Not Just a Copy: Young Adults’ Perspectives on Reconstructing Religion

by

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NOT JUST A COPY: YOUNG ADULTS’ PERSPECTIVES ON RECONSTRUCTING RELIGION

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This thesis examines the experiences of young adults who were raised in conservative Christian households through a dialectical transactional perspective. Existing research on religious socialization is based on unidirectional transmission models that assume children are passive recipients of parents’ religious messages and models. This study sought to explore how young adults represent and evaluate their early upbringing; their descriptions of present internalization; and the sources of change in the internalization process. Sixteen young adults aged 18-25 years participated in qualitative semi-structured interviews. The transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings of this study contribute to new understandings of how young adults act as interpretive active agents in the internalization of religious models and messages. In contrast to assumptions of existing research, young adults demonstrated their active agency through challenging religious messages, constructing their acceptance and interpreting messages from their ecology of models.
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This study focused on how children in conservative religious families uniquely experience their religious socialization. Socialization is the process where individuals learn to become competent social beings through understanding and adopting what are deemed important aspects of their cultures and social worlds including relevant skills, knowledge, values and roles (Fritz, 2010).

Religious socialization is the process by which children develop religious beliefs and understandings (Sherkat, 2003). Existing literature on religious socialization has focused on various religions including Christianity and Islam (Bengtson, Putney & Harris, 2013; Van de Pol & Van Tubergen, 2013), as well as specific subgroups of conservative or fundamentalist religions such as conservative Protestantism (Grasmick, Bursik & Kimpel, 1991) and Southern Baptists (Pevey, Williams & Ellison, 1996).

Children who are raised in conservative religious families may experience unique challenges in the process internalizing the religious values and practices of their parents because these values and practices are contradictory to those of mainstream society. The purpose of this study is to examine the experiences of children who were raised in conservative Christian families, particularly because there is a lack of the child’s perspective in existing research. The focus was on the ways children enact their agency: how they represent and evaluate their early religious socialization; the ways they have internalized their parents’ religious models; and the sources of change influencing their current identification and models. This study focused on adults in the emerging adulthood stage (Arnett, 2000) who were raised with fundamentalist Christian principles as children. The emerging adulthood stage is a time period in which young adults typically experience identity conflict and questioning (Arnett, 2000), making it a critical
time to examine the possibility of questioning their religious upbringings and changing their perspectives regarding religion.

**Literature Review**

In the following section, I will argue that the process of socialization in fundamentalist or conservative religious families in a mainstream social context can be understood using models of cultural transmission and acculturation originally developed for research on immigrant families raising children in a new culture. I will then review research on religious socialization, as well as the specific context of families who practice a conservative or fundamentalist religion. This review will focus on two outcomes of religious socialization, the adoption of practices and the development of a religious identity. Then, I will present a critique of the measures and theoretical concepts that are used in this literature. Limitations of the current literature about religious socialization will then be discussed. Lastly, a theoretical perspective will be presented that emphasize the concepts of children’s agency and influence. This theory is the social relational theory (Kuczynski, Marshall & Schell, 1997; Kuczynski & Knafo, 2014) which offers a framework for understanding the child’s agency within the context of family relationships, and the ability for a child to creatively interpret, evaluate and reconstruct parental messages.

**Religious Fundamentalism**

Although there are many ways of framing and defining religious fundamentalism, one of the most frequently cited and accepted definitions comes from Altemeyer & Hunsberger (1992), who define religious fundamentalists as members of a religious faith that strictly adhere to a set of absolute religious teachings. Religious fundamentalists are also defined as individuals who perceive themselves as having “a special relationship with the deity” and believe that they counter “the forces of evil” through their behaviours and practices (Altemeyer & Hunsberger,
1992). Altemeyer & Hunsberger (1992) proposes that this definition differs from specific Christian conceptualizations of religious fundamentalism, which have been documented in the literature using terminology such as “born again”, and emphasize the return of Jesus. An operational definition of religious fundamentalism can be found in the Religious Fundamentalism Scale, a 20-item Likert scale developed in accordance with this definition (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992, 2004). Items in this scale include “God will punish most severely those who abandon his true religion”, outlining the strict adherence and conformity to religion that is central to this definition of religious fundamentalism (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 2004). Further research has determined that this scale is applicable to religious fundamentalists of not only Christian religious groups, but also other religions such as Islam, Hinduism and Judaism (Hunsberger, 1996). Research has documented several Christian groups as fundamentalists including Baptists (Harding, 1987) and Protestants (Grasmick, Bursik & Kimpel, 1991).

