

## The Ego-Virtue of Fidelity: A Case for the Study of Religion and Identity Formation in Adolescence

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*Extrapolation from Erik Erikson's theory of human development suggests the ego-virtue of fidelity provides a conceptual link between religion and identity formation. It is argued here that fidelity, within identity statuses, is characterized by commitment (i.e., foreclosure and achievement). Further, due to the connection between fidelity and ideology, greater evidence of fidelity and identity commitment should be observed among religious minority adolescents and among adolescents who more frequently attend church. Partial support was shown for these predictions. Mormon adolescents, who were minorities in the broader societal context, but majorities in their local community context, were found to score higher in identity foreclosure in comparison to Catholic and Protestant adolescents who were religious minorities in their local community context. It was suggested that premature foreclosure among Mormon adolescents may be due to the importance of exhibiting indicators of fidelity as efforts to strengthen one's minority identity and one's minority group in respect to the broader society. More frequent church attendance was related to higher scores in commitment identity statuses (i.e., foreclosure and achievement). Apparently, consistent church attendance is not required for heightened scores in the exploration status of moratorium.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Erikson (1964, 1968) designates identity formation as the major psychosocial task of adolescence. He proposes that identity evolves from an intertwining of individual, societal, cultural, and historical experiences. Identity evolves, in part, from resolutions of earlier psychosocial stages, and provides a basis for psychosocial development in adulthood. The individual who successfully advances in the task of identity formation (a) anticipates likely future roles the self may adopt, (b) perceives the self's sameness and continuity in time and space, (c) has knowledge that the self's sameness and continuity is recognized by others, and (d) perceives that the self one is coming to define is recognized and valued by the social environment.

There has been great interest in examining identity formation according to Marcia's (1966) identity status classifications. In this operationalization of Erikson's theory, identity formation is argued to occur through two processes of exploration and commitment that yield four identity states or statuses. Identity achieved adolescents are characterized by high exploration and high commitment to an identity, whereas moratorium adolescents have also explored but have not made identity commitments. Both foreclosed and diffused adolescents are characterized by low exploration; however, foreclosed individuals have made a commitment to an identity and diffused individuals have not.

While research on the identity statuses have included comparisons on a variety of characteristics (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity), the role of religious background in identity formation has largely been ignored even though Erikson's biographic analyses have included religious leaders, such as Gandhi (Erikson, 1969) and Martin Luther (Erikson, 1958). This omission in research is unfortunate, given that religiosity and faith are conceptualized as having particular relevance at various points in Erikson's psychosocial stages. For example, faith in adulthood is conceived as a restoration of trust and hope stemming from infancy (Erikson, 1980). While many institutions in society serve as contexts for the recapitulation of infant hope and trust into adult faith, Erikson (1968) argues that religion is the oldest and most lasting institution to serve this purpose.

In adolescence, faith is expressed through fidelity, which is defined as "the ability to sustain loyalties freely pledged in spite of the inevitable contradictions of value systems" (Erikson, 1964, p. 125). Fidelity bears strong relations with infantile trust and mature faith, as well as being the cornerstone of identity. In this paper a conceptualization is presented in which an attempt is made to explicate the relations between Eriksonian conceptions of fidelity, religion, and identity formation. Two variables of religiosity—religious minority status and church attendance—are intro-

duced and discussed according to the aforementioned conceptualization. An investigation of the relations between the variables of religiosity, Marcia's identity statuses, and fidelity will then be summarized.

## REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In Eriksonian writings, fidelity is targeted as the ego-virtue of adolescence that derives from the identity crisis. Ego-virtues are defined as human qualities from which ego strength is acquired over the course of the life span and are perpetuated across generation (Erikson, 1964). Ego-virtues of hope, will, purpose, and competence evolve from successful resolutions of the first four psychosocial stages and are precursors to fidelity in adolescence. Likewise, fidelity provides the basis for adult virtues of love, care, and wisdom (Erikson, 1964, 1985).

