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# A Predictive Model for TCK Identity Development: What Role Do Faith Development and Religious Motivation Play?

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# A Predictive Model for TCK Identity Development: What Role Do Faith Development and Religious Motivation Play?

**Cover Page Footnote**

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and Religious Motivation Play?

With the onset of globalization, individuals are frequently crossing cultural boundaries and Third-Culture Kids are increasingly frequenting the college campus (Hervey, 2009; Pollock & Van Reken, 1999). A Third-Culture Kid (TCK), is "an individual who, having spent a significant part of the developmental years in a culture other than the parents' culture, develops a sense of relationship to all of the cultures while not having full ownership in any. Elements from each culture are incorporated into the life experience, but the sense of belonging is in relationship to others of similar experience" (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999, p. 19). Many TCKs are successful; however, they often internally struggle with questions such as "Who am I?" and "Where am I from?" while in college and beyond, which influences their ability to maintain jobs, connects with a life partner, and settle down in one location (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999, p. 269).

Throughout the research, there is a growing recognition that this population faces unique identity challenges (e.g., answering the questions "Who am I?" and "Where am I from?) given their mobility and interaction with multiple cultures (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). TCKs express feelings of rootlessness, alienation, unresolved grief, and the concern of not knowing who they are (Schaetti & Ramsey, 1999; Bell-Vidala & Sichel, 2011). While the problem is documented, and some research exists, this area of TCK identity development is still in a neophyte stage. Little literature exists that helps researchers and practitioners understand the uniqueness of the TCKs' identity development and the mechanisms that support it (Hoerstring & Jenkins, 2011). This is unfortunate as such an understanding could help college educators, student support service members, and counselors with the knowledge to better provide support TCKs during their college years.

Research surrounding traditional identity models may be helpful in understanding TCK identity development (Bikos et al., 2009; Killguss, 2008).  In mono-cultural (also known as single culture) identity development research, researchers have established a relationship between faith, religious motivation, and identity statuses. This research suggests that the more mature faith adolescents or young adults have and the more committed they are to religion, the more solidified their identities are (Fulton, 1997; Leak, 2009; Markstrom-Adams & Smith, 1996). Based on this research, helping TCKs address issues of faith development and religious commitment may positively influence their identity formation. However, a relevant question is whether the relationship among faith development, religious motive, and identity development that has been established in the mono-cultural research holds true with this unique population, especially given their unique identity challenges.  Thus, grounded in identity development and faith development theories, this study sought to examine TCKs' faith development and religious motivation as mechanisms to promote successful identity formation. The conceptual framework guided the asking of the two questions: (a) Is there an association between TCKs' faith development and their identity statuses? (b) Is there an association in the TCKs' maturity of religious motivation and identity statuses?

## Development of Third Culture Kids

Many TCKs experience what researchers term, "delayed adolescence," and fail to reach successful identity resolution until their late twenties and early thirties (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999; Useem & Cottrell, 1993; Weigel, 2010).  In a survey of nearly seven hundred adult third culture kids (ATCKs), Useem and Cottrell (1993) observed that ATCKs go through "delayed adolescence," or delayed identity resolution between the ages of twenty-two and twenty-four, and often times later.  Weigel (2010) found similar results in her qualitative study that examined

TCKs and their transition into college. Identity was the most prevalent theme in her interviews, with TCKS explaining that they were "trapped" between conflicting cultures and unable to reconcile the differences and, in turn, solidify their identities.

Pollock and Van Reken (1999) suggest that this struggle with identity may be a consequence of the TCKs' developmental years, which are characterized and influenced by two realities: (a) mobility and (b) cross cultural exposure. During the formative years while the foundation for identity is developing, TCKs experience personal mobility as their parents move from one location to another. They also experience community mobility as diverse individuals perpetually move in and out of their lives. This is in contrast to their mono-cultural counterparts who develop a foundation for identity and a sense of identity while living in one primary location within one culture. Consequently, TCKs struggle and sometimes do not resolve the crisis of identity as successfully as their mono-cultural peers (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009; Wrobbel & Plueddemann, 1990). While the fact that TCKs struggle with identity development issues is documented in the literature, very little exists on the identification of factors that influence successful resolution of identity.  What does exist is dated (Killlguss, 2008; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009; Wrobbel & Plueddemann, 1990).