**Analogy of religious fundamentalism as culture.** In this thesis, I propose that in addition to the standard definition, religious fundamentalism can be considered analogous to a culture. As a culture is defined as a complex whole encompassing knowledge, beliefs, morals, customs and other habits (Tylor, 1958), recurring patterns of certain beliefs, values and practices within these fundamentalist religious communities can also be viewed as cultures of religious fundamentalism. Socialization in the context of religious communities that adhere to fundamentalist beliefs and practices can be analogously viewed as a form of family acculturation, similarly to immigrants in a new cultural setting. The acculturation analogy is useful because both parental transmission and internalization of parental values is challenging in cultural contexts that do not support parental efforts (Kuczynski, Navara & Boiger, 2011). For
example, a child raised in a fundamentalist religion may wish to adopt the values or practices of mainstream society.

This proposed analogy of viewing Christian religious fundamentalism as a culture includes cocooning children (Goodnow, 1997) within the religious community, authoritarian childrearing practices and values such as gender inequality and anti-homosexuality (Kirkpatrick, 1993). The proposed cultural model of religious fundamentalism will be used to inform this study, because individuals raised in fundamentalist religious households and exposed to mainstream culture can experience internal conflicts, as they struggle between the contradicting cultures of their religious upbringing and mainstream society. The following review will argue how existing research literature has documented how authoritarian parenting, cocooning and derivative values and beliefs can be viewed as elements of religious fundamentalist culture.

**Authoritarian parenting strategies.** Baumrind (1991) defined authoritarian parenting as a parenting style that occurs when parents try to control and evaluate their child’s behaviours according to a set of standards, usually theologically motivated and incorporating conventional values such as preservation of order and respect for authority. Additionally, authoritarian parents believe that the child should always “accept their parent’s word for what is right” (Baumrind, 1991). Baumrind (1991) found that high enforcement and low responsiveness were characteristics of this parenting style (Baumrind, 1991). According to a scale composed by Robinson, Mandleco, Olsen & Hart (1995), indices of authoritarian parents include verbal hostility, corporal punishment, non-reasoning, punitive strategies and directiveness. Examples of items in this scale for this parenting style include “argues with child”, “uses physical punishment as a way of disciplining our child” and “tells child what to do” (Robinson et al., 1995).
There is evidence that authoritarian parenting strategies are a theologically motivated component of the fundamentalist Christian culture. Danso, Hunsberger & Pratt (1997) found correlations between religious fundamentalism and authoritarian strategies such as corporal punishment and an emphasis on obedience. Similarly, fundamentalist Protestants had stronger attitudes in support of corporal punishment, which they justified with reference to Biblical sources (Grasmick, Bursik & Kimpel, 1991). Ellison, Bartkowski & Segal (1996) found conservative Protestants more often cited Biblical scriptures when justifying corporal punishment, than individuals who professed less conservative religious theologies.

**Cocooning.** Evidence of cocooning (Goodnow, 1997) is also present in existing literature on religious socialization in fundamentalist and conservative religions. Cocooning is defined as containing children within groups of like-minded people as a strategy to discourage exposure to contrasting or opposing messages (Goodnow, 1997). Children may be encouraged to engage with particular individuals and activities; they may also be restricted from engaging in activities, interactions or communities that do not align with parental values. Research shows that many conservative religious parents enrolled children in religious programming such as religion-based schooling (Erickson, 1992; Gunnoe & Moore, 2002; Himmelfarb, 1979). Bengtson, Putney & Harris (2013) found that in several religions including Evangelical Christianity and Judaism, cocooning tactics included encouragement to participate in Sunday school, religious camps, youth groups, in addition to encouraging friendships and relationships with others within the religious community. This engagement and involvement with the religious community was found to be not only strongly encouraged, but sometimes was even viewed as necessary (Bengtson, Putney & Harris, 2013). Children of Christian families were expected to maintain their religious values and practices following independence from the home through continued
participation in the religious community such as attending religious retreats, and pursuing romantic relationships solely with individuals of the same religion (Bengtson, Putney & Harris, 2013).

