligan, 1982; Yurtsever, 2010), participants were categorized into two groups based upon gender, with five male participants and six female participants involved in the study.

Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using several steps. First, it was read holistically, viewing the phenomenon as a complete experience to be understood. Open coding was used to code and

classify the data into meaningful units and thematic categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Descriptive coding was the filter through which the coding supplied meaning to the information, and simultaneous coding, applying "two or more codes within a single datum" (Saldana, 2009, p. 5), was used to begin to understand patterns within the data. This was done with each new set of information. Each unit of meaning was then placed within a thematic category (Strauss & Corbin, 1990; see Appendix F). Finally, selective coding was used to describe interrelationships between the thematic categories. Since development—specifically moral development—is interdependent in nature, it was essential to examine the relationships between the thematic categories.

Narrative coding was also utilized since it is suitable "to understand the human condition through story" (Saldana, 2009, p. 109) and appropriate for "inquires such as identity development" (p. 109). Through narrative coding, nuances can be understood, and a depth and complexity regarding a participant's "presentation of the self" (p. 109) can be achieved. Saldana (2008) recommended narrative coding as appropriate for phenomenological research.

I transcribed and coded all data as it was collected. Interpretation of the data was ongoing throughout the study with additional interviews or e-mail questions added when further information was needed. Because I constantly evaluated categories according to the data and discovered concepts and patterns within the data, this investigation was emergent in nature.

A record of emergent codes was kept within a separate file. This file contains a list of the codes, their descriptions and data examples. Initially, all data was coded by hard copy so that I will "develop a basic understanding of the fundamentals of qualitative data analysis" (Saldana, 2009, p. 22).

The first half of the data was categorized through an analysis of the questionnaire and the initial interviews. This data became units of analysis such as "empathy related self-descriptors," which was then used to produce deeper analysis. However, categories were constantly reevaluated and added to the single-category divisions to establish their validity and add to the richness of their definitions.

Several methods of interpreting data have been used by qualitative researchers investigating moral identity. Schlenker, Weigold, and Schlenker (2008) asked individuals to name and describe their heroes and found a correlation between integrity and individuals defining their heroes with morally charged adjectives such as benevolence, spirituality, and authenticity. This present study followed the work of Schlenker et al. (2008) in evaluating an individual's level of moral integrity, of centrality within moral identity through choice of heroes, and choice of moral descriptors used within the questionnaire and interview.

Pratt, Arnold, and Lawford (2009) suggested "a narrative approach to describing moral identity deserves further exploration" (p. 310). Pratt et al. asked individuals to disclose personal experiences of moral importance. Individuals were then rated on the seriousness of the moral subjects they decided to discuss, the richness of the details surrounding the narrative of their moral decision, and the factors they felt impacted its conclusion. The moral identity centrality of emerging adults can be disclosed by coding their life narratives according to preset and emerging categories (Pratt et al., 2009). Davidson (1993) and Saldana (2009) also advocated the use of the narrative interviewing approach and the use of narrative coding within phenomenology.

By using the constant comparative method (Creswell, 2007), each new defining category in a college student's developing moral self-understanding was analyzed. Codes were categorized as concepts until there was data saturation, which occurs when no new concepts,

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categories, or relationships are discovered. All data collection continued until saturation of the categories had occurred. This provided a triangulation of data to add to the confirmability of the findings. Connections and relationships within the data were established. The constant comparative method was used to categorize units of data into interrelationships that richly described the development of moral identity and created a theory relating to its formation.

This study generated three visual representations of the data. First, the use of moral descriptors used by the 11 students was used to formulate a table showing the results (see Appendix A). Also, the data generated from the interviews formulated a rich description of the phenomenon being investigated (Creswell, 2007).

Standards of Rigor for Qualitative Research

Good qualitative research will deepen the understanding of a specific phenomenon. Standards of rigor will help to insure that the study has credibility and reliability. This study has implemented several methods to insure its quality.

Credibility

To create structural corroboration, I used an audit trail and triangulation of methods. To control for personal bias, a reflective journal was utilized for the entire research process, an audit trail was established, and all personal biases have been noted at the beginning of the report. The goal was to display a logical progression through the use of a visual chart or diagram that clearly detailed the process being researched.

Theory triangulation was utilized as suggested by the literature. This study also used interdisciplinary triangulation, since the fields of psychology, sociology, theology, and philosophy were used to more thoroughly understand the data (Ary et al., 2006). Triangulation of data and methods was created through the initial questionnaire given to the 11 student

participants, through in-depth semi-structured interviews with the 11 student participants, and through reflective essay questions written by the students in response to an e-mail.

Member checking was utilized during the interview when I restated and summarized statements made by the participants and asked for their correction or elaboration. This insured that I had correctly interpreted their statements and helped to eliminate personal bias from the interpretation process.

Transferability

Within qualitative research, transferability is based upon "whether people believe the findings strongly enough to act on them" (Ary et al., 2006, p. 511). The use of multiple subjects and multiple methods helped to increase transferability. The creation of 'rich, descriptive data' also increased its usefulness to other settings.

Dependability

Reliability is achieved through the use of appropriate methods and the use of triangulation. Triangulation was used to verify the consistency of the data across several research methods. All data were collected by one researcher, and an audit trail covering all aspects of the research process was established. Through the use of an audit trail, individuals can understand how and why decisions were made (Ary et al., 2006). It documents procedures, decisions, observations, working hypotheses, and data collection, categorization, and analysis.

Confirmability

To help insure that the research was free of bias, a reflective journal was used to monitor objectivity. In qualitative research "the focus shifts from the neutrality of the researcher to the confirmability of the data and interpretations" (Ary et al., 2006, p. 511). Confirmability

regarding results was primarily increased through the use of rich descriptions and data saturation (Ary et al., 2006).

No student was asked to sample questions for this study without signing the written consent form (see Appendix C) or before approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) was granted on October 11, 2012.

Ethical Issues

This study involved late adolescents, so ethical issues were paramount. Anonymity and confidentiality were central to each stage of the research. No real names were used in any report or collected data, and written consent was required. Students were informed regarding the nature of this study, but not the research questions. All interested participants were able to see the results or receive a copy of the finished research study.

All names were changed in the transcription process and all data kept in a password protected computer file. This is an emergent study in which it was impossible to know everything that would be discovered, but nothing of an illegal or immoral nature was revealed. However, had it become necessary, the required authorities would have been informed. As a Christian researcher with a biblical worldview, it was essential that the highest view of truth and the greatest respect for the welfare of each student were practiced. Accuracy regarding data and elimination of bias were both goals throughout the entire research process.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Overview

This chapter begins with an introduction of the study's setting and of the 11 participants. It then presents the findings, within the organizational grid of themes and sub-themes based upon the research results and the four research questions. As recommended by van Manen (1990), this qualitative research is not driven by theories about experiences, but rather by data from the lived experiences of the research participants. After a brief introduction of each participant, three themes and twelve sub-themes are presented.

I. Descriptions of moral selves given by participants

    a. Viewed themselves as outside of dominant culture

    b. Stated that they had a higher purpose

    c. Experienced God as transcendent providence

    d. Possessed well-developed self-narratives regarding their moral selves

    e. Experienced a crisis of doubt during early adolescence

    f. Experienced a crisis of suffering during late adolescence

II. Factors impacting moral identity development

    a. Impact of mentors or parents

    b. Impact of culture

III. Comparison of gender based descriptions

    a. Females referenced love, grace, and empathy, as motivational causes and identity descriptions

    b. In self-narratives, females referred to themselves as helpers, comforters, and supporters

c. Males referred to love and grace, but also emphasized theological truth and action

d. In self-narratives, males often described themselves in hero roles

Setting Described by Participant

All of the students participating in this research study could be classified as moral exemplars due to their strong moral identities and dedication to their religious beliefs. Cindy, a nineteen-year-old sophomore at the school, described Hilltop Bible College and the students that attend.

> In a Christian school there is sometimes theology but also a deadness to Christianity. I don't see that at (Hilltop College). Most have grown up in Christian homes or the mission field. But the only people who go to (Hilltop) are ones that care about Christianity. Why come here if you don't? We are all so involved with our faith and want to live it out. Maybe that will and maybe that won't mean missions, but we all want it to be about all of our life.

Sketches of Participants

This was a homogeneous group. These self-portraits are brief and do not offer a full development of the students' moral, spiritual, or personal development; however, data can be gleaned from the recognition of similarities and differences within them. Each interview lasted from one to three hours. Students attending Hilltop Bible College were asked to volunteer after seeing a letter describing this research and its need for participants on the school website. As Hilltop Bible College students, they all were high school graduates and all of the participants self-identified with evangelical Christianity, briefly identified here as believers in Jesus Christ. Five labeled themselves as Baptist, five as non-denominational, and one as belonging to a Bible Church. The only screening used was regarding past volunteer experiences, the selection of a

moral hero, and the use at least one morally relevant self-descriptive term in reference to themselves. Since no screening was used for race or ethnicity, all of the participants were Caucasian. All of the participants came from an economically middle class background, three were from the Midwest, one from the northwest, and seven were the children of international missionaries.

As the children of current or past missionaries, these students had spent several years serving with their parents on a foreign mission field. This gave them a significantly different cultural background then many individuals who grew up in the United States. Concomitantly, all but one of the participants was raised in Christian homes.

Table 1 displays the participants—their ages, gender, and religion—and the number of moral descriptors they used to describe themselves and their heroes. The table also indicates if the participants were the children of missionaries (MK). All 11 participants chose personal heroes of high moral character and exclusively used moral characteristics to describe their heroes. Their heroes fell into three categories: Christian family member, current or historical missionary, or biblical hero. The one exception was the selection of Rachel Joy Scott, the Christian high school student who was killed in the Columbine school shooting. Additionally, Appendix F displays the various themes generated from the interviews and the clusters formed to create meaningful units. These meaningful units were then used to create a description of moral identity within emerging adults in an evangelical environment and to provide answers to the four research questions through themes gleaned from the data.