**Identity Development Theories**

While there is some debate, most researchers suggest that TCKs follow traditional development paths (e.g., Erikson's stages of development). TCKs simply develop at a delayed pace or fail to reach successful identity resolution (McCaig, 1994; Useem & Cottrell, 1993; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009; Wrobbel & Plueddemann, 1990). As such, this study is situated in traditional identity development theories such as those posed by Erikson (1964) and Marcia (1966).

Erikson (1964) suggested that individuals develop through a succession of steps and through interaction within widening circles, beginning with the mother and ending with mankind. The formation of identity is the major task of adolescence, approximately ages 12 to 18, as adolescents experience rapid physiological growth and become "primarily concerned with attempts at consolidating their social roles" (Erikson, 1980, p. 94). They develop ego identity, "the awareness of the fact that there is a self sameness and continuity to the ego's synthesizing methods …" (Erikson, 1980, p. 22), and move toward successful identity achievement, which involves commitment to work, citizenship, and core beliefs that are integrated into an individual mold.

James Marcia's (1966) refined Erikson's original identity theory, and his identity status model has become a popular basis for identity development research (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Luyckx et al. 2006). In his model, Marcia (1993a) suggested that identity can be considered in terms of its structural, phenomenological, and behavioral aspects. He explained identity in terms of two dimensions, the exploration of political and religious values and occupational choices and the commitment to values and an occupation (e.g. fidelity). Commitment refers to making a solid commitment to an identity domain and engaging in behaviors that are congruent with those commitments.  Exploration involves the active questioning and considering of various identities. Based on the intersection of these two dimensions, Marcia (1993b) formulated four identity statuses, with the latter equating with Erikson's identity fidelity: (a) diffusion, (b) foreclosure, (c) moratorium, and (d) achieved. Individuals with achieved identity statuses have explored and have become committed to a self-constructed identity based on their exploration. Those with foreclosed statuses have not explored but have committed to an identity conferred upon them by another (e.g. parent, school, or religious organizations). Individuals with moratorium statuses are

involved in exploring alternatives but have not yet committed to any identity. Finally, those in the diffused status are neither exploring, nor committed; they have not constructed any identity (Marcia, 1966, 1993b).

Marcia and other theorists who extended Erikson's work noted that religion can be central in the identity formation process. Religion offers a worldview and social norms that inform shaping of an individual's identity (Berzonsky, 1989; Kroger, 2000; Marcia, 1966). A few have suggested that religion and faith may be a resource that can help or hinder identity development (Fulton, 1997; Marcia, 2002) such as TCKs experience. Both Erikson (1964, 1968) and Marcia (1966) recognized that ideology commitment is central to identity formation. Although it is not necessary, religion can provide a socio-historical context to promote fidelity to an ideology. Religion offers a transcendent worldview in which adolescents can base their moral values and beliefs; it also offers traditions to exemplify behavioral norms grounded in an ideology (Erikson, 1964).  Damon (1983) corroborated with Erikson (1964) who suggested that the meaning found in religion is vital to identity formation. Damon (1983) purported that a belief system or worldview is foundational to the adolescent's uniqueness and identity. Religious beliefs, values, and norms can enable adolescents to make sense of the world and the place they have in it (Damon, 1983; Erikson, 1964). Without the meaning and guidance of worldview, adolescents may become confused by options and fail to have perspective about issues surrounding the meaning of life, which may ultimately lead to hopelessness.

## Faith Development and Religious Motivation Theory

There are numerous models for studying and understanding religion, spirituality, and faith; however, Fowler's (1981) model is often used and is frequently studied in relation to

identity development (Fulton, 1997; Leak, 2009; Markstrom-Adams & Smith, 1996). Thus, his

model will further serve as a theory to ground this study.

Fowler (1981) developed a six-stage faith development model from a structural-

developmental perspective. Explanation of his complex theory is not within the scope of this

manuscript, and only the stages relevant to adolescents and young adults are reviewed here.