**Derivative beliefs, values and practices.** In this study, derivative values will be defined as values and world views that are not core Biblical doctrine (e.g. The Gospel), but are commonly accepted interpretations or judgements in the religious community that are drawn from Biblical texts, that are not necessarily literal applications of these texts. Research has documented that religious fundamentalists are more likely to possess discriminatory attitudes towards women (Kirkpatrick, 1993; Peek, Lowe & Williams, 1991), blacks, communists and homosexuals (Fulton, Gorsuch & Maynard, 1999; Kirkpatrick, 1993). Children raised in fundamentalist religions who more closely identified with the religion at an early stage had stronger “us-them” judgments by perceiving more individuals as members of out-groups, and more likely to express attitudes of prejudice against homosexuals and racial-ethnic minorities (Altemeyer, 2003). Unnever & Cullen (2006) found connections between fundamentalism and positive views towards punitiveness that were derived out of religious beliefs and involvement. Fundamentalism has been correlated with sexism (Peek, Lowe & Williams, 1991), gendered division of housework (Ellison & Bartkowski, 2002) and female submissiveness (Pevey, Williams & Ellison, 1996). Although Pevey, Williams & Ellison (1996) found that misogynistic tendencies were explicit in the Christian Baptist community and took the form of patriarchal family structures and ideas of wifely submission, Ellison & Bartkowski (2002) found that conservative or fundamentalist women spent more time doing housework and other “female” type labour in the home compared to non-evangelical groups. In both studies, gender roles and values were derived from ideologies interpreted from religious texts, and used as a standardized
theology (Ellison & Bartkowski, 2002; Pevey, Williams & Ellison, 1996). Based on this research, female submissiveness and gender roles can be considered derivative values (Glenn, 1999) that are a component of the culture of religious fundamentalism.

**Religious Socialization**

Much of existing research in this field conceptualizes religious socialization within a unidirectional perspective (Bader & Desmond, 2006; Bengtson, Copen, Putney & Silverstein, 2009; Van de Pol & Van Tubergen, 2013; Vermeer, Janssen & Scheepers, 2012), where children are treated as passive recipients of parental messages. Existing research also assumes that parental beliefs, values and practices are directly transmitted and replicated in children. This unidirectional perspective is evidenced through the measures and concepts used in studies regarding religious socialization. For example, in typical studies, positive correlations between parents and children on measures of religious affiliation and participation are interpreted as successful religious socialization (Acock & Bengtson, 1980; Willits & Crider, 1989). An example of these predictors is church or religious service attendance (Bader & Desmond, 2006; Bengtson, Copen, Putney & Silverstein, 2009; Van de Pol & Van Tubergen, 2013; Vermeer, Janssen & Scheepers, 2012). Another predictor were items intending to measure religious beliefs and faith in Biblical statements such as “There is no place for alcohol in the full and happy life” (Dudley & Dudley, 1986; Fisherman, 2011). In addition, the value placed on the importance of religion (Bader & Desmond, 2006; Bengtson et al., 2009) was another predictor. Two examples of these unidirectional transmission models are the transmission of religious practices and the transmission of religious identity.

**Religious practices.** Religious practices such as prayer and religious service attendance are often incorporated into the everyday life of some children, who engage in conforming
behaviours without questioning or understanding the reasons for their actions (Peek, 2005). Bader & Desmond (2006), found that children possessed more positive attitudes towards religiosity when parents consistently engaged in religious practices. Children were also more likely to have strong religious beliefs and more frequently attended religious services when parents strongly valued religion and attended religious services frequently (Bader & Desmond; Vermeer, Janssen & Scheepers, 2007). Other children were found to participate in religious youth groups or other religious programming, which contributed to more frequent participation in religious practices (Bengtson, Putney & Harris, 2013; Gunnoe & Moore, 2002).