Fidelity serves the following important functions in adolescence: (a) provides a socially acceptable channel for adolescent passions that derive from enhanced drive activity; (b) promotes feelings of belongingness; (c) along with identity, is a necessity for producing ethical strength; (d) enhances the social order by allowing youths to correct or destroy aging ideologies; and (e) provides a sense of purpose in life. A negative by-product of fidelity, however, is the potential for prejudice and ingroup-outgroup distinctions that evolve from feelings that one's group is special and unique (Erikson, 1964, 1985).

Fidelity, understood as a capacity to sustain loyalties, serves as a building block to identity formation, especially in relation to social groups (Erikson, 1964). For example, Erikson (1965) states that fidelity "can arise only in the interplay of a life stage with the individuals and the social forces of a true community" (p. 3). Fidelity serves as a confirmation that one is tied to a social group and provides evidence concerning the degree of one's loyalty to the group. Feelings of belongingness and purpose associated with fidelity are attained through sustaining loyalties to ideological groups that cultures, societies, and religions provide (Erikson, 1964). He argues that societies "must receive from their youth...the pledge of particular fidelities in the form of ideological commitment" (p. 171). In other words, fidelity is perpetuated and supported by a social environment that encourages allegiance, loyalty, and commitment to domains of ideological identity.

Religion is one ideological institution on to which fidelity is anchored, and for a variety of reasons, is an institution of high appeal to some adolescents. First, according to Erikson (1965), youths are attracted to ideologies, such as religion, that offer ultimate answers for the larger designs of life. Thus, accepting explanations for some of the broader issues of existence, adolescents can direct their efforts to less complex and more day-to-day issues. Second,

religion and other institutions provide a historical orientation to adolescents that facilitates a confluence of individual and societal history. This process, in turn, confirms identity and enhances one's feelings of importance and purpose in life (Erikson, 1965). Third, as social groups, religions serve as buffers against alienation by promoting belongingness through the use of rites and rituals, faith, and affirmative dogma (Erikson, 1964).

Religious minority groups are special kinds of religious contexts that typically exist in communities characterized by a dominant religion and an associated absence of religious plurality. It is possible to identify religious minority structures in religiously plural communities when a group clearly identifies itself as unique in respect to its use of rites and rituals, faith, and affirmative dogma. In addition, minority status identification is strengthened from (a) special attitudes and treatment directed toward the group from the outside, (b) the group's desire to maintain a separate identity, and (c) the presence of resistance from those outside of the group. The latter occurs when the minority group attempts to minimize its differences from others (Tajfel, 1981).

Religious minority status also can be understood from examining the identity literature, particular in respect to Grotevant's (1992) and Baumeister's (1986) identification of assigned identities. Grotevant (1992) observes that the dimension of exploration from Marcia's identity status classification scheme is not applicable to all forms of identity. In particular, some aspects of identity are best understood according to their assigned natures, as opposed to those characterized by the exploration or self-selection process. Congruent with this argument, Baumeister (1986) recognizes an "identity of assigned components," that is, one of five forms of identity defined according to varying degrees of self-definition. Among a variety of other possibilities, examples of assigned forms of identity include gender, ethnicity, Grotevant's (1992) identification of an adopted identity, and it is argued in this paper, religious minority status.

While *religion, per se*, according to Baumeister (1986), is an "optional choice identity" based on a high degree of self-definition, we argue that, in contrast, *religious minority status* is characterized by the absence of self-selection or self-definition. In social contexts that are dominated by a particular religious majority group, one is a religious minority by virtue of not being a member of the majority. In such a context, one can be nonreligious and a religious minority. Or more pertinent to the present investigation, an individual associated with a nonmajority religious group is implicitly assigned a minority status. The options for choice are limited for such individuals, and may include joining the majority group, moving to a community not dominated by a religious majority, or moving to a community dominated by one's own group.