Stage two, Mythic-Literal Faith, is characterized by a sense of belonging to a community based

upon shared beliefs, stories, and observances. Beliefs and symbols are interpreted as one

dimensional and literal, and the world is based upon reciprocal fairness and reciprocity. Moral

absoluteness and anthropomorphic images are central, and this stage is void of reflection and

conceptual meaning. Conflict between authoritative stories (e.g. creation versus evolution)

usually initiates the entrance into stage three, Synthetic-Conventional Faith. As an individual's

environment involves the family, school, the media, and often work, he or she looks to faith to

provide a coherent framework that synthesizes various views.

Fowler (1981) purported that stage three typically has its ascendancy in adolescence.

Faith at this stage is not objectified for examination or reflection. It is maintained via

relationships and a deference and conformity to authority.  Stage four, Individuative-Reflective

Faith, begins to emerge when serious conflict between authorities are encountered that result in

reflection upon held beliefs. Stage four is most often seen in late adolescence or early adulthood.

It is characterized by reflection upon and personal responsibility for beliefs. Commitments to

faith are derived from experience and the critical thinking about ideology; this is in contrast to

earlier stages in which commitment is based upon authoritative sources, traditions, and

approvals.

Individuals in stage five, Conjunctive Faith, recognize the paradoxes of the held beliefs and understand "truth" as multidimensional. There is a greater openness to alternative views of faith and religion. This theory has parallels with Allport and Ross's notion of intrinsic and extrinsic motives for religion that will provide the basis for understanding religious motivation in this study. Individuals who have explored their faith have a more mature intrinsic motive for religious commitment, while those who have not explored their faith may be more extrinsically motivated in their religious commitment. Intrinsically motivated individuals are motivated by religious tradition; and thus, demonstrate a mature motive for their living out their faith. Extrinsically motivated individuals are only committed to the religion to the extent it is serving their mundane goals (e.g. social status, feelings of comfort, acceptance etc.). They demonstrate lack of mature motive for religion and are weakly committed or "using" their faith and religion rather than "living" it.

**The Relationship Between Identity Development, Faith, and Religion**

While Marcia and other theorists who extended Erikson's work noted that religion and faith are an essential aspect of identity formation (Berzonsky, 1989; Kroger, 2000; Marcia, 1966), Markstrom-Adams and Smith (1996) stated that a theoretical and empirical gap exists related to identity and religion. Gelbet, Thompson, and Meilie (2009) supported this assertion by stating faith and identity development were studied separately until recently. This recent research is demonstrating a relationship between faith development, religious motivation, and identity development in mono-cultural populations and primarily Judeo- Christian populations (Duriez & Soenens, 2006; Watson & Morris, 2005).  In 1994, Markstrom-Adams, Hofstra, and Dougher purported that "[r]eligion is one ideological institution on to which fidelity is anchored" (p. 455). Much of the research completed since that point supports this.  The more religiously committed

individuals are, the more committed they are to religious ideologies, The more committed they are to their religious ideologies, the more mature they are in their identity development. Markstrom-Adams and Smith (1996) surveyed adolescents and found some support that students who had achieved identity statuses had intrinsic religiosity or valued their faith in and of itself. Fulton (1997) extended this research and studied college students at a religious institution. He also found that intrinsic religiosity was positively related to identity achievement. Hunsberger, Pratt, and, Pancer (2001) found a similar result between identity achievement and religious motivation. When examining the relationship between Marcia's (1966) statuses and faith development stages, Mischey (1981) and Bussema (1999) also found an association between the achieved status and high levels of faith development.  Conversely, low levels of religious activity (e.g., church attendance) and strong fundamental beliefs have been associated with identity diffusion (Hunsberger et al., 2001; Markstrom-Adams et al., 1994). Identity diffusion is also associated with extrinsic religiosity (Markstrom-Adams & Smith, 1996) and Fowler's second and third faith stages (Bussema, 1999). Foreclosure status is positively associated with lower stages of faith development, and moratorium status is associated with higher stages of faith development (Bussema, 1999; Mischey, 1981). As Leak (2009) articulated, faith is one source of identity that "can be a vessel that contains and transmits fidelity, loyalty, and commitment to a maturing identity" (p. 204) or a vessel that assists college students, such as TCKs, struggling with identity development.