Table 1

Information on Participants

Participant	Age	Gender	Religion	Number of Moral Descriptors	MK
Sabina	20	Female	Baptist	5/9	No
Olympia	19	Female	Baptist	6/9	Yes
Sam	20	Male	Baptist	4/9	No
Cindy	19	Female	Non-Denominational	6/9	No
Davidia	19	Female	Non-Denominational	6/9	Yes
Paul	23	Male	Baptist	6/9	Yes
Rebecca	18	Female	Non-Denominational	8/9	Yes
Robert	20	Male	Bible Church	5/9	Yes
Peter	29	Male	Non-Denominational	7/9	No
Joy	19	Female	Non-Denominational	5/9	Yes
Jude	19	Male	Baptist	7/9	Yes

Table 2 displays a comparative list of self-descriptors used by participants, with each descriptor only listed once for each gender. The majority of the descriptors used were moral characteristics and most were oriented toward compassion. However, five out of the six female participants used empathy related moral descriptors exclusively, while male participants used empathy, action, and truth related moral descriptors. Table 3 shows the numerical difference in the use of self-descriptors by male and female participants. There also was a difference in the area of identity roles, with females describing themselves as wife, married, missionary kid, and student, and males as manly, servant of God, and leader.

Table 2

Gender Related Use of Moral Heroes and Moral Descriptors

HEROES	CHARACTERISTICS OF HEROES	SELF-DESCRIPTORS
Male Heroes	Love	Shy (M)
My Dad	Peace	Irritable (M)
Hudson Taylor	Calm	Compassionate (M)
Jesus Christ	Love for God	Condemned (M)
Paul	Loving Husband	Loving (M)
Joshua	Faithfulness	Forgiven (M)
	Diligent	Fun (M)
Female Heroes	Humble	Diligent (M)
CT Studd missionary	Trustworthy	Calm (M)
David Hodgdon miss/teacher	Honest	Joy (M)
Sabina Wormbrand	Respected	Servant of God (M)
My Mom	Bold in sharing Christ	Love God (M)
Rachel Joy Scott	Loving	Humble (M)
My Dad	Courageous	Courageous (M)
	Perseverance	Reliable (F)
	Heart for lost	Relational (F)
	Dedicated to God	Godly (F)
	Passionate about helping others	Loving (F)
	Endurance	Hopeful (F)
	Humble	Christ centered (F)
	Godly	Creative (F)
	Mature	Tolerant (F)
	Steadfast	Talkative (F)
	Loyal	Respectful (F)
	Loving wife	Truthful (M)
	Godly	Faithful (F)
	Loving	Faithful (M)
	Perceptive	Prissy (F)
	Faithful	Smart (M)
	Caring	Kind (F)
	Trusting in God	Encouraging (F)
	Nice	Stubborn (F)
		Manly (M)
		Driven (F)
		Compassionate (F)
		Generous (F)
		Intense (F)
		Bold (M)
		Strong, (M)
		Adventuresome (M)

Table 3

Comparison of Male and Female Self-Descriptors

Self-Descriptors	Male	Female
Non Moral	12	9
Empathy Related	4	16
Truth or Justice Related	11	2

Participants

Sabina was raised Baptist and was homeschooled until she began college. She is a married 20-year-old, with extensive volunteer experiences both in the community and in her church. She has served on one mission trip to Honduras. She used three out of three moral descriptors to describe her hero: faithful, steadfast, and loving, and two out of six to describe herself. Sabina is pursuing missions as her future career.

Sam is a married 20-year-old that grew up in a small Mennonite church. He is one of six children. Sam's parents were active in the leadership of the church and he described them as dedicated Christians. He has extensive experience volunteering and served on two mission trips. He used three moral descriptors regarding his personal hero: truthful, humble, and godly, but only one to describe himself, godly. During his interview, Sam placed a great deal of emphasis upon theological truth. He is pursuing missions as a future career.

Cindy is 19, single, and a freshman in Bible college. She has a limited background in volunteer service opportunities and has served on one U.S. mission trip. She was homeschooled for elementary school and attended a private Christian school during high school. She used two

out of three moral descriptors to describe her hero, and three out of six to describe herself: compassionate, unselfish, and kind. She has battled a serious and life threatening illness for several years.

Davidia is 19 and was raised in a Christian home. She attends a small non-denominational church and has been on one short-term mission trip. Growing up, she attended public school. She used two moral descriptors to describe her hero, and three to describe herself: truthful, faithful, and respectful. During our interview she confided that she had been raped last summer.

Paul was raised in a Christian home in which his parents spent a short time on the mission field. He belongs to a church on the West Coast that he describes as very "mission minded." He is 23 and hopes to work as a missionary with an unreached people group. He attended Christian school during his elementary years and public school during middle school and high school. Paul used two moral descriptors, including courageous, to describe his hero, and four out of six to describe himself. Unlike any of the other male participants, the majority of his moral descriptors regarding himself were oriented toward empathy, including kind, loving, and encouraging.

Olympia was raised on the mission field, and stated that she has lived a "very good life." She was homeschooled until high school and then attended a public school. Her goal is to be a missionary in Mongolia. Olympia used two out of three moral descriptors to describe her hero and four out of six to describe herself. Her descriptors were the empathy related characteristics of loving and generous.

Robert is a 20-year-old single male who was raised on the mission field. His parents and grandparents were missionaries and graduated from Hilltop Bible College. He currently attends

a Bible Church and used moral descriptors twice for his hero and three times regarding himself. He displayed impressive spiritual maturity and plans on "following the family business" into missions.

Peter is pursuing plans to go into full time Christian work, is married, and was the oldest participant at 29. He was raised in a non-Christian home, attended public schools from kindergarten through eleventh grade, and dropped out of school during eleventh grade. Currently he attends a non-denominational church. He used moral descriptors to describe his hero three out of three times, and used moral descriptors four out of six times when he described himself. His moral descriptors were loving, compassionate, peaceful, and the positional, no longer condemned.

Joy is 19, single, and grew up in a third world country as a child of missionaries. She was homeschooled for kindergarten, first grade, and ninth grade, and attended Christian school for the rest of her education. Joy used three out of three moral descriptors to describe her hero, and three out of six to describe herself.

Rebecca is a self-described "faithful servant of Christ." She was raised on the mission field and used two out of three moral descriptors for her hero and six out of six for herself. Her descriptors included: godly, loving, hopeful, and faithful, and the positional descriptions of Christian and Missionary Kid. She grew up in a third world country and has always felt alienated from people in the United States of America. She talked a great deal about the loneliness she feels is part of mission work. Her career plans include missions and she describes herself as non-denominational but evangelical.

Jude is 19, single, and describes himself as "basically Baptist." He was raised in a strongly religious Baptist home and is pursuing missions as his future career. He and his ten

siblings were homeschooled in Northern California. He used three descriptors for his hero and

four moral descriptors to define himself, including caring, humble, faithful, and Christ-like.

Theme One: Descriptions of Moral Identity

Several moral identity themes became apparent in the narratives given by the students.

These were used to build a description of the moral identity developmental stage of emerging

adults attending an evangelical Bible college. All of the students interviewed identified

themselves as believing Christians and dedicated to their faith; as such, they were used within

this study as moral exemplars, displaying healthy moral identity development. Several

descriptive sub-themes were evident in the narratives of the students and will be discussed in this

research. The sub-themes describing moral identity in emerging adults are: alienation from the

dominant culture, a well-developed self-narrative, a connection with a higher purpose, an

admiration toward an adult with high moral character, and a crisis experience in their past.

Alienation from Dominant Culture

A sub-theme within the self-narratives was the sense of alienation from the current

culture. Seven of the participants were raised as the children of missionaries in a different, often

third world country. This gave many of them a sense of personal and group identity of being a

missionary kid, or MK. This identification with a cultural subgroup gave them a sense of

alienation toward the culture of the United States. This strong sense of group identity was

connected to missions or Christianity. When asked if she was like or unlike other young college

students, Olympia stated:

Very different from the average teen in West, in U.S.A! I grew up in third world culture.

Have a respect for cultures, traveled the world, I have a respect for elders. Which is a

lost virtue among U.S. students. I was raised in a home where Christ is followed. This is

not my world!

Smith and Sparkes (2008) stated that identity is "shaped by the larger socio-cultural matrix of our being in the world" (p. 6). Since seven of the 11 participants grew up in missionary families within a different culture and country, their identity shaping culture is not the United States of America. Consequently, the participants saw themselves as distinct from Americans and alienated from the dominant culture. Joy stated, "I knew that I was not like these Americans. My idea of struggling is different than there's. I'm different." Olympia echoed this with "I've had a problem fitting in here all my life." She further illustrated how this impacted her identity by stating, "Who am I? I would say, missionary kid. That has defined my life. That makes you different from everybody else, or everybody here." Rebecca made a similar statement with, "We're a different breed, missionary kids. We don't fit in anywhere." This feeling of alienation from the dominant American culture was present in 10 of the 11 participants.

Three of the participants who were not the children of missionaries indicated that previous service learning experiences in other countries had shown them differences between the cultures they visited and Americans living in the United States. They expressed surprise at the lack of material possessions in third world countries, yet the high level of personal happiness and self-satisfaction exhibited by individuals. Sabina connected this to the previously stated alienation from their dominant culture, "It was amazing and so much fun. They were very friendly, open, different than Americans. They have nothing and are the happiest people on the planet!" Jude, an MK, also made this connection by stating, "How happy people can be with so little, it's amazing, almost shocking."

Connection with a Higher Purpose

All of the participants interviewed in this study spoke of an allegiance to a higher purpose

or a connection to a sense of meaning in their lives. Participants spoke confidently regarding a sense of personal meaning and purpose. Cindy stated that she had, "worked through the whole story of the Bible and that [it] has changed [her] idea of what the Bible is about and [her] purpose and how it fits into the story." She went on to say,

> I just came to the conclusion that God is in control but there are hard times but it's OK because it is for a purpose. God is doing something. And I remember in the hospital asking God, God, I know that you have a purpose here, but I need to know what it is. But no, I needed to learn to trust.

> Rebecca's statement that "You know, we are not supposed to be here just to float along" demonstrated her belief that individuals need to have a reason to live that is greater than themselves; this was a descriptive feature of students within this study.

Belief in Transcendent Providence or Destiny

The participants interviewed also viewed the events in their lives as controlled by a transcendent, benevolent power. Joy demonstrated this belief in a higher controlling power in her statement, "When I left Bolivia it was not morally courageous or spiritually led, but God still used it." Olympia connected this to financial care:

> I definitely have times in my life when I have experienced God's provision for me. One time last year, I was going into the senior year of high school but the tradition was that throughout high school you would raise money for your senior year, but I went into my senior year with nothing. But then someone just anonymously paid half of it. And this summer, I didn't have money for tuition, but someone just paid it. So I have seen God's financial provision. And God has provided the roommates I have and I experience God through my experience with them and through what I am learning in classes. I can't

think of anything more specific but I have experienced God so many times in my life that yes, it's been incredible.