Recognizing religious minority status as a particular form of assigned identity that evolves from the presence of certain social contextual factors, the expression of fidelity among religious minority adolescents might be

accounted for by processes of socialization. For individuals born into religious minority families who exhibit strong adherence to religious traditions, intense religious socialization is likely to occur throughout the first two decades of life. It is in adolescence, however, when many faith traditions have expectations for youths to render public displays of loyalty to the group. Such public testimonies or affirmations may be of even greater salience to religious minorities who must affirm their beliefs in societal contexts where their religion is not broadly adopted and/or supported. Hence, allegiances and testimonies indicative of fidelity might be proclaimed with even greater vigor among religious minority adolescents, thereby solidifying religious and ideological identity commitments.

Church attendance is the second variable of religiosity examined in the present investigation. While religious minority status is conceptualized as having an assigned nature, church attendance is an observable behavior, and for older adolescents, is highly influenced by personal choice. Given the behavioral nature of church attendance, it is argued that it is indicative of fidelity and identity commitment. In other words, fidelity is observed through behavior such as church attendance, which provides behavioral confirmation concerning the degree of the adolescent's identity commitment toward some ideological domain. Indeed, there is evidence to support this assertion from Tzuriel (1984), who found that religiosity predicted commitment and purposefulness in identity. As stated previously, commitment and purposefulness are associated with fidelity, and church attendance is an aspect of religiosity.

Church attendance, as measured in the present investigation, should not be confused with religious identity exploration in which the individual is attending a variety of religious institutions on a sporadic basis. Church attendance that is associated with commitment is attendance, on a regular basis, at the same religious organization.

The following points are summarized from the review of literature: (a) religious concepts are significant in Eriksonian theory; (b) fidelity is an expression of adolescent faith; (c) religion is a means that facilitates the expression of fidelity; (d) fidelity is solidified through the identity crisis; (e) fidelity is observed through *loyalty* and *commitment*, and (f) two factors associated with religion — religious minority status and church attendance — should be associated with high levels of ideological identity commitment, hence, providing evidence of fidelity.

According to Marcia's (1966) identity status model, ideological identity commitments may be of foreclosed or achieved natures (Marcia, 1966). Therefore, adolescents' heightened experience of fidelity may or may not follow exploration processes. This is consistent with Erikson's writings (1964), in that he argues that ideological commitments associated with fidelity, during adolescence, are oftentimes empty commitments until content

is attached to them in adulthood. Thus, empty commitments may be comparable to Marcia's (1966) foreclosed identity status, and commitments with substance are associated with achievement. In either the case of foreclosure or achievement, however, the drives of adolescence are expressed through the socially approved channel of fidelity. Based on the preceding discussion, the following research questions were advanced and tested:

First, are there differences in identity formation between two distinct groups of religious minority adolescents? One group consists of Mormon adolescents who represent a religious minority group in the broader societal context, but as a sample in the present study, live as a religious majority in their local community. The other group consists of Protestant and Catholic adolescents who are religious minorities in their local community context, but are part of groups typically not regarded as religious minorities in the broader societal context. It is expected that the Mormons, as the religious minority group in the broader societal context, will score higher on commitment statuses (i.e., foreclosure and achievement) of identity than the non-Mormon adolescents.

Second, does more frequent church attendance provide behavioral evidence of identity commitment? Since church attendance is conceptualized as a means for the expression of fidelity, and fidelity has been argued to be a sign of identity commitment, adolescents who attend church on a weekly basis are expected to score higher on statuses characterized by high commitment (i.e., foreclosure and achievement). Conversely, those who attend church less frequently than once a week will score higher on diffusion and moratorium.

Finally, will religious minority status and church attendance be differentially related to ideological and interpersonal forms of identity? Since fidelity and religion are tied to issues of ideology, it is expected that the two variables of religiosity will bear stronger statistical relations to the ideological identity statuses than to the interpersonal identity statuses.

## METHODS

### Sample

The sample consisted of 36 Mormon adolescents (15 males and 21 females) and 47 non-Mormon (Catholic and Protestant) adolescents (18 males and 29 females). Participants were high school students from Grades 9 through 12. All participants were of middle-class backgrounds. They lived in the same geographical area containing a population of 57,176 persons (Census of Population and Housing, 1982). According to the most recent statistics available from 1971 when the population of the region was 43,000,

the religious demographics were 90% Mormon, and for the non-Mormon religions represented in the present sample, 1% were Presbyterian, 1% were Roman Catholic; Lutheran, Episcopal, and Southern Baptist were each less than 1% of the population (Wahlquist, 1981).