### Problem and Purpose Statement

Very little exists on the identification of factors that influence successful resolution of TCK identity (Killlguss, 2008; Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009; Wrobbel & Plueddeman, 1990). The research that has been done, exploratory and qualitative, suggests that faith and religion may

be important for achieved identity status (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). In interviews with eight

TCK women, ages 18 to 23, Walters and Auton-Cuff (2009) found that in the midst of high

mobility faith provided a foundation for TCKs to build their identity. Faith provided a sense of

belonging to a group.  Further, faith was a mechanism in which the interviewees established their

independence apart from their parents. Faith and religion thus have the potential to provide a

sense of belonging, ideology, a consistent base essential for the initiation of identity

considerations, and a foundation for identity resolution (King, 2003; Leak, 2009).  Faith

development and identity research with non-TCKs supports this notion; however, research has

not examined this relationship quantitatively with the TCK population. The association among

these variables therefore needs to be studied (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009; Wrobbel & Plueddemann

1990).  As such, the present research examined the following research questions: (a) Is there an

association between TCKs' faith development and their identity status? (b) Is there a there an

association in the TCKs' maturity of religious motivation and identity status? If the theory and

models based on the reviewed empirical research hold true, it is hypothesized that TCKs' mature

faith development and religious motivation would be associated with identity achievement.

## Methodology

**Research Design and Analysis**

A predictive, correlational research design was used, as it is the most appropriate given

the purpose of the study was to examine the relationship among identity status, faith

development, and religious motivation, as they naturally occurred. Moreover, a logistical

regression procedure was selected to assess how well the predictors explained the categorical

criterion variable, identity status.

**Participants**

A volunteer sample of 86 TCKs from a private institution in central Virginia served as the sample for this study. The TCKs were enrolled in online ($n = 26$, 30.2 %) and residential ($n = 60$, 69.8 %) bachelors programs within three colleges (Education, Arts and Sciences, and General Studies). The study was limited to students ages 18-30 and included students with freshman ($n = 18$, 20.9 %), sophomore ($n = 17$, 19.8 %), junior ($n = 19$, 22.1%), and senior ($n = 32$, 37.2 %) statuses.  The majority of the participants were female ($n = 69$, 80.2 %), and most of the participants were Caucasian ($n = 59$, 68.6 %). However, the sample also included African-Americans ($n = 11$, 12.8 %), Asians ($n = 11$, 12.8 %), Hispanics ($n = 2$, 2.3 %), and American Indians ($n = 2$, 2.3 %). One (1.2%) participant reported being multi-racial.

Participants' passport regions included, Africa ($n = 2$, 2.3 %), Asia ($n = 9$, 10.5%), North America ($n = 69$, 80.2 %), and South America ($n = 6$, 7.0 %). A few reported holding dual citizenship with parents' passport region being North America. The number of years that TCKs spent outside their passport countries during their developmental years varied from a few years to 18 years, and years since they had returned to their passport country ranged from less than a year to 20 years.

 Just as their passport countries varied, so did their host countries and their parents' occupations. Host regions for the sample included Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, and South America with parental occupations being in the following areas: (a) business ($n = 11$, 12.8 %) , (b) military ($n = 7$, 7.2 %),(c)  government ($n = 6$, 7 %),  (d) international schools ($n = 3$, 3.5 %), and missions ($n = 48$, 55.8 %). Twelve students (12.8%) noted that their parents had various occupations or did not specify their parents' occupations. As this study focused on faith and religion, TCKs were asked to specify their religious preference. Here is is important to also note that the study was completed at an educational institution

controlled by a private, nongovernmental agency, with a Judeo-Christian affiliation. Although

the students at the institution do not need to identify themselves with any particular religious

affiliation to attend, the majority of the participant reported being "Christian" ($n = 84$, 97.7%).

Two (2.3%) chose "Atheism" as their religious preference.  This is consistent with the fact that

the majority of research on identity and religion has been conducted within a Judeo-Christian

environment. And, as such, the conceptualization of faith and religion for the study as well as the

results, discussion, and implications of this study will focus on identity development within this

religious tradition.

Consistent with the research on TCKs between the ages of 18-29 (Pollock & Van Reken,

1999; Useem & Cottrell, 1993), this sample of TCKs were actively questioning and considering

of various identities and were in the moratorium status of development (see Table 1).