Narrative Identity

The majority of the stories told during the interviews and in response to questions e-mailed to participants after their interviews demonstrated strong narrative content. Strong narrative content is demonstrated when individuals take a random event from their past and recreate it to reveal meaning. Narrative stories have a beginning, progress to a middle and central event, and then conclude with a theme. Often, the participants telling the narratives are the central character, and a clearly articulated setting and plot is evident. This ability to create a meaningful narrative out of episodic memory events represents an important adolescent development (Lapsley & Hill, 2009; McAdams, 2013; McLean & Breen, 2009).

Crisis Events within Moral Identity Development

Many of the students seemed to pass through two distinct spiritual stages of crisis: the first during middle school and the second during late adolescence. In the first stage, they experienced doubt regarding their faith, either questioning their salvation or their belief in God or Christianity. Eight of the participants indicated that early adolescence held a time of crisis of doubt that brought about growth. Joy expressed it as, "I thought God just dealt with adults, but when I was 14, I finally realized that God was active in my life."

Jude indicated that he had been raised in a Christian home, and remembered making a decision to be a Christian at four or five. But, "At fourteen I believed, but had no depth *[sic]*. At 14, I gave God seven, or maybe nine prayer request. Year after, every one had been answered. I recognized God answers prayer and have seen God come through and working *[sic],* in just amazing ways."

Davidia expressed a similar crisis of doubt when she was in middle school:

Probably middle school, I struggled with, am I really saved? I don't know how that went

away. I guess I started to get into staying in the good graces of God. I thought, I did

something good today so now God likes me, and then I did something wrong so I'm not

in his 'in' circle. I needed to grow out of that to believe that it's positional. My position

is God loves me and it doesn't change daily based upon what I did wrong or right.

Joy also discussed the experience of doubt that brought about greater faith. She said:

And then when I was 14 I started connecting with God. I had thought that knowing God,

that God doing something in your life *[sic]*, just started when you were18 or something,

and then at 14, 15, I went to a great church and knew God was working in my life.

Two of the participants stated that the crisis was not one of doubting the existence of

God, but of their connection to him. Olympia, a freshman at Hilltop College stated,

There was one period when I was 13 or 14 when I doubted, maybe didn't doubt faith, but

did doubt whether I was really saved. I started, I don't know, it wasn't that I was

planning on turning away. I just felt like I didn't have any big conversion experience, I

don't really remember anything. So I thought, what if I didn't really do it? So, every

night I would pray. I started seeing specific examples of God providing for me. He

made it personal. I made it my own and not just my parents'. I read in his Word and see

his love for me, and I wouldn't have that if he didn't love me. It took a couple months

to get through that time. But I finally saw God working in my life and I love him and

know he loves me.

Two of the students stated that this was the first time they considered missions as a future

career. Sabina stated:

I was saved at six, but it really didn't click until 13, when I went through a difficult time.

That was when I decided to go into missions. Up to then I thought I was a

Christian because I was raised a Christian, but around 13, with the move, I started

thinking about how God saw me. I remember a song at that time talked about hearing

God say, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.' And I remember thinking, I want to

hear that. That's what I want to live for.

Joy summarized much of the dialogue from the participants with, "At fourteen, being in missions and on the mission field, you just kinda get it at that age *[sic]*."

Several students mentioned a second phase of crisis that led to growth during late adolescence. This crisis was brought on by a period of disappointment in God due to a time of significant suffering: rape, a brother's terminal diagnosis, a painful or terminal illness, the failure of a spiritual mentor. This crisis of suffering brought participants to a spiritual decision that pushed them to a new stage in which they saw themselves as part of a meaningful narrative. When students developed an ability to see themselves as part of a meaningful story, they developed a stronger sense of moral identity. Cindy described this developmental moral passage in her life:

I have Crohn's disease. I have a chronic illness. I had to quit skating and it changed my

life. I got to the point where I saw the hand of God in it. My mom has it, my two aunts

have it, so there is a huge support system in my family for it. Last year of high school I

had a terrible episode when I almost died. I was in the ICU and went septic, and I was

hurt that this happened *[sic]*. Senior year, I was working on college applications, yet I

still believed that my life could have been gone but God had protected me. Yeah, I

asked why *[sic]*, but then I walked away thinking look at all God has done for me during

this time.

Faithfulness in suffering. Participants expressed a deep understanding of suffering, and all but one expressed an understanding that suffering was a normal part of life and within God's purpose for them. A female participant stated, "My life is about more than my happiness." A male participant gave his view of a theological understanding of suffering with, "God sent his son to suffer."

Suffering was also mentioned as a major factor in moral development by many of the participants. "Main turning point, this last summer, I was raped. That made me want even more to go back to school here *[sic]*. So definitely made me trust more. …I trust my parents know best and I trust God to know best."

Joy demonstrated a similar attitude and stated:

The kids at the school were physically and verbally bullying me, borderline sexually. This was an international boarding school, and even when they talked to me they always said you, when talking about the school they, never, like, said we *[sic]*. I went through a period when I was suicidal for a long time and if it wasn't for my belief that life has a greater purpose, I would be dead by now.

Theme Two: Factors Impacting Moral Identity

Moral Identity develops during adolescence and is impacted by several factors. Both moral mentors and cultures that promote a moral standard influence Moral Identity development. Each of these factors includes specific characteristics that may develop a strong and unified Moral Identity in emerging adults.

Parents that are admired for their moral character

Ten of the participants stated during their interview that they admired their parents and

desired to follow their moral example. The idea that "I model what my parents are, I saw their

sacrifice" became a theme evident in the narratives provided by the participants. Sam, raised in a

strong religious home, described his father as a faithful church leader, "Even when we were on

the farm he was always involved in church. Church counsel and stuff and I always looked up to

him *[sic]*." Jude stated the theme of admiration toward a parent because of his or her moral

stand:

> My dad is a servant. I was looking at him as an example. Even now there are
>
> times *[sic]*. He was willing to get things done, just doing whatever was needed. He
>
> would just kinda like take different roles, preaching in front, and just as important,
>
> working in back to make sure everything works for the person in front *[sic]*.

Cindy stated that her development was based upon the influence of her mom. "My Mom

taught me how to be an adult. I'm different socially, but my teaching was from my parents."

Olympia, and several other participants, reflected upon watching parents deal with trials and

difficulties. "I also experienced watching my parents know my brother had Asperger's." She

went on to state, "My parents were faithful in living out what they profess. That is challenging,

encouraging, and molding. Some kids never see that."

Peter talked about a family crisis that he felt lead to his moral development because he

saw the faithfulness of his family members:

> When I was twelve my brother went through some hard things, convicted of things he
>
> didn't do. Why did God let him go through this for things he didn't do! I have two older
>
> brothers and one sister. But I couldn't understand how God would do that. Seeing my
>
> brother go through it was hard, but it strengthened my faith; it made my family grow
>
> stronger together. I don't know if I changed, but to see that mess impact others positively

was impacting.

Sam tells the narrative of watching his parents and family during a church split, in which they were central characters. Sam stated:

> The youth pastor was better liked so they went with the youth pastor. …So I saw it first-hand. So to have so much of the church body turn against your family, not really looking at the issue just getting on an emotional frenzy, just going against you because you said something they didn't like about someone they liked *[sic]*. There was an anonymous church survey put out about it and people, church people, said really negative things about my family.

Mentors

Three of the students interviewed stated that they currently or in the past had a Christian mentor in their lives that impacted them positively. While this is not a significant number, this sub-theme of mentors with high moral character building moral identity supported the previous sub-theme highlighting the impact of parents who provided a moral individual for children to admire. Peter stated, "My pastor mentored me. Starting with the freshman year of high school, youth pastor." He also described him as "like a father figure to me."

Joy commented that "There was this woman in my church that was a missionary in the past and she just began to meet with me and talk to me." All three students stated these mentors were moral exemplars and made a significant difference in their lives.

Impact of Culture

Several students mentioned the importance of being in the evangelical environment of Hilltop Bible College. Participants stressed that the Bible college gave them a sense of purpose and meaning by teaching the Bible as one narrative, telling the story of God, and emphasizing

their responsibility to become a part of that story. Cindy gave an example of a spiritual breakthrough. "Being in Bible School we start in Genesis and work the whole story of the Bible and that has changed my idea of what the Bible is about and my purpose in how it fits into The Story." Cindy continued with the comment, "That is where I found meaning, knowing that it is a process of growing in our dependence on God as we work for him."

Theme Three: Comparison and Contrast of Self-Descriptions Based Upon Gender

This study examines gender related differences within Moral Identity by comparing the self-descriptions and the personal narratives given by the participants. Individual self-descriptions were solicited through the use of a questionnaire and personal narratives were gathered during an interview. Data from both sources was then used to describe the meaning these participants associated with their identity as a moral man or a moral woman. Several gender-related differences were found.

Female Participants and Empathy

All of the participants used at least one compassion-oriented self-descriptor, however, all of the female participants used several compassion-oriented self-descriptors and included narratives demonstrating empathy. "I guess I find it easier to show kindness than courage," was a feeling expressed by many of the female participants. Joy defined empathy as a characteristic that is central to her identity. "I'm always there for people. Very caring, I love to be there for people. I guess that is just the way I am, I can't think of any ways I was raised that would make me that way." Several of the female participants gave narratives in which they demonstrated empathy. Olympia, when asked to tell about a time she behaved in a moral way, narrated the following story:

Well, one time when I was a freshman in high school, about four year ago, I was in

Washington State, there was this girl who had mental disabilities, very socially impaired as well, so I took it upon myself to try to talk with her, to try to relate to her. She always had a care worker with her to help her with all the difficulties she had. I spent time with her and went out for coffee with her. It was a really good time of being able to help someone who could not give anything back. It gave me a feeling of joy to help someone like that.