## Procedures

In selecting both the Mormon and non-Mormon sample, leaders from the religious groups represented supplied the investigator with the names and addresses of high school students in their wards or congregations. Potential participants and their parents were sent a letter from the investigator that described the study and requested participation on the part of the adolescent. A phone call was then made to the family to determine both the adolescent and his/her parent's agreement for the adolescent to participate in the study. Adolescents were interviewed and completed instrumentation in their homes under the direction of trained research assistants. The present study addresses findings from the participants' completion of the Extended Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status. Some of the findings from the interview data are reported in Markstrom-Adams (1991).

## Variables

### *Religious Minority Status*

As described earlier, the study included two religious minorities. The Mormons represented a religious minority in the broader societal context, and the Catholic and Protestants represented a religious minority in the local community context.

### *Church Attendance*

Frequency of church attendance was assessed by asking participants to respond to the question, "How often do you attend church?" Five response categories given were (a) *weekly*, (b) *monthly*, (c) *on most important religious holidays*, (d) *almost never*, and (e) *never*. Church attendance on a weekly basis was reported by 86% of the Mormons and 79% of the non-Mormons. The remaining four response categories were collapsed into one category. Thus, the two categories for church attendance were (a) *attendance on a weekly basis* and (b) *attendance less frequently than once a week*.

### *Identity Formation*

The Extended Objective Measure of Ego-Identity Status (EOM-EIS) was administered to all participants. The EOM-EIS is a quantitative measure of ego-identity status in a self-report form. The instrument consists of 64 items that allow for an examination of both interpersonal and ideological forms of identities according to Marcia's (1966) four identity statuses. Ideological identity is assessed in the domains of occupation, politics, religion, and philosophical life-style, while interpersonal identity is assessed in the domains of friendship, dating, sex roles, and recreation.

The combination of four identity statuses and interpersonal and ideological forms of identity allows for an examination of eight identity subscales which are measured in the present investigation. Detailed scoring procedures, as well as evidence for the validity and reliability of the EOM-EIS are found in Adams *et al.* (1989).

## RESULTS

A 2 (religious status)  $\times$  2 (church attendance) between-groups analysis of covariance was conducted on the eight identity subscales of the EOM-EIS. The two religious statuses were Mormon and non-Mormon, and two levels of church attendance were weekly attendance at church or church attendance less frequently than once a week. Grade differences, but not gender differences, were found to be significant in preliminary analyses. Thus, gender was eliminated from any further analyses and grade served as a covariate to compensate for any variability in the EOM-EIS attributable to this variable. Since a covariate will adjust the means, both adjusted and unadjusted means are presented (Tables I and II). Data were analyzed using SAS (SAS Institute, 1985) with the appropriate option (i.e., SS3) for unequal cell sizes that adjusts all other effects when considering a particular effect.

The main effect of religious status was significant ( $p < .01$ ) for ideological and interpersonal foreclosure in the analysis of covariance (see Table III). Mormon adolescents scored significantly higher than the non-Mormon adolescents on both forms of foreclosure (see Table I). Thus, there is partial support for the first prediction, that is, the Mormon adolescents, as a religious minority in the broader societal context, scored higher on one of the commitment identity statuses (i.e., foreclosure).