**Religious identity.** Religious identity is another concept that has been incorporated in outcome measure of successful religious socialization, although the majority of recent research focuses on minority groups and religions other than Christianity. Peek (2005) defined successful transmission of religiosity as developing a declared Muslim identity, which indicated that the child had been raised with Islam, grappled with whether to accept this religion and lastly, accepted a religious identity. Consistent with the unidirectional transmission models, parents who identified more strongly as a Muslim also had children who identified more strongly religiously (Verkuyten, Thijs & Stevens, 2012). Fisherman (2011) also found that Israeli adolescents had stronger religious identities when parents strongly enforced religious beliefs and practices. Other studies used Marcia’s typology of identity regarding commitment and exploration, to support the hypothesis that parental socialization impacted youth’s decisions to commit to a religious identity (Armet, 2009; Hadad & Schacter, 2011).

**Limitations**

Despite its frequent use in research, the unidirectional parent to child socialization model provides a limited understanding of the religious socialization process because there is a need to
incorporate the influence of the child into accounts of religious socialization. Children are active agents in their own development and not mere passive recipients (Kuczynski, Marshall & Schell, 1997; Kuczynki & Knafo, 2014) and may contribute to a variety of processes such as deciding to continue or reject or change religious practices when they become adults (Boyatzis, 2005). Various scholars have begun to address religious socialization as a bidirectional process, acknowledging the reciprocal interactions between the parent and child as an important factor (Bebiroguli, Roskam & Van der Straten Wailliet, 2014; Boyatzis & Janicki, 2003; Flor & Knapp, 2001). Scholars have also criticized the lack of the child’s perspective in the current literature, emphasizing that the child’s agency and role in constructing religious identity should be examined (Hemming and Madge, 2011). However, these studies do not explore the agentic processes of children qualitatively, instead suggesting that future research should further explore the role of reciprocal interactions further. Hoge, Johnson & Luidens (1993) found that strong church involvement in childhood did not predict the religious beliefs of young adults. Similarly, Arnett & Jensen (2002) found that religious socialization in childhood was not an important factor in religious beliefs or church service attendance during adulthood. Sherkat (1991) also found that Sunday school attendance or other religious training as a child did not reduce the likelihood of religious preference changes in later life. Although these changes and differences are evidenced in research, it is necessary to incorporate the child’s perspective in order to understand the nature of their role in religious internalization. Based on this research, it was expected that young adults would report factors other than parental socialization and religious practices as impactful on their current conceptions of their present status of internalization.

There is a need to address influences other than the parent that are not acknowledged in unidirectional models. Newer literature demonstrates that there are several agents of influence
including peers and the community that can impact religious choices and preferences (Sherkat, 2003). Social influences such as educational attainment (Sherkat, 2003), the school environment, media, social networks (Hood, Hill & Spilka, 2009) and the quality of parent-child relationship (Sherkat & Wilson, 1995) have not been examined in religious socialization research. In light of these limitations, this study addresses both the child’s perspective and external influences impacting religious socialization and internalization.

**Theoretical Perspective**

**Social Relational Theory**

There are a number of constructivist models including Corsaro (1992), Lawrence & Valsiner (1993) and Smetana (2011) but the more comprehensive model that will be used to inform this thesis is social relational theory, which utilizes a transactional dialectical model. Within this framework, both children and parents are agents who contribute to socialization processes and outcomes (Kuczynski, Marshall & Schell, 1997; Kuczynski & Knafo, 2014). Instead of a unidirectional transmission model where the child passively accepts parental messages, social relational theory focuses on the child’s ability to construct and reconstruct their own models and parental messages during the internalization process (Kuczynski, Marshall & Schell, 1997; Kuczynski & Knafo, 2014). The products of the child’s internalization processes are incorporated in the child’s working models of internalization. These working models include beliefs, values, skills, motives and attitudes that continue to change and be reconstructed (Kuczynski, Marshall & Schell, 1997). In the context of religious socialization, it is assumed that children actively reconstruct parental messages by evaluating, modifying, reinterpreting or redefining aspects of their religious socialization. The differences in working models between the parent and child can cause contradictions such as explicit conflicts within the family.
(Kuczynski, Marshall & Schell, 1997; Kuczynski & Knafo, 2014). For example, children may experience internal conflicts as they wish to reject parent’s religious messages but would still like to maintain a positive relationship with one’s parents or members of the religious community. Although typical family conflicts are expected to exist within these religious families, it is expected that there are additional conflicts that are different from typical family conflict, that are attributable to the dissonance between religious socialization in the family and external influences of culture.