Sabina demonstrated the central importance of love to the sense of one's moral identity when she stated, "Everything should be based upon love for God and love for other people." Joy echoed this sentiment with, "I want to be really kind to everyone and really good to others." She went on with a narrative demonstrating the centrality of empathy to her moral self-image:

I already had a reputation for talking to and sitting with the kids no one else wanted to be with. There is this one girl this year who is recovering from mono *[sic]*t oo and away from home and she has certain things that she just doesn't understand so anyway I go to her and just let her talk, and say 'Yeah, I know what it is like to be tired all the time'*[sic]*. And another girl is depressed and tired and I struggled with that for a good three years so I identify with people who used to be passionate about church and God and then get too tired because I remember that and went through it *[sic]*. And another student has this tick thing that makes other kids not want to be around him, but because of the brother I had I know what it is like so I like him and feel comfortable around him. Another girl just found out that her mom has MS, like my mom. So, yeah *[sic]*. A lot of things you go through might not be exactly the same but really are guilt, fear, abandonment. I can tell when people are screaming on the inside.

Female Participants in the Role of Helpers

During the interviews, participants were asked to tell about a time they behaved in a moral way. Six out of the six female participants told stories in which they demonstrated empathy, often doing little more than listening and offering encouragement. In their moral narratives they were the helpers, emotionally supporting those in trouble or suffering.

Similar stories were also given in response to this e-mail question sent to the females after the interviews: "Please describe an event or decision from your past in which you made a positive difference." Five out of six female participants gave answers demonstrating their role of empathetic encourager. The one female participant who did not narrate a story in which she played the role of an empathetic encourager told a story about how she supported her father when he took an important theological stand. Most females within this study were like Joy, who believed her role was to show others that she understood their pain:

> A girl fell down the stairs on the bleachers in front of everyone and cut her lip. She told
>
> me she remembered me rubbing her back and telling her something along the lines of
>
> 'Embarrassing stuff happens to all of us,' and 'Nobody is looking anymore anyway.' It
>
> seemed to mean a lot to her when she reminded me about it two years after it had
>
> happened.

Male Participants and Truth

Male participants also used self-descriptors of empathy and compassion; however, four out of five male participants used a greater number of self-descriptors regarding truth and theological correctness. Sam said, "Life is about going to the Bible to find propositional truth, then living that out." This was a common theme within the narratives and self-descriptions given by the male participants. Peter gave a narrative of a time of crisis, in which theological truth

gave him the answers he needed:

> I was confused and doubted. I didn't know what was going on. So I talked to my mentor, the pastor, and he just gave me verses to read. He was very firm in not telling me what to believe or do, but just gave me Scripture to read. So that helped me to explore. And I guess I decided what I believed with the controversy."

Sam gave a narrative of his father during a church split:

> The three pastors at the church all disagreed with one another. So my dad researched it to make sure he was biblically on the right track. But unfortunately, the church decided to base it on personality and who was liked the most instead of on theological truth.

In four out of the five male participants, moral identity seemed to have a greater connection to truth than to love. "Integrity is sticking to the Bible. Truth *[sic]."*   As Sam went on to explain, "He handled that church situation with integrity. Because he stuck it out. He approached a taboo subject. He tried to help everyone understand what the Bible says."

One male participant also explained his moral growth during his college years this way: "Going to (college) was a real turning point for me. Um, yeah, really putting the Bible together and getting a comprehensive understanding of the Bible and the purpose behind everything."

Four out of five male participants used self-descriptors relating to knowledge or truth, while only one female participant used any knowledge oriented self-descriptor, and she used two to describe herself: truth oriented and open minded. Three out of the five male participants also used action oriented self-descriptors compared to one out of six female participants. There was, however, one male participant who used seven out of nine self-descriptors that related to compassion, and none relating to truth, knowledge, or action.

Male Participants in the Role of Hero

In the narrative stories supplied by female participants, five out of six displayed themselves as moral characters because of their empathy and their ability to understand the sufferings of others or to offer support to others in difficult situations. All of the five male participants, however, told narratives in which they were the hero that changed a negative situation through their knowledge or action. When asked to tell a moral narrative, none of the female participants told a story in which they changed a negative reality. Instead, they narrated a story in which they empathized with a victim or supported a hero. In contrast, five out of the five male participants displayed themselves as moral characters that solved problems or rescued individuals from difficult situations. Stories such as Robert's had plots of rescuing friends by physically helping them:

This happened last October with a friend of mine. He was driving to work and his car broke down. He texted me, so I dropped everything and went to pick him up. Took him to work. That's what you need to do to help other people.

In an e-mailed response to a prompt, Tyler narrated a story about his decision to attend Hilltop Bible College and the positive impact it had upon his church:

It also positively affected the adults in youth group by giving them a first-time exposure to a young person passionate about pursuing Christ with their life. So in summary, when I decided to go against the normal of what every typical high school graduate does, it set a positive tone and voice for both the youth and adults in my church body. It made a difference.

While the female participants emphasized the feelings of the individuals they were helping and their abilities to understand and relate to these feelings, the male participants

narrated stories of changes in the actions or situations of those they helped. Making a difference in the theological understanding of others seemed to be a dominant and importance theme. Sam talked about a time when he made a difference in the theological beliefs of his church:

> Two years ago I did a talk on the importance of Genesis for my church. This was to raise awareness of how your interpretation of all Scripture affects the Gospel. I was showing how, if you get the foundation wrong, you have no basis for the Gospel. After my talk I was approached by several men who told me they were impressed and challenged by my message. I wanted people to see that they could trust all of Scripture, even the parts that seem a little out there, as truly inspired and accurate in every detail.

While all of the male participants listed love, compassion, or encouragement as a personal moral trait in at least one out of nine self-descriptors, none related a narrative regarding time spent encouraging a friend by understanding their feelings or relating to what they were experiencing. Male participants told stories of changing their world in a morally positive way through living out their beliefs through actions or through a verbal sharing of truth.

Reflective Journals

The majority of the students who completed the questionnaire indicated that at some point, they had used or were using a reflective journal. However, female participants were more likely to practice reflective techniques then male participants, with five out of six female participants stating the use of reflective journals, while only two out of six male participants stated the current use of one. Five of the female participants indicated reflective journals were a positive influence in their lives and they wished to use them more consistently. Male participants, however, were more divided, with three out of the six stating there was little or no value to reflective journals.

Summary

This qualitative phenomenological study describes the moral identity of emerging adults attending an evangelical college in the Midwest and provides insight into factors impacting its formation. The chapter began with a description of the college, followed by brief portraits of each of the participants. Following this introduction, three themes and 12 sub-themes were discussed related to the four research questions. The final chapter will offer an analysis of the findings in relation to the available literature regarding moral identity and offer models to provide a framework for its discussion. This will be followed by practical implications regarding moral identity development in adolescents and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Overview

This qualitative phenomenological study described the moral identity of emerging adults and explored factors that impact its development. The theoretical framework proposes that moral identity deepens and matures during late adolescence as the individual grows to perceive moral values as essential to his or her identity (Blasi, 1984). Since previous literature (Aquino et al., 2009; Frimer & Walker, 2009; Hardy et al., 2012) has indicated that moral identity may be the link between the complex interaction of moral emotions and moral reasoning that produces moral behavior, this needs to be an area of emphasis for researchers and for individuals working with youth.

Chapter Five concludes this phenomenological study. The three themes and 12 sub-themes identified in Chapter Four can be condensed into five descriptive themes involved in moral identity formation in late adolescence and four themes discussing gender differences in moral identity development. The five descriptive themes are a well-developed moral self-narrative, an attitude of alienation toward the prevailing culture, admiration toward a moral adult, connection to a higher purpose, and the process of moral identity development through two specific crisis periods. These themes were used to create three models describing moral identity and its development.   Additionally, Chapter Five includes a short discussion regarding the impact of volunteer experiences as demonstrated in this study. Recommendations include a renewed emphasis upon moral formation during adolescence based upon moral identity development and further research on moral formation within evangelical communities.

Theme One: Descriptions of Moral Identity

This study creates a thick description of Moral Identity in emerging adults within an

evangelical culture. Several characteristic are shown to be elements within this description and

several factors are shown to impact its development. Moral Identity develops through an

interaction with a moral culture during a process in which individuals give meaning to their

memories by creating moral self-narratives.

Moral Self-Narratives

Participants within this study demonstrated a strong narrative structure within their

stories regarding moral experiences. Recent research (Dunlop & Tracy, 2013; McAdams, 2008)

illustrated a connection between a strong moral narrative structure in the stories individuals tell

and their internal morality. An identity is strengthened when individuals see themselves as part

of a story, fulfilling a larger narrative. This study furthers research on the given topic by

examining the formative connections between a strong moral narrative structure within a story

and the moral identity of the teller. Three dominant themes were found within the moral

narratives of the participants within this study. These three themes—alienation from the

dominant culture, admiration toward a moral individual, and connection to a higher purpose—are

present in their moral self-narratives (See Figure 1). Each of these dominant themes will be

individually discussed from the standpoint of previous research, followed by an analysis of the

influential role of moral self-narratives.

Alienation from Culture

Connection to a Higher Purpose

Admiration of Moral Individual

Moral Self Narrative
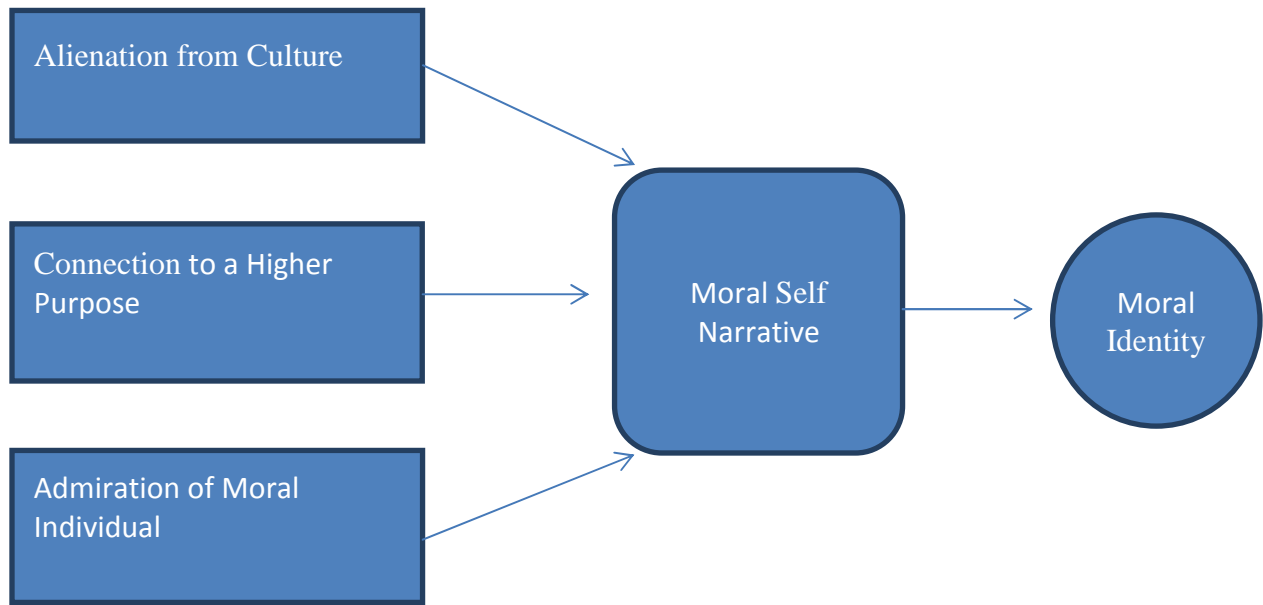
Moral Identity

Figure 1. Moral Identity in emerging adults includes alienation from the dominant culture, connection to a high purpose and admiration toward a moral individual. It is structured through a moral self-narrative.