Church attendance was significant for ideological diffusion ( $p < .01$ ) and interpersonal foreclosure ( $p < .05$ ; see Table III). Weekly church attenders scored higher in interpersonal foreclosure and lower in ideological



**Table I.** Adjusted Means, Unadjusted Means, and Standard Errors of the Eight EOM-EIS Subscales According to Religious Status

Subscales	Mormon ( <i>N</i> = 38)				Non-Mormons ( <i>N</i> = 47)			
	Unadjusted		Adjusted		Unadjusted		Adjusted	
	Mean	<i>SE</i>	Mean	<i>SE</i>	Mean	<i>SE</i>	Mean	<i>SE</i>
Ideological Diffusion	21.63	.95	24.06	1.47	23.81	.97	25.18	1.09
Ideological Foreclosure	23.00	1.06	22.68	1.25	18.00	.74	17.71	.93
Ideological Moratorium	26.45	.78	26.94	1.27	27.57	.84	28.80	.95
Ideological Achievement	32.89	.93	31.08	1.27	32.34	.76	32.04	.94
Ideological Diffusion	19.97	.89	19.61	1.21	20.68	.68	20.92	.90
Interpersonal Foreclosure	22.45	1.37	20.53	1.34	15.53	.88	14.93	1.02
Interpersonal Moratorium	28.03	.80	27.59	1.21	27.40	.74	28.49	.90
Interpersonal Achievement	34.34	.85	32.76	1.21	31.43	.71	31.89	.90

**Table II.** Adjusted Means, Unadjusted Means, and Standard Errors of the Eight EOM-EIS Subscales According to Church Attendance

Subscales	Attend church weekly ( <i>N</i> = 70)				Attend church less than once a week ( <i>N</i> = 15)			
	Unadjusted		Adjusted		Unadjusted		Adjusted	
	Mean	<i>SE</i>	Mean	<i>SE</i>	Mean	<i>SE</i>	Mean	<i>SE</i>
Ideological Diffusion	21.91	.77	21.78	.73	27.2	1.03	27.45	1.70
Ideological Foreclosure	20.80	.77	20.67	.63	17.60	1.18	19.72	1.45
Ideological Moratorium	26.49	.62	26.47	.64	29.80	1.40	29.27	1.48
Ideological Achievement	33.16	.64	33.68	.63	29.93	1.31	30.05	1.47
Ideological Diffusion	20.43	.63	20.30	.61	20.07	.99	20.22	1.41
Interpersonal Foreclosure	19.64	.88	19.56	.68	13.87	1.28	15.90	1.58
Interpersonal Moratorium	27.34	.60	27.39	1.21	29.27	1.25	28.69	1.40
Interpersonal Achievement	32.89	.66	32.99	1.21	32.00	.91	31.66	1.40

Table III. Analysis of Covariance of the Eight EOM-EIS Subscales According to Religious Status and Church Attendance with Grade Level as a Covariate ( $df = 1.80$ )

Source of variation	Diffusion		Foreclosure		Moratorium		Achievement	
	F value	<i>p</i>	F value	<i>p</i>	F value	<i>p</i>	F value	<i>p</i>
Ideological Variables								
Religious status	.38	.54	10.23	.00	1.37	.24	.38	.54
Church Attendance	9.24	.00	.36	.27	2.99	.09	3.49	.07
Status × Church	.26	.61	.01	.93	.84	.84	1.51	.22
Covariate Grade	1.11	.30	19.61	.00	.00	.36	4.34	.04
Interpersonal Variables								
Religious status	.76	.39	10.94	.00	.37	.55	.33	.57
Church attendance	.00	.96	4.42	.04	.72	.40	.76	.39
Status × Church	.76	.39	.78	.38	2.77	.10	3.92	.05
Covariate Grade	3.52	.06	19.00	.00	.00	.97	.00	.98

diffusion (see Table II). Church attendance was marginally significant ( $p < .10$ ) for ideological moratorium and achievement (Table III). Weekly church attenders scored higher on ideological achievement and lower on ideological moratorium (see Table II). Thus, there is partial support for the second prediction that stated weekly church attenders would score higher on commitment statuses (i.e., foreclosure and achievement) and lower on diffusion and moratorium statuses (noncommitment statuses).