According to social relational theory, children are not only influenced by parents’ working models, but also an ecology of working models, including peers, education, media and other social influences (Kuczynski, Marshall & Schell, 1997; Kuczynski & De Mol, 2015) which may enforce or contradict parental efforts. Both parents and children are within this cultural context of ecology of working models which continue to be sources of influences that may be different from religious messages and influence both children and parents’ working models. This ecology of models contains different sources of influences with ideas that children should also evaluate, reinterpret, reject and manage (Kuczynski, Marshall & Schell, 1997; Kuczynski & De Mol, 2015).

Research Questions

This thesis study seeks to answer three research questions concerning child’s experiences of religious socialization within the context of conservative Christian families.

1) “How do young adults represent and evaluate their early religious upbringing?”

The goal was to explore how young adults construct and evaluate the content of their messages (e.g. doctrinal aspects of Christian beliefs, values, practices and world views) that were communicated to them by parents or others during childhood. In addition, the goal was also to
explore how socialization experiences (e.g. discipline, teaching of doctrine, cocooning) during childhood and early upbringing were recollected and evaluated.

2) “How do young adults currently conceptualize the internalization of their earlier childhood religious socialization?”

The goal was to explore the current status of their religious socialization and their conceptions of continuity and change in their working models, religious identifications, beliefs, values, practices, world views, and associated meanings. Participants’ descriptions of their existing religious identifications and concepted aspects of internalized, reinterpreted, reconstructed and rejected religious models are reported in response to this research question.

3) “What were the sources of change that impacted religious internalization?”

The goal was to determine how the ecology of working models (Kuczynski, Marshall & Schell, 1997) (e.g. peers, media, education) may have impacted the young adults’ reported present status of internalization and evaluations during early upbringing.

In order to limit the scope of this thesis, there are two additional research questions discussing future visions and the nature of present parent-child relationships that will not be included.

Method

Participants

In order to participate, there were several eligibility criteria participants needed to meet. Firstly, interviewees must have been raised with fundamentalist Christian principles, as defined by the cultural analogy outlined earlier. For the purposes of this study, “fundamentalist Christianity” was framed in the recruitment process as “conservative or strict Christian parenting” and/or “strong involvement in the Christian community” to encompass individuals
who did not identify their families and/or themselves as fundamentalist according to my cultural analogy of religious fundamentalism. Although factors such as culture, gender and ethnicity could influence a participant’s upbringing as well, the main focus of this study was on the religious aspects of the participants’ upbringing.

Participants were also required to be currently attending or have previously attending a post-secondary institution, including college or university. I expected that attending a post-secondary institution would increase the likelihood of exposure to secular influences that may have been different than their Christian religious upbringing. I anticipated that participants who were exposed to these new sources of influence through their education would be more likely to engage in independent thinking and questioning, which was important in responding to the research questions. With these expectations, I believed that these participants may have been exposed to non-religious influences including values, beliefs and practices that differed from the ones that were taught during their religious socialization, which may have encouraged thinking about their religion upbringing and other views regarding religion and religious identification.

The interviewees must also have been between the ages of 18 to 25, as the study sought focus on the young adult population. It has been shown that typically, individuals during this life stage participate in questioning the world views they were raised with (Arnett, 2000). For most young adults, exposure to new experiences and individuals in this life stage have been found to produce modifications of existing perspectives and world views (Arnett, 2000).

A total of sixteen young adults participated in this study. All participants were recruited from Southern Ontario, Canada, with most participants being recruited from posters placed at both McMaster University and the University of Guelph. The sixteen young adults ranged from the ages of 18 to 25, fitting the emerging adulthood criteria. Thirteen of the participants were
female, and three of the participants were male. Participants identified themselves as being raised in several denominations including Protestant, Baptist, Pentecostal and Brethren; other participants could not specify a specific denomination they were raised in (e.g. community church).

Most participants were currently attending a post-secondary institution (n=10). All other participants had recently graduated from post-secondary (n=6). The majority of participants (n=14) identified as having attended a secular university, while one participant reported attending a religious university and one participant reported attending a college. Two participants reported