Alienation from Dominant Culture

An unexpected theme was the sense of alienation experienced by the participants toward the current culture in the United States. The sense that this world was not their home was prevalent and displayed in statements such as, "This isn't my culture," "I'm very different from the West," and even "I'm an MK, not an American." These statements indicated that the participants' sense of identity, of who they truly are, is not connected to this culture. Many of the participants defined their identity as being part of the group designated as "Missionary Kids." Other participants defined their identity as being part of the group "Future Missionary" or as being part of their extended Christian family. All of the participants spoke about "other" college-age students outside of Hilltop Bible College as being different from them and their group. Their identity was not tied to the dominant culture, but they were "strangers and aliens

here" and felt a strong sense of group identity to an evangelical, mission-oriented group or family. Sandlin and Walther (2009) identified the creation of a subculture that was in opposition to the hegemonic culture as a factor in community development and in the structuring of a moral identity. Smith (2009) has written extensively regarding emerging adults raised in the culture of evangelicalism but identifying with the larger culture. He theorized regarding the damaging effect identifying with the larger culture can have on moral and spiritual development. Cultural and group identification has been shown to be a formative factor in developing an individual's self-narrative (O'Fallen & Butterfield, 2011), and therefore moral identity. By identifying with a morally elevated subculture instead of the dominant culture, an individual's moral identity is strengthened.

Historically, Christianity has always struggled to find its place within culture. The dual commandments of being in the world but not of the world describe the paradox of the church and of parents and educators training the next generation for Christ. The evangelical church has been at various places on this continuum during its history, at times embracing a monastic separatism, and at other times becoming synchronized into the culture they were called to change. This study indicates that the key may be found within identity theory. The participants within this study served within their world but interpreted their identity as belonging to a separate culture. For many of the participants within this study, this separation was a result of being raised in a different culture, however, this connection to an alien culture could also be facilitated through turning the desires of an individual toward a different world (Smith, 2009).

Connection to a Higher Purpose

Previous research has indicated a correlation between an individual's perception of a higher purpose or a connection to a transcendent being, and one's ability to make moral

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decisions (Broderick, 2010; Bronk, 2012). This study furthers Broderick's (2010) and Bronk's (2012) literature by adding the correlation between an individual's connection to a higher purpose in life and the unified strength of the individual's moral identity. Students with a connection to a higher purpose develop an ability to see their lives as part of a story with meaning and significance. This sense of destiny and purpose in their lives develops their abilities to structure a moral self-narrative, which then creates a unified moral identity within emerging adults.

Connection with a transcendent being has been correlated with moral behavior (Broderick, 2010). Power (2005) found that perceiving a purpose greater than oneself facilitated moral agency. This study found that a connection with a greater purpose or an allegiance with a transcendent being helped to develop a strong and consistent moral identity in participants. Joy made this point:

I find it funny that our schools teach meaning and purpose and yet when you go out into the world they teach that there is no purpose no meaning and that makes our school so important because it does show us that these is something more important than ourselves. Christianity doesn't always teach that but it should be something that we teach. I believe that we have meaning.

One possible reason Hilltop Bible College has students with strong moral identities may be this emphasis upon purpose and meaning that permeates their formal and informal curriculum. The larger culture of the school and its metanarrative has become a dominant factor in creating a student's self-narrative and therefore, moral identity.

Hilltop Bible College also taught students to associate their connection to a higher purpose with a belief in a transcendent providence. This belief in a higher power that was

orchestrating their lives may be a factor in creating their perception that they were part of a

personal redemptive narrative. This sense of a greater power writing their life stories may

provide individuals with a structure of meaning and purpose from which to construct their moral

self-narratives, thereby establishing their moral identity.

Figure 2. Emerging adults described two periods of crisis which strengthened their Moral

Identity.

Several of the participants indicated their moral identity development had passed through

two adolescent stages, as shown in Figure 2. The first stage is during early adolescence (12-14

years of age) and is a crisis of doubt, in which the participants discussed a period of questioning

their faith, their religion, or the existence of God. Some questioned the truth claims of

Christianity while others questioned the truth of their religious experience. Piaget (1932) stated

that within this stage, individuals develop critical thinking skills, and Erikson (1968) designated

adolescence as the Identity vs. Role Confusion Stage in which individuals begin to question their

identities and roles in life. Both of these factors would help to explain why many of these

participants described this as a time of questioning their beliefs and a time of deciding if their

identities would continue to be dominated by the faith and belief system of their parents. Each of

the participants decided to take on the identity of Christianity in a deeper way after successfully conquering this stage.

Bryant (2011 conducted a qualitative study with four students attending an evangelical college and found that each of the four students experienced a crisis of doubt in which they questioned their faith during their early college years. Bryant found that each student had successfully navigated this period of doubt through significant mentors and an attachment to their faith communities. Students within Bryant's study progressed from an authority-based epistemology to one that included reasoning and self-authorship during their years in college. Welch and Millberg (2008) emphasized the importance of religion becoming internal instead of external in a two-part process. Part two, identification, is the "process of accepting religious beliefs as one's own due to personal choice, resulting in these beliefs being highly valued and personally relevant" (p. 146). They added that this is achieved through a period of cognitive questing, described as an experience of doubt and of asking existential questions. Whether this is a process completed in middle school, college, or one that is part of adulthood, research (Bryant, 2011; Welch & Millberg, 2008) has indicated it is a process that leads to epistemological complexity and spiritual maturation, so it is one that should be understood and facilitated by teachers of moral development.

During late adolescence (18-25 years of age), many of the participants discussed a time of suffering, experienced personally or by someone they loved, during which they again doubted their faith but eventually came to the conclusion that suffering was a beneficial part of successful living, instilling life with meaning and purpose. This conclusion of seeing suffering as part of their story and seeing that story as part of a larger destiny was an important developmental belief. Suffering was then able to strengthen their moral identities, by creating a connection

between moral identities and a higher purpose, a noble calling, or a transcendent being. While there was no literature on a later stage of suffering that generated a connection with a higher purpose, several studies provided insight.

Taverineir (2012) studied the narrative identities given by high school seniors and found that students who gave narratives demonstrating a positive outcome to a tragic or negative life event also demonstrated a greater sense of well-being. McAdams (2013) defined redemptive narratives as stories individuals tell that describe a successful survival of a tragic experience through which the individual grew stronger, more skilled, or developed a greater sense of purpose and meaning. These redemptive narratives are correlated with personal life satisfaction and with generatively (McAdams, 2001; McAdams, 2013). Thorn (2004) studied narrative identities expressed by individuals and found that those who reported events containing negative emotions were more likely to connect those events to personal meaning. Thorn went on to show that narratives that were high in tension, such as mortality narratives in which death is feared, created a greater sense of meaning within the individual.

Moral identity was also correlated to individuals who told redemptive narratives that demonstrated personal growth, overcoming crisis, and a personal connection to a noble purpose (McAdams, 2012). Bauer, McAdams and Pals (2008) found that individuals with a strong moral identity experienced profound satisfaction with life. Within this study, redemptive narratives held three distinct characteristics: an emphasis upon personal growth, the view that personal suffering is transformative, and an understanding that life is progressively improving. Pals (2006) theorized that a goal of identity formation within the emerging adult was the construction of a unified narrative story in which a tragic or difficult life experience is viewed as producing growth and emotional well-being.

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Based upon these studies, late adolescence is a period during which individuals may develop a sense of meaning and purpose in their lives by successfully surviving a crisis of suffering. Surviving this crisis will be achieved when the emerging adult believes the suffering will produce personal growth or serve a greater purpose. This can be facilitated when the individual translates his or her life experience into a redemptive, personal narrative, in which one's story is interpreted within a theme of purpose, meaning, and destiny.

This concept, that each individual needs a redemptive, personal narrative that reflects a metanarrative from a larger community, is an essential part of evangelicalism and is a foundational teaching principal at Hilltop Bible College. At Hilltop, the entire story of the Bible is seen as the story of God providing a redemptive narrative framework for each individual. Each student is taught to interpret this larger story in a personal way. Students grow to understand that they must become part of this larger story to achieve their purpose and destinies.

Theme Two: Factors Impacting Moral Identity Development

Moral Identity is formed through interactions with a morally strong culture and through admiration toward a moral individual. Participants within this study developed a moral self-narrative through their exposure to the moral metanarrative of their evangelical culture. This moral self-narrative helped to define their identity by providing a meaningful framework for its development.

Admiration of a Moral Individual

In nine of the 11 participants, admiration of a moral individual was displayed through admiration of one parent, and initially seemed to reinforce the current literature on the importance of mentoring in young lives (Lanker, 2012). However, this study extended the previous literature by connecting the role of mentors to the development of moral identity and

added the new dimension of admiration toward a morally strong individual as an important element. Research has shown that morality is advanced when individuals have a caring role model to admire and emulate (Lanker & Issler, 2010). This study extended this understanding to include the advancement of moral identity when role models with high personal integrity are admired. However, as noted earlier, these results may have been influenced by the use of questions oriented toward morality and the participants' desires to give answers that were acceptable in a religiously oriented environment.

Research has shown that one developmental source of moral identity is the shared, emotionally positive relationship with a caregiver (Lapsley & Hill, 2009). It has been theorized that this relationship may be the foundation of the conscience in an individual by creating a secure attachment between a parent and child, causing the child to want to comply with parental expectations (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004). This committed compliance (Kochanska, 2002) is based upon the child's love for and admiration of his or her caregivers and motivates moral internalization. Therefore, moral admiration in children, when it is associated with a deeply relational and shared commitment, can create moral identity by creating a moral desire to fulfill the standards of the caregiver (Lapsley & Hill, 2009). Lapsley and Hill also stated that this development could be more significant when the moral structure is associated with standards or values from a larger source outside of the caregiver's environment. This is due to its influence on a child's ideal moral identity.