**Procedures and Instrumentation**

During the final month of a spring semester, undergraduate students enrolled in online ($n$

$= 26$, 30.2 %) and residential ($n = 60$, 69.8 %) programs within three colleges (Education, Art

and Sciences, and General Studies) were sent an e-mail via their university accounts. The e-mail

requested that they complete an informed consent and web-based survey that consisted of

questions related to their demographics, identity status, and faith. In the e-mail, students were

provided with a definition for a TCK and were asked to complete the survey only if they meet

the criteria outlined in the definition. The definition provided was, "an individual who, having

spent a significant part of the developmental years in a culture other than the parents' culture,

develops a sense of relationship to all of the cultures while not having full ownership in any.

Elements from each culture are incorporated into the life experience, but the sense of belonging

is in relationship to others of similar experience" (Pollock & Van Reken, 1999, p.19). On the

survey, students were asked to respond affirmatively or negatively to each of the following criteria: "I am an individual who has spent a significant part of the developmental years in a culture other than the parents' culture";  "I feel that I have developed a sense of relationship to all of the cultures (passport and places I have lived) while not having full ownership in any"; "I have incorporated elements from each passport and host (e.g. places I have lived) culture experience into my life and how I live"; and "I feel a sense of  belonging to other TCKs."  Only those answering affirmatively to all four criteria were provided the option to complete the survey.

The web-based survey consisted of the Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status survey (Adams, Fitch & Shea, 1979), the Faith Development Scale (Leak, Loucks, & Bowlin, 1999), and the Religious Orientation Scale–Revised (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989).

**Ego identity status**. The Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status survey (Adams et al., 1979) was used to assess TCKs' ego-identity statuses, the criterion variable. This 24-item instrument asks respondents to respond to 6-point Likert type scale questions related to the ideological dimensions of occupation, politics, and religion. The instrument has four scales, each corresponding with Marcia's four identity statuses: (a) diffusion, (b) foreclosure, (c) moratorium, and (d) achieved. Scores on the subscales range from 6 to 36. The instrument was designed so that scores could be reported for each subscale or used for categorical classifications (Adams et al., 1979).  In the present study, the instrument was used for categorical classifications and Adam's (1999) protocol was used to indicate the identity statuses of participants. See Table 2 for the means, standard deviations, and cutoff scores for each status used in this study to determine the status of each participant.

The instrument has demonstrated good validity and has demonstrated acceptable reliability in studies using college students (Adams et al., 1979; Carlson, 1986). Reported Cronbach alphas for each subscale given over a three year period as follows: Diffusion, .69-.73; Foreclosure, .81-.86; Moratorium, 70-.77; and Achieved, 84-.89. While some studies have questioned the reliability of this instrument, in the present study, the Cronbach alphas for each subscale demonstrated acceptable reliability: Diffusion, .71; Foreclosure, .76; Moratorium, .76; and Achieved, .65.

**Faith stage**. The Faith Development Scale (FDS; Leak et al., 1999) was used to assess faith development, a predictor variable. The FDS is an 8-item, forced choice measure in which participants are asked to choose an option that reflects Stage 4 or 5 of faith development (e.g., "My religious orientation comes primarily from my own efforts to analyze and understand God") or an option that reflects Stage 2 or 3 of faith development ("My religious orientation comes primarily from teachings of my family and church"). Scores range from 0 to 8, with higher scores reflecting a higher level of faith development. The scale has been shown to have good validity (Leak et al., 1999), specifically a confirmatory factor analysis demonstrates that the scale has good construct validity (Leak, 2009). The scale also has good internal consistency (Cronbach alpha= .71) and test-retest reliability ($r =.96$). Cronbach alpha in the present study was .73.

**Religious motivation**. The Religious Orientation Scale–Revised (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989) based on the work of Ross and Allport (1967) was used to assess religious motives. This 14-item instrument asks respondents to respond to a five point Likert type scale (e.g., 1- disagree to 5- strongly agree) questions (e.g., "I enjoy reading about my religion"). Eight items assess

intrinsic motives. This study only examined the intrinsic scale as the focus of the study was to examine mature religious commitment associated with identity development.

The scores on the intrinsic scale ranged from 8-40, with higher scores indicating a mature motive for living out religion. Construct validity for the instrument has been established through a factor analysis (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989). The intrinsic scale has good reliability (Cronbach alpha= .83; Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989). The reliability for this study was consistent with previous findings. Cronbach alpha in the present study was .75 for the intrinsic scale.