There was a significant interaction between religious status and church attendance for interpersonal achievement. Mormons who attend church weekly scored highest ( $\bar{X} = 34.90$ ;  $SE = .87$ ) on interpersonal achievement, and Mormons who attend church less than once a week ( $\bar{X} = 30.60$ ;  $SE = 2.25$ ) scored the lowest. The converse was found for the non-Mormons. Non-Mormons who attend church weekly scored lower ( $\bar{X} = 31.07$ ;  $SE = .82$ ) on interpersonal achievement than non-Mormons who attend church less than once a week ( $\bar{X} = 32.70$ ;  $SE = 1.60$ ). Thus for Mormons, church attendance was related to higher identity achievement, while for non-Mormons less frequent church attendance was related to higher identity achievement.

Two separate discriminant analysis procedures (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1989) were performed for religious status and for church attendance as dependent variables and the eight EOM-EIS subscales and grade as in-

dependent variables. These analyses gave an indication of which variables were more salient in predicting religious status or church attendance.

In religious status (see Table IV), group membership was predicted significantly (Wilks's lambda = .702, deemed to be significant at  $p = .000$ ). The independent variables (eight EOM-EIS subscales) classified 69% of the sample compared to 50% that could be classified accurately by chance. Sixty-nine percent of the Mormons and 70% of the non-Mormons were classified appropriately.

In Table IV the standardized canonical function coefficients (coefficients are adjusted for one another), the pooled group within correlations [coefficients are bivariate, between the variable and the functions(s)], and the univariate  $F$  values of the individual variables are shown. It can be observed that ideological foreclosure, interpersonal foreclosure, and interpersonal achievement contributed significantly to the function. Of these, interpersonal foreclosure ( $r = .66$ ) made the greatest unique contribution to the function. The pooled correlation coefficients indicate that interpersonal foreclosure and ideological foreclosure have substantive relations to the function.

In the discriminate analysis for church attendance, sample size was used to estimate prior probabilities because of the unequal group sizes. An overall classification rate of 82% was achieved. The weekly church attendance group was classified correctly 82.9% of the time, and the less frequent church attendance group was classified correctly 80% of the time.

Table V shows that ideological diffusion, ideological moratorium, ideological achievement, and interpersonal foreclosure contributed significantly to the function. Of the variables that were significant, ideological diffusion had the highest canonical coefficient (.71) and the highest pooled

**Table IV.** Discriminant Analysis with Religious Status as Dependent Variable and the Eight EOM-EIS Subscales as Independent Variables

Predictor variable	Standardized canonical coefficients	Pooled within group correlations	$F$ value	$p$
Ideological				
Diffusion	0.29	0.27	2.5	.12
Foreclosure	-0.31	-0.66	15.74	.00
Moratorium	0.06	0.16	.93	.34
Achievement	-0.48	-0.07	.22	.64
Interpersonal				
Diffusion	0.16	0.10	.41	.52
Foreclosure	-0.66	-0.82	23.92	.00
Moratorium	-0.00	-0.09	.32	.57
Achievement	-0.38	-0.44	7.04	.01

**Table V.** Discriminant Analysis with Church Attendance as Dependent Variable and the Eight EOM-EIS Subscales as Independent Variables

Predictor variables	Standardized canonical coefficients	Pooled within group correlations	<i>F</i> value	<i>p</i>
Ideological				
Diffusion	0.71	0.63	9.04	.00
Foreclosure	-0.49	-0.38	3.31	.07
Moratorium	0.06	0.46	4.96	.03
Achievement	-0.34	-0.44	4.50	.04
Interpersonal				
Diffusion	-0.28	-0.05	0.06	.80
Foreclosure	-0.21	-0.60	8.38	.00
Moratorium	0.24	0.28	1.83	.18
Achievement	-0.25	-0.12	0.35	.55

within groups correlation coefficient (.63). The standardized canonical coefficients of the other significant variables, ideological moratorium, ideological achievement, and interpersonal foreclosure were considerably lower. The pooled within correlation coefficients of these variables indicated a stronger relation to the function than their canonical counterparts because these variables were significantly intercorrelated. For example, ideological diffusion is substantially correlated with ideological moratorium (.43) and with ideological achievement (-.36), and ideological achievement is also correlated with ideological moratorium (-.21). Thus, there is considerable shared variance between these variables reducing each individual variable's unique contribution to the function. Nevertheless, the analysis indicated that ideological diffusion is the best single predictor of church attendance. It also indicated that, since the ideological variables contributed the most to the function, they are more salient in predicting group membership than the interpersonal variables.