Moral Self-Narrative

In this study, individuals with a moral identity could tell self-narratives about their moral lives, and the stories often had redemptive themes. Redemptive narratives are stories individuals tell about themselves in which good comes from bad because of a personal destiny or connection

with a higher purpose (McAdams, 2001). The male participants gave narratives about

themselves in which they were heroes in stories of moral courage or truth. The female

participants gave narratives in which they were supporters offering empathy and care. This

ability to tell a morally charged story in which the narrator behaved morally is correlated with

moral behavior (McAdams & McLean, 2013). This study indicates that the link between a moral

self-narrative and moral behavior may be an individual's moral identity. While this study

indicates a correlation between the two, it is reasonable to assume that this relationship is

circular, with a moral self-narrative forming a moral identity and a moral identity forming and

reinforcing an individual's moral self-narrative.
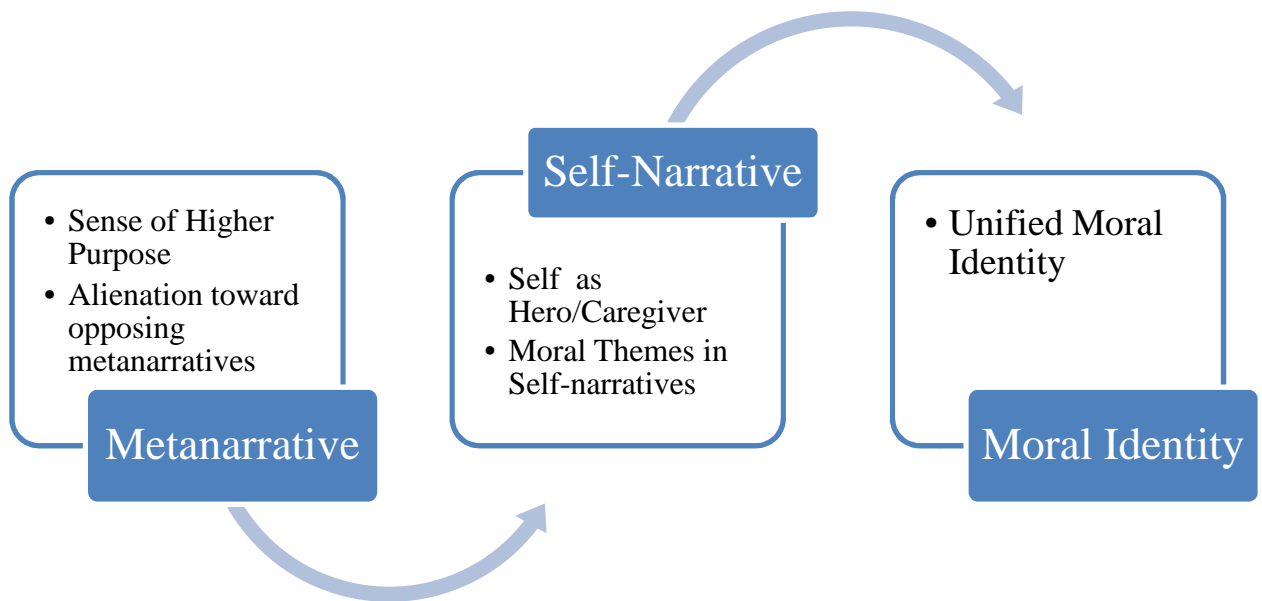
Figure 3. Moral Identity is formed when individuals accept the moral metanarrative of their

culture through the process of forming a moral self-narrative that reflects that culture.

According to Smith and Sparkes (2008), identity is "shaped by the larger socio-cultural

matrix of our being in the world" (p. 6). Culture shapes identities because it helps people to write

their stories, stories that will define them through the creation of identities. The metanarrative

that defines one's culture creates the structure and scaffolding that will configure one's personal

narrative, which in turn will create one's personal identity. Moral identity therefore, will be

influenced by the culture's overarching story when the individual identifies with it. By

identifying with a culture, individuals accept its metanarrative, which will provide the

scaffolding and structure for that individual's personal narrative. The group narrative that an

individual identifies with will define his or her definition of the good life, of success or failure.

This will influence one's self-narrative by defining what it means to be a hero, what a happy

ending looks like, what has ultimate value or meaning. This personal self-narrative will then

create or influence an individual's identity (McAdams, 2008; McAdams, 2012).

Participants in this study were raised in a culture that provided a strong metanarrative.

This metanarrative created a model for them to base their self-narratives upon. One of the

functions of a culture's metanarrative is to provide structure to the self-narratives of individuals

within that culture. An individual's identity will then develop within the structure and confines

of that self-narrative to produce a moral identity that reflects the metanarrative from which it

originated. While previous research has not shown a correlation between a moral identity and the

metanarrative of a culture, research has shown a connection between a metanarrative and an

individual's self-narrative, and this research has shown a correlation between a self-narrative and

an individual's sense of identity. Additionally, the metanarrative of a group has been shown to be

a causal factor in morality.

Impact of Volunteer Experiences

While previous research has shown a correlation between strong moral identity and

volunteerism, this study demonstrated a very weak connection. While all the participants had

experienced either domestic or international volunteer opportunities, only one participant felt it

was a formative factor, and only three stated that they had learned anything new from the

experience. It is possible that international volunteer experiences had a less potent influence upon these participants because the majority of them, seven out of the 11, had grown up internationally, with parents who were serving on a life-long volunteer opportunity. The positive effects found in helping others, developing moral efficacy through making positive changes in the lives of others, and experiencing a different culture first hand may be diminished if the adolescent has experienced it many times before in his or her life as the child of an international missionary. The one participant who expressed the greatest change was the only participant not raised in a Christian home, without any previous international experience.

If these participants experienced limited benefit from mission trips or service learning experiences due to previous experiences with their parents in foreign and service oriented opportunities, it may indicate that service learning opportunities have a greater impact when they are substantially different from the past experiences of the participants. One element of a transformative service learning experience may be putting the individual outside of his or her comfort zone, into a novel and unfamiliar environment. Its greatest benefit may be when it acts as a crisis episode because a crisis may transition the individual into a new stage of development or independence. Additionally, from a spiritual perspective, an experience of crisis may be transformative because it produces a greater dependence upon God.

Three participants stated that while it was not a formative experience, they did develop gratitude because of the experience, and discussed further that this was a value alien from their present United States culture. This may be a dominant moral attitude that volunteer experiences produce, or it may be connected to the participants' feelings of alienation from the United States culture that is discussed in the previous section.

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Theme Three: Comparison of Male Based Truth and Female Based Empathy

Current research on gender differences in moral development is convoluted, controversial, and inconsistent. While some research (d-Arripa-Longueville et al., 2010; Walker, 2006) has found identical responses from male and female participants and no gender differences in moral development, other research has shown that females are more oriented toward empathy while males are oriented toward concepts of justice (Silfver, Helkama, Lonnqvist, and Verkasalo, 2008). Van Goethem et al. (2012) found that females experienced greater empathy and were more oriented toward relationships and other people. Malti et al., (2009) demonstrated that this female orientation toward empathy could already be found in six-year-old kindergarten students. This present study has added to available literature on the topic by indicating that females have a moral identity based upon empathy and emotions, while males describe their moral identity using the moral characteristic of courageous action and a reasoned out understanding of truth. Within this study, all but one female participant picked heroes that played a supportive role, while male participants selected heroes that were bold, independent, and courageous leaders. Male and female participants also used different types of self-descriptors to define themselves. Male participants described themselves as strong, truthful, smart, and adventuresome, while female participants described themselves as relational, encouraging, compassionate, and empathetic. However, all of the participants used at least one self-descriptor emphasizing some form of love to God or others.

Male participants gave self-narratives in which they played the role of hero, rescuing someone from a physical circumstance or from a theological error. However, female participants gave self-narratives in which they empathized with individuals who were feeling pain, and sought to encourage and support. In each of the stories told by the male participants, something

had changed for the better by the end of the story. However, in most of the stories told by the female participants, circumstances remained the same, but the victim of the circumstances now felt loved or valued.

Female participants also demonstrated a greater use of reflective journals. This could indicate a correlation between the practice of reflective journaling and the experience of empathy, or a correlation between personal reflection and female participants. In this study, there was not a relationship between reflective journaling and the value placed upon the volunteer service opportunity.

It is beyond the scope of this research to comment on whether these self-defined descriptions of empathy vs. courage are innate or develop through identification with a group culture. As Olympia commented regarding a male's moral identity, "Guys might feel a need to fulfill the macho image so they need to not be kind but be strong, so they might find it easier to have moral courage than moral empathy. That might show weakness in their mind." A need to show courage rather than empathy was demonstrated in this study, but since identity is formed through culture (Smith & Sparkes, 2008), this study cannot comment on whether their identification with moral courage was in response to an innate tendency or the "macho image" they were encouraged to adopt.

Practical Implications

Several factors within this study have practical implications for moral education within Christian schools, churches and families. Moral education will gain effectiveness if it strives to create a strong and unified Moral Identity within adolescents through the use of self-narratives and by creating a moral culture that impacts identity development through the use of moral metanarratives and moral mentors. It is also essential for educators to understand that

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epistemological development is a process that may involve periods of crisis. By understanding

these factors educators can assist adolescents as they develop into men and women of strong

moral character.

Importance of Building a Moral Narrative

"Narratives are ultimately reflective and subjective interpretations of life and its

meaning" (Bruce, 2008, p. 329). To form a self-narrative, an individual will reflect upon life

experiences and integrate it into an understanding of his or her identity. Because this process

becomes a meaning-making experience, it will develop the moral identity of the individual.

Individuals who are encouraged to tell their moral stories and are taught to interpret those stories

within the larger context of a group's moral narrative will be more likely to create a personal

moral identity. Moral identity can be molded when individuals reinterpret past events through

personal story telling that is associated with a larger metanarrative through questions that

encourage that connection. Therefore, the practical implication for a moral development program

is to incorporate communication of personal self-narratives within the larger framework of a

moral purpose and story, identification with a moral group, and admiration toward moral

individuals.