## Results

The predictive relationship among TCK identity status, religious commitment (i.e. both intrinsic and extrinsic) and faith development was evaluated.  Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics for each group for each variable disaggregated by identity groups.

Preliminary assumption testing using histograms revealed no gross violations of the assumption of normality. A significant relationship did not exist between the predictor variables (intrinsic religious motivation and faith $r = .16$, p $= .15$) suggesting that multicollinearity was not a concern.

Research has indicated that gender, class status, ethnicity, and age can influence identity status. Thus, chi-square tests of independence were conducted to ascertain if statistically significant associations existed between identity status and the four variables. Gender ($X^2$ ($N = 86$) $= 6.77$, $p = .08$, $V = .28$), class status ($X^2$ ($N = 86$) $= 9.99$, $p = .351$, $V = .19$), ethnicity ($X^2$ ($N = 86$) $= 24.45$, $p = .140$, $V = .31$), and age ($X^2$ ($N = 86$) $= 8.32$, $p = .503$, $V = .18$) were found to have no association with identity status in the sample. There was no association between TCKs' identity statuses and the time spent years aboard, $X^2$ ($N = 86$) $= 60.45$, $p = .17$ 1, $V = .48$.

Further, a correlation analysis demonstrated that there was no relationship between the years

spent abroad and the predictor variables of faith development of religious motivation, *p* > .05.

While these variables have been considered significant in other TCK studies, these variables did

not need to be considered as covariates.

For the purpose of the logistic regression, the identity statuses of foreclosure, diffusion,

or moratorium were coded as 0, indicating the absence of achieved identity status.  The

achievement identity status was coded as one. The results of the direct logistical regression

revealed that the full model containing the predictor variables (i.e., intrinsic religious motivation

and faith stage) significantly predicted identity achievement status, $X^2$ (2, *N* = 86) = 17.85, *p*

<.001. In other words, the model was able to distinguish between the TCKs who did and did not

have achieved identity status. According to Cox and Snell R Square and Nagelkerke R Square,

respectively, the model accounted for between 18.7% and 29.2% of the variance in identity

status and correctly classified 83.7% of the cases. As seen ins Table 4, both faith and intrinsic

religious motivation made significant individual contributions to the model explaining TCK

identity status.

Faith, with the largest odds ratio of 1.91, was the strongest predictor of identity status,

indicating that TCKs with stronger faith were almost two times as likely to report achieved

identity statuses. This finding supported the expectation that high levels of faith development are

positively associated with TCKs' achieved identity statuses, while low levels of faith development

are associated with lack of achieved identity statuses.  Furthermore, the positive odds ratio of

1.31, indicated that the higher a TCK's level of intrinsic religious motivation, the more likely

they were to report an achieved identity status. This finding also supports the hypothesis that

mature religious motivation is positively associated with TCKs' achieved identity statuses.

**Discussion**

Corroborating much of the previous research examining non-TCK populations (Fulton, 1997; Hunsberger et al., 2001; Leak, 2009; Markstrom-Adams 1994), the present study demonstrated that TCKs' lower levels of identity statuses were associated with low levels of faith development and religious motivation. Whereas, a TCK's achieved identity status was associated with high levels of faith development and religious motivation. The model consisting of the variables of faith development and religious motivation accounted for between 18.7% and 29.2% of the variance in identity status. It correctly classified 83.7% of the cases. Following Erikson's (1968) theoretical proposition that identity is the consequence of experiences, this research provides support for the idea that different religious and faith-related experiences and opportunities may be central to increasing exploration, solidifying faith and religious commitments, and in turn, successful identity resolution for TCKs. Failure to explore ideologies related to faith and religion may result in foreclosed or other lower levels of identity statuses.

As a testing period is an integral part of integrating values into forming identity (Erikson, 1968), it is important that TCKs are encouraged to grapple with faith related questions and have a space in which they can explore and test religious ideologies and behaviors. TCKs need to be able to discuss viable options without judgment, where they not only struggle with but reduce cognitive dissonance for healthy psychological development. Colleges and universities, especially private, religious affiliated ones, are uniquely positioned to provide TCKs with faith and religious-based opportunities to explore and to successfully navigate their identity.  College counselors may offer individual counseling sessions that focus on faith and development; support services may offer group sessions or seminars that focus on religious beliefs (e.g., "The good, bad, and ugly of commitment to all religions"). Educators may encourage discussion about

religion and faith integration in the classroom, discussing how the key players within disciplines both embraced and criticized religion and faith.