## DISCUSSION

The first research question pertained to differences in identity between two religious minority groups—Mormon adolescents who represented a religious minority in the broader societal context, and non-Mormon Protestant and Catholic adolescents who were religious minorities in their local community context. The Mormon sample scored significantly higher than the non-Mormons on both ideological and

interpersonal foreclosure. The Mormon religious minority in this study scored in a similar manner to ethnic minorities who have been found to score high on foreclosure in various studies on identity formation (e.g., Abraham, 1983; Hauser, 1972a, 1972b; Streitmatter, 1988). These parallels between studies are not surprising given an argument that was presented earlier in the paper, that is, religious minorities share with ethnic minorities the distinction of assigned identity. Since limited exploration is associated with conceptions of assigned identities, foreclosure is not a surprising outcome.

It would appear that fidelity, as observed through heightened commitment scores as illustrated in foreclosure, obtained greater expression by the Mormon adolescents. However, the fact that identity exploration was not heightened for this group (with the exception of interpersonal achievement among Mormons who attend church weekly) suggests that the premature commitments of the Mormon adolescents were more likely to be of the "empty commitment" nature described by Erikson. It could be argued that the Mormon's higher scores in foreclosure occurred because religion is a foreclosing institution; thus, exploration is inevitably discouraged. However, the non-Mormon adolescents in the present study also were affiliated with formal religion and scored significantly lower on foreclosure in contrast to the Mormon adolescents. To explain the higher foreclosure of Mormon adolescents, therefore, it is necessary to examine characteristics of the sample in greater detail.

Due to religious teaching and socialization, the Mormon adolescents may have held an awareness of their group's minority status in the larger scheme, as well as the implications for diverging from and exploring outside of their group. Indeed, in Markstrom-Adam's (1991) examination of perceptions of dating relationships among the same adolescent sample that was used in the present study, it was evident that the Mormon adolescents were much more cautious and guarded in respect to their interactions with their non-Mormon peers. Some of the Mormon participants were concerned that discrepancies in beliefs and standards between themselves and non-Mormons could cause them to abandon their faith if they were to enter more committed heterosexual relationships with such individuals. In this light, then, it makes sense that religious minority groups who are concerned about maintaining group membership might position more parameters to inhibit exploration outside of the group.

Apparently, the Catholic and Protestant religious minority adolescents did not feel similarly compelled to make premature commitments in identity. Thus, they did not score similar in foreclosure to the Mormons nor to the findings on ethnic minorities from other studies. If one concedes that parallel experiences exist between religious and ethnic minorities, it

would seem that the Mormon adolescents adhered to a minority identity while the Catholic and Protestant adolescents did not. What this means is that holding a minority status in the broader society is more salient to religious minorities than holding a minority status in the local community context only. The Catholic and Protestant adolescents perhaps were cognizant that their status in the local context was quite unique in respect to their religious groups in the broader context.

While Mormon adolescents scored higher in foreclosure subscales they did not score higher on the other commitment subscales (i.e., interpersonal and ideological achievement). The one exception is the finding that Mormon adolescents who reported attending church on a weekly basis scored the highest on interpersonal achievement. However, the Mormon adolescents who reported attending church less frequently than once a week scored the lowest on interpersonal achievement. It may be that opportunities for social interaction provided by Mormon organizations contributed to the enhanced interpersonal achievement of Mormon adolescents who attend church more frequently. Further, these youths may receive explicit socialization from their religious leaders concerning desirable social conduct.