Christian education therefore, must become less oriented toward academic classes that

cognitively teach a biblical worldview and more oriented toward creating a culture that will write

an individual's self-narrative and form his or her identity. This culture will communicate a well-

developed redemptive metanarrative and provide opportunities for individuals to reformulate

their self-narratives to reflect this metanarrative. It will also provide opportunities for

individuals to develop a connection to a higher purpose and a sense of alienation toward the

dominant culture. Through stories of moral individuals and experiences with moral mentors,

individuals will develop an admiration toward moral heroes and a desire for moral characteristics.   Within evangelicalism, training individuals to have a biblical worldview may still be the goal, but because moral education is an art and not a science, its formation will require a culture, not a class.

Importance of Alienation from Culture

The cultural metanarrative an individual identifies with creates an individual's self-narrative and therefore, his or her moral identity. Spiritual leaders must work to create group identities that support moral self-narratives. Leaders must help adolescents and emerging adults experience a feeling of alienation from any culture not based upon strong moral principles, and an identification with a subculture that provides a moral overarching story.

"Our hearts are constantly being formed by others, and most often through the cultural institutions that we create" (Smith, 2009, p. 71). These cultural institutions have the ability to create desire, shape character, and form identity within individuals through "stories that have captivated us, that have sunk into our bones—stories that 'picture' what we think life is about, what constitutes 'the good life'" (Smith, 2013, p.32). Smith later stated that it is "narrative that trains our emotions" (p. 32).

This narrative training can be facilitated when individuals reshape the cultural "stories that captivated us" into personal self-narratives. Self-narratives are a reshaping of past episodic events into a meaningful structure that creates identity. Individuals actively build self-narratives by placing them within established cultural story lines, complete with a culturally defined hero, villain, and plot line. Educators facilitate this process by supplying stories that create within individuals moral ideals that reflect a culture's values, and then supplying opportunities for them to process these ideals into their own stories. Students need opportunities to orally tell and write

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self-narratives because these will form their moral identities as they create meaning through the self-narrative process.

The goal of Christian education is not the cognitive distributing of doctrinal knowledge, but the training of desires and the forming of identity. Moral identity will be formed through the development of personal, moral self-narratives, in which the individual sees himself or herself as a morally good hero living a life of meaning, purpose, and destiny. These moral self-narratives will be built upon an alienation from cultures without moral structure and identification with morally strong cultures.

Importance of a Connection to a Higher Purpose

As part of replacing the overarching story of the current culture with an overarching moral story, adolescents and emerging adults could be taught their connection to a higher purpose. This would help them develop a sense of meaning in their lives. In this study, unified moral identity was strongly correlated with a sense of ultimate moral purpose that provided a sense of meaning and significance in the individual's life.

Within teaching, the use of Socratic questioning may help students understand their higher purpose and find a greater sense of meaning for their lives. By attaching their moral identities to a higher purpose, individuals place greater importance upon moral decisions and are more likely to see moral behavior as reflective of their moral identity. When morality is connected to a transcendent moral code, it can form an individual's moral ideals and give them a sense of greater purpose. A universal or community wide moral code impacts an individual's ideal self, which will form his or her identity and personal moral code.

Importance of an Individual They Can Admire

Mentoring is an important tool influencing moral development in children, adolescents,

and emerging adults (Lanker, 2012; Lanker & Issler, 2010). However, this study indicated that if mentors are to positively impact moral identity development, they must possess moral integrity and a faithfulness that their mentees will admire. Healthy moral identity development will include morally strong individuals that children and adolescents can admire. By supplying moral heroes, either through personal relationships such as parents or mentors, or through exemplary individuals in books or stories, moral identity and subsequent moral behavior will be developed. When children, adolescents, and emerging adults admire moral heroes, they desire moral characteristics. This training of the desires toward becoming a moral hero will give structure to one's moral self-narrative and consequently shape one's moral identity. However, this study has shown that this training of desires is most effective when it is linked to moral role models within a trusting relational structure.

Importance of Understanding the Moral Identity Developmental Process

Understanding the process of moral identity development in adolescence is beneficial to all adults who strive to facilitate moral or spiritual development within young adults. This study has produced insufficient data to conclude that all adolescents experience these stages of moral identity development, since only eight of the 11 participants experienced both developmental stages. However, it is still beneficial to understand their possible impact. By furthering understanding of the process of moral identity development to include a possible period defined as a crisis of doubt, adults will be prepared to meet this crisis with adequate support, oriented to helping the adolescent develop critical thinking skills and reach greater epistemological development. Adults can also assure adolescents experiencing this phenomenon that it is a natural developmental process that can lead to a stronger moral identity and advanced moral development. Within evangelicalism, adolescents can be overcome with feelings of guilt (Schadt,

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2010) when experiencing doubt, as they search for truth and grow to achieve self-authorship of their beliefs.

Anticipating that some students may experience a secondary late adolescent stage referred to in this dissertation as a crisis of suffering will allow spiritual leaders to provide adolescents with a sense of higher purpose or a connection to a personal destiny that will facilitate their successful navigation of this crisis. Ideally, leaders will provide training in this area prior to and during this crisis of suffering. Seeing this crisis as a developmental process that can lead to growth will facilitate just that.

This research only examined participants raised within the evangelical culture. Therefore, its results and implications are limited to education within evangelicalism. However, if additional research confirms the need for an individual to connect with an overarching moral story from which to derive his or her redemptive self-narrative and moral identity, then all educators involved in moral development may find this research applicable. Within moral education, instructors and parents must provide their children with a culture that creates an overarching moral story that provides a framework for an individual's self-narrative. This framework will help to create within that individual a moral identity that will impact moral behavior.

Suggestions for Further Research

Moral development is a central feature of Christian education; therefore, additional research within the evangelical community is needed on the impact of personal self-narratives upon moral identity development within emerging adults. Research should be conducted on the correlation between personal self-narratives and moral identity development in emerging adults within evangelicalism.

Two unexpected results of this study were the positive impact of an alienation from the dominant culture and the lack of impact from volunteer opportunities upon moral identity development. Both of these areas need additional research with participants who were not the children of missionaries and were raised in the United States. Research on evangelical colleges that are not exclusively Bible colleges or missions oriented would also be beneficial.

This study only began the required research on the role of a culture, or a subculture, upon moral identity development. Further qualitative research can delineate the ways that a culture's metanarrative creates and defines an individual's self-narrative and how that self-narrative defines an individual's moral identity. Building a redemptive and moral self-narrative is a factor in moral identity development and therefore, in moral behavior. Additional research must examine appropriate methods for training students in this skill.

Moral identity is different from spiritual identity, but there is no research describing the differences and how they interact. Research in this area should also include both participants within various religious communities and from non-religious settings. Further research may clearly distinguish and uncover similarities between moral, spiritual, and religious identity.

The correlation between moral identity and the biblical worldview of emerging adults is a needed area for further research. Moral identity may be the link between a biblical worldview and moral behavior, or it may be a formative factor in creating a biblical worldview within a student. If a biblical worldview were taught within one class as a cognitive exercise, it would have little impact upon moral identity development since an individual's moral identity will be created through a forming of the desires and construction of a moral or redemptive self-narrative.

A significant limitation of this study was the use of an evangelical setting. Additional research with participants not nurtured within an evangelical subculture and participants not

cultivated within missionary families working in a foreign country will help discover if the apparent correlations between culture, self-narratives, and moral identity can be generalized to a larger population. Being raised within this evangelical missionary subculture significantly impacts a child's development, and there are many aspects within this subculture that could impact the moral identity development of an emerging adolescent. This study has begun a dialogue regarding the impact of culture upon moral identity development, but is limited in its ability to describe the impact of any culture but the evangelical subculture of the participants in this research.

Conclusion

Fifty-nine percent of emerging adults raised in the church abandon their beliefs between the ages of 15 and 29 (Kinnaman, 2011). Additionally, many of the forty-one percent who stay within evangelicalism compromise their faith by adopting the morality of the culture surrounding them. Christian education must take on the challenge of raising godly men and women of integrity who remain within the Christian culture and reflect its biblical teachings.

"Culture is more of a verb than a noun; it is the fruit of human 'making' or cultivation" (Smith, 2009, p. 71). This study has shown the importance of a culture in forming self-narratives and moral identity within emerging adults. A culture and the metanarrative each culture is based upon is reflected in the self-narratives of individuals within that culture, as it defines both what is good and what is the good life. Through an interaction with personal narratives, a culture may create the self-narrative of individuals, which will form an individual's moral identity.

Blasi's (1984) seminal research identified moral identity as a motivational link between moral reasoning, moral empathy, and moral actions. This study has advanced the literature on moral identity by interviewing 11 college students with strong moral identities and using those

interviews to create a rich description of moral identity in emerging adults within evangelicalism. This description demonstrates how alienation toward a culture, connection to a higher purpose and destiny, and admiration of a moral role model all create a moral self-narrative within an emerging adult, which creates a dominant and unified moral identity. While morality is a complex process with many interdependent factors, moral identity is a pivotal component. An understanding of its development will help educators form individuals of deep moral character who experience fulfilling and productive lives.

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Appendix A

Sample of Questionnaire to Participants

Name:

Date of Birth: Sex: M []   F []

Home Phone: Cell Phone: Email:

Religious Denomination:

Religious denomination of family:

Elementary and High School Education:

Age: Marital status:

College Major: College Minor:

Please list your past service learning, mission trips, or volunteer experiences:

Name a personal hero, or someone whose life you would like to emulate.

What characteristics of this person would you most like to adopt?

Use three one word descriptors of this personal hero:
1)
2)
3)

Do you use a spiritual journal or other form of personal reflection?

Describe yourself using three one word descriptors:
1)
2)
3)

List three one word descriptions you hope would never describe yourself:
1)
2)
3)

Appendix B

Sample Letters to Participants and College President

Dear [Name of Participant]

"Educating the head without educating the heart is no education at all" (Aristotle). Do educational institutions today ignore their responsibility to train students morally as well as academically?

My name is Wendy Lundberg and I am in the dissertation stage of my doctoral program at Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia. The topic of my educational research is to understand the development of moral identity as experienced by college students attending an evangelical school. You, along with 10 other students, have been selected because as a student at _____ College, you have wisdom and insight into moral development within Christian students at an Evangelical college. My research is a qualitative phenomenological study and I hope to use the results to better prepare educational leaders at Christian schools to develop moral identity and moral character within their students.