Within identity status research, an achieved status is indicated by a willingness to commitment to one ideology often built upon the foundation belonging and roots (Marcia, 1966), which many TCKs lack. Faith and religion provide a sense of belonging and a consistent base essential for the initiation of identity considerations and resolution (King, 2003; Leak, 2009), especially amidst high mobility and college transition (Walters & Auton-Cuff, 2009). Therefore, colleges and universities can also support TCKs in the formation of religious clubs or encourage participation in local religious organizations, as connection to such groups can foster a sense of community where TCKs can feel safe to explore identity issues.

## Limitations and Recommendations for Further Research

This study, while significant, is only the beginning of investigation in a relatively unexplored area. The purpose of the study was to explore the associations among TCKs' religious motivation, faith development, and identity development. This study could be expanded through the examination of other variables shown to influence successful identity development in mono-cultural college student populations; a regression model that includes variables such as demographics, experiences, specific support services, and participation in co-curricular college activities could be tested.

Generazability of this research is limited by the characteristics of the sample. The study examined TCKs at a private university. The majority of the sample population reported Christianity as their primary religious orientation. Further, the sample consisted of primarily Caucasian females who held passports in North America. The present study should be replicated

with a more demographically and religiously diverse TCK population at other types of

institutions.

Furthermore, a possible bias may have also been present in this study as it relied solely

on self-report measurements. Participants may have exaggerated on the self-report surveys, or

participants may have filled out the surveys based on perceived social desirability. Therefore, the

use of validated interview protocols to determine identity status and faith development could be

used to extend and strengthen the current study. Finally, similar to other research, the present

study demonstrated that the majority of TCKs, even those in their late twenties, were in the

moratorium development stage, a finding that needs to be examined further.

### Conclusion

The present study extends the literature on TCK identity development and demonstrated

that research surrounding traditional identity models can be applied to assist TCKs in

overcoming their identity struggles (Bikos et al., 2009; Killguss, 2008).  Consistent with much of

the non-cultural identity development research (Fulton, 1997; Leak, 2009; Markstrom-Adams &

Smith, 1996), this study established a link between faith, religious motivation, and identity

achievement. The study suggests that the more mature TCKs' faith and religious commitment,

the more solidified their identities were. Thus, educators, counselors, support services in

colleges, and universities should seek ways to assist TCKs with their faith and religious

development, as this development serves as a potential mechanism for successful identity

development.

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Table 1

*Descriptors of the Identity Statuses*

| Status | *n* | % |
|---|---|---|
| Foreclosure | 10 | 11.6 |
| Achievement | 18 | 20.9 |
| Diffusion | 13 | 15.1 |
| Moratorium | 45 | 52.3 |

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for Cutoff Scores for the Identity Statuses*

| Status | *M* | *SD* | Cutoff |
|---|---|---|---|
| Foreclosure | 15.48 | 5.84 | 21.32 |
| Achievement | 28.60 | 4.23 | 32.83 |
| Diffusion | 12.89 | 4.04 | 16.93 |
| Moratorium | 12.67 | 4.67 | 17.34 |

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics for FDS scores Based on Identity Status* ($N = 86$)

| Activity | Foreclosed (*n* = 10) | | Achieved (*n* = 16) | | Diffused (*n* =13) | | Moratorium (*n* = 45) | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* | *M* | *SD* |
| FDS | 2.90 | 1.45 | 5.22 | 1.69 | 4.00 | 1.73 | 4.08 | 1.35 |
| Intrinsic | 1.79 | 68 | 2.15 | 0.70 | 34.62 | 3.99 | 0.52 | 0.26 |

Table 4

*The Individual Predictors and Their Contribution to the Model for Predicting TCK Identities*

| Predictor | *B* | *SE* | *Wald* | *p* | Odds Ratio | $CI_{95\%}$ *Odds for Ratio* | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | | | | | *Lower* | *Upper* |
| Intrinsic | .27 | .11 | 6.41 | .011 | 1.31 | 1.06 | 1.61 |
| FDS | .65 | .23 | 7.92 | .005 | 1.91 | 1.22 | 3.05 |