The argument that church attendance is indicative of fidelity and identity commitment also received some support from the findings. Those who attend church more frequently (on a weekly basis) scored significantly higher on interpersonal foreclosure and marginally significantly higher on ideological achievement. Those who attend church less frequently scored significantly higher on ideological diffusion and marginally significantly higher on ideological moratorium. These findings are quite consistent with conceptual understandings of the four identity statuses. Clearly, the commitments of foreclosure and achievement are exhibited in the behavior of church attendance. It also makes sense that diffused individuals would attend church less frequently since they hold a nonexplorative and noncommitted status. Moratorium adolescents' exploration may involve less church attendance and greater engagement in activities, such as talking with others, cognitive processing, and reading about various faith traditions. Church attendance, when it does occur, may be to a variety of religious institutions and on a sporadic basis.

In the final research question it was argued that since religion is a domain of ideological identity and fidelity is attached to ideological issues greater correspondence between ideological identity and the religious variables should be observed. Evidence for this assertion was observed more strongly in the discriminant function for church attendance than the discriminant function for religious minority status. The four ideological identity statuses, as well as interpersonal foreclosure, were useful in predicting

more frequent from less frequent church attenders. Apparently, church attendance, as a self-report behavioral variable, is strongly linked to ideological concerns. Fidelity receives expression through behavior, such as church attendance that in turn is an observable indicator of one's ideological preferences and commitments. That interpersonal foreclosure also was predictive of church attendance provides additional evidence of the salience of the foreclosure statuses to the variables of religiosity.

Religious minority status appears to be influenced by both interpersonal and ideological components of identity, particularly in respect to foreclosure and achievement. It would appear that this particular variable of religiosity has implications for both ideological and interpersonal issues particularly in respect to identity commitment. While advocating ideology, religious minority groups also provide instruction on appropriate behavior in interpersonal contexts. For example, Markstrom-Adams (1991) found that some Mormon adolescents reported receiving explicit religious socialization concerning interfaith dating. Given concerns of religious minorities toward group preservation, issues of marital endogamy and exogamy may have high priority in religious discussions. Thus, the ideological nature of religion is broadened to incorporate notions of expected and desired interpersonal behavior.

The findings of this study are quite promising and suggestions for future research on identity formation and religiosity can be given. There is a strong conceptual argument to recognize fidelity as a link between identity and religion. In this study, the measurement of identity commitment was regarded as evidence of fidelity. However, it would be important in future work to include an explicit measure of fidelity. While fidelity certainly is exhibited through commitment, it would seem to be an aspect of commitment that is behavioral. Since fidelity is indicative of one's loyalty to an ideological group, a measurement of fidelity should incorporate questions related to the degree of adolescents' allegiances to various ideological concerns. Such allegiances may be tapped through questions on behavioral expressions of commitment, such as church attendance, membership in a political group, activity in social justice organizations, etc.

While Erikson clearly identifies fidelity as attached to ideological issues, it has been observed in more recent work that an examination of interpersonal domains in identity formation is highly salient (e.g., Archer, 1985, 1989; Thorbecke and Grotevant, 1982). Thus, it would be important to explore the role of fidelity in interpersonal domains and the overlap between ideological and interpersonal domains. For example, while religion has been classified as a domain of ideological identity, the significance of interpersonal concerns to religiosity was discussed in this paper.

In the discussion of interpersonal aspects of fidelity, the overlap between fidelity and intimacy also should not be overlooked. In respect to intimacy, fidelity can be understood according to one's sense of faithfulness and loyalty to a significant other. When interpersonal commitment of this nature is evident, it would appear that the individual is successfully negotiating the sixth psychosocial stage of intimacy. Indeed, the capacity for fidelity that evolves from the identity crisis would seem to be essential in establishing intimacy. Thus, fidelity may not only be understood in reference to commitment to ideological social groups, but may be broadened to incorporate components of interpersonal relationships.

In summary, the ego-virtue of fidelity has been recognized as a significant component of Eriksonian theory, particularly in respect to the identity crisis of adolescence. According to Erikson, fidelity is expressed through adolescents' commitments to ideological social groups, such as religious groups. Evidence for relations between identity commitment and religious minority status and church attendance were found. Extension of the study of fidelity to ideological domains beside religion and in interpersonal domains of identity is recommended.

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