If you agree to assist in this study, there will be three activities that will require your time and input. These are:

1.   Completion of a short questionnaire, which will be emailed to you in October, 2012;
2.   A personal, 45-60 minute, one-on-one interview with the researcher at your College or a location chosen by you during the fall of 2012.
3.   Possible second group interview, or asking you to answer to two to three questions given and received through email. This will take place in December, 2012.

In total, this research will require no more than three hours of your time spread over a period of six months. Your participation is voluntary and at any time during the research you may withdraw your participation, or request the removal of your previously given information. This research has been authorized and approved by Liberty University and IRB, and all data collected in the dissertation will remain anonymous and confidential. The interview and observations will be recorded and transcribed for analysis purposes alone, and will not be reviewed by anyone except the researcher. However, you will have the option of reviewing the tape after each meeting, and, at that time, may withdraw the use of the taped interview from the research.   The resultant dissertation will be available to you, at no cost, if requested.

While, no monetary recompense will be given for your participation, your input into this vital area of educational research can have an important impact in the field of moral development.

If you agree to assist in this research, please respond to this email. I will then call or email you, to discuss the next step.

I look forward to meeting you and working with you over the next few months. Please feel free to call or email me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Wendy Lundberg

920-924-2177
Wendy.lundberg@gmail.com
 June 15, 2012
Dear Dr. _____,

My name is Wendy Lundberg and I am currently in the dissertation stage of my doctoral program at Liberty University, Lynchburg, Virginia. The topic of my educational research is to understand and the experience of moral identity as understood by college students. My research is a qualitative phenomenological design, and I hope to fully describe the moral identity stage in emergent adults that will better prepare educational leaders at Christian schools to develop moral identity and moral character within their students.

With your permission, I would like to contact, via email, students attending your school, and ask them to become voluntary participants within my research. I have selected students at your college because I wish to interview students possessing a strong moral identity, to further define how adolescents grow to become moral individuals, and chose missions, a self-denying ministry toward others, as a life purpose.

If you agree to allow your students to assist in this study, there will be three activities that I will ask them to take part in. These are:

1.   Completion of short questionnaires, which I will email to them in August, 2013;
2.   A personal, 55-60 minute, one-on-one interview with myself, at the
        college or a convenient location during the fall of 2013;
3.   A second group interview, or completion of one to three questions given and received
        through email. This will be completed during November, 2013.

In total, this research will require no more than three hours of your student's time, spread out over a period of six months. I hope to find 11 students willing to participate. This research has been authorized and approved by Liberty University and IRB. All data collected will be used in the dissertation but will remain anonymous and confidential. The interview and observations will be recorded and transcribed for analysis purposes, but may be viewed by participants at their request. The resultant dissertation will be available to you, at no cost, if requested.

Your input into this vital area of educational development can have an important impact in research on moral development within Christian institutions.

I will call you during the upcoming week to discuss this research project and answer any questions you may have. I am looking forward to working with you and your students, and would greatly appreciate your approval.
Sincerely,
Wendy Lundberg

Sample of Consent Form for Participants

CONSENT FORM
Building Virtue: The Process of Moral Identity Formation
In Students Attending a Midwestern Christian College
Doctoral Dissertation
Wendy Lundberg
Liberty University
Department of Education

You are invited to be a participant in a research study on moral development during late adolescence. You were selected as a possible participant because of your position as a student at an evangelical college. A total of 11 students will be involved in this study. We ask that after you read this form you ask any questions you may have before agreeing to become a participant in this study.

This study is being conducted by: Wendy Lundberg, Liberty University, Lynchburg, West Virginia.

Background Information:
The purpose of this qualitative research is: To develop a theory to explain the process adolescents go through to formulate their moral identity and moral self.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following:
I would initially email you a one page questionnaire to be filled out and emailed back to me.
 I would then interview you at the college or a nearby location for one 55-60 minute interview in October. This would be recorded.
 Finally, in December, I would invite you to join me for a group follow up session to discuss some of the issues discovered through the interviews. This session would be videotaped.
 If you were unable to attend the group session, I would ask you to complete three questions, which would be emailed to you.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:
The risks regarding participation within this study are minimal, and are no more than an individual would encounter within everyday life. Information given during the questionnaire, interview, group session, and follow up emails will be held in the strictest confidence, with complete anonymity being given to participants. However, any information discovered that requires mandatory reporting, such as child abuse, child neglect, or intent to harm others, will be reported.

The benefits to participation are: No monetary benefit would be given at the completion of the research. However, you would be instrumental in providing knowledge and wisdom to educators

within Christian Education to assist them in developing the moral character of their students.

Compensation:
Participants will not receive payment.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. To achieve privacy and confidentiality for the participants, the use of pseudonyms, locked data files, consent forms from students, and rigorous storage procedures will be used. Since audio and video recordings will be made, participants will have the option of hearing or viewing these recordings at any time. At that point they may decide to withdraw their permission for its use in this research. After completion of this research study, all audio and video records made will be destroyed.

If participants join in the discussion group, confidentiality will be limited to this researcher's use of the information given, since other participants within the discussion group will not be bound by this consent form.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University or with New Tribes Ministries. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or to withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Students may freely withdraw their participation, or any information given during previous questionnaires or interviews, at any time throughout this research.

Contacts and Questions:
The researchers conducting this study are: Wendy Lundberg and her dissertation chair, Dr. Mark Lamport. Please ask any questions you have before you sign this form. However, if you have further questions or difficulties, **you are encouraged** to contact Dr. Mark Lamport at Liberty University, malamport@liberty.edu

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, Dr. Fernando Garzon, Chair, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1582, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at fgarzon@liberty.edu.
You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

Please check

o   I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

o   I give my consent to any audio or video recordings made within this research.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____Date: _____

Sample of Interview Questions

Introduction

  Thank you for meeting with me today. As I mentioned in our phone conversation, I just wanted to meet with you for approximately one hour to talk about the questionnaire you filled out for me, and to discuss how you see yourself morally. You described yourself as a caring person, why do you think this is an important description? Can you give an example of a time you were caring?

OPEN ENDED QUESTIONS

- Is there someone who has impacted your spiritual journey? Describe him/her.
- What have been the major turning points within your spiritual journey?
- What were the deterrents?

Tell stories from your life describing a situation when: (Pratt, Arnold, & Lawford, 2009, p. 300)

- You faced a morally ambiguous situation and had to make a decision.

- You showed empathy and care within a situation.

- You showed lack of empathy and care within a situation

- You demonstrated moral courage within a situation

- You demonstrated moral cowardice within a situation.

Appendix E

Self-Understanding Interview

Questions

- Tell me a story showing integrity, about yourself or someone else.

- Describe yourself, as others perceive you.

- Describe your actual self.

- Name an activity that is most important to you

- Name the most significant person or people or groups in your life

- What are your most important psychological aspects?

- How did you become the kind of person you are today?

- How are you unique from those in your group?

- How are you different from those outside of your group?

These questions are adapted from interview questions found in J. A. Firmer and L. J. Walker's article, "Reconciling the self and morality: An empirical model of moral centrality development," published in *Developmental Psychology* in 2009.

Clustering of Meaningful Units

God telling me
God wanted me to do it
I've experienced God   Experienced God   Question # 1   Description
I've seen financial miracles
He has provided financially
God gave me my roommates

Church split
Innocent brother arrested
Rape
Separation from family & friends
Almost died in hospital
Near death experience   Faithfulness in Suffering   Question # 3   Process
Cron's disease
Brother with severe disease
Physical exhaustion
Physical & Sexual Abuse
Sexual Abuse
I'm a MK
Very different from West
Not like Americans   Alienation from Current Culture   Question # 1   Description
This isn't my culture
I'm an MK not an American
That makes us different

Happiest people are outside of US
Happy with nothing   Impact of Mission Trips   Question # 2   Description
Have so little yet are happy

I want to be passionate about Christ
I am passionate about serving
We need to be passionate
They weren't passionate   Passion for Christ   Question # 1   Description
No passion makes you worthless
I desire to follow Him in everything
I saw zeal & passion that can be

Overactive Conscience
Picky Conscience   Conscience   Question # 1   Description

I understand God's purpose
I know my purpose
My purpose is
Purpose is to know God Life Purpose and Meaning Question # 1 Description
God is doing something
See everything from God's perspective
Not suppose to float along

Parents involved me in ministry
Faithful Dad
I saw sacrifice
I admire Mom
Mom taught me to be adult
Admire Dad for integrity Admiration toward Parents Question #1 Description
Trust my parents
Seeing example of love from Mom
Parents live out beliefs
Dad gets things done
My family is most significant to me
Dad is example of love

QUESTION # 4 MALE DESCRIPTIONS

Theological Truth
Go to Bible
Check verses
Bible says it Male Descriptions Question #4 Description
It's about Theology
Apologetics
Importance of Grace

QUESTION # 4 FEMALE DESCRIPTIONS

Grace
Love
Unity
Care
Kind Female Descriptions Question #4 Descriptions
Empathy
Joy from Helping
Trust others
Easier to be kind

Mentored by church women
Mentored by roommate Mentored by Significant Adult Process

Mentored by pastor

QUESTION # 3 MIDDLE SCHOOL AGE CRISIS OF DOUBT
13 was a life passage
At 14 I doubted
In middle school it became genuine
At 13-14 I questioned
Middle school I questioned

CHARACTERISTICS OF SELF – MALE

Servant   IDENTITY THROUGH ROLES

Forgiven   THEOLOGICAL TRUTH CHARACTERISTICS

NON MORAL CHARACTERISTICS - MALE

Shy

Irritable

Fun

Strong

Smart

Manly

Adventurous

Calm

Nice

Learning

COMPASSIONATE CHARACTERISTICS - MALE

Encouraging

Kind

Loving

Compassionate

Warm

Loving

Love God

MORAL CHARACTERISTICS - MALE

Godly

Humble

Joy

CHARACTERISTICS OF SELF – FEMALE – IDENTITY THROUGH ROLES

Wife

Married

Student

Missionary Kid

NON MORAL CHARACTERISTICS - FEMALE

Fun

Creative

Talkative

Driven

Stubborn

Energetic

COMPASSIONATE CHARACTERISTICS - FEMALE

Relational

Loving

Loving

Kind

Generous

Compassionate

Tolerant

Respectful

MORAL CHARACTERISTICS _ FEMALE

<u>Christ centered</u>

<u>Faithful</u>

<u>Truthful</u>

<u>Hopeful</u>

<u>Godly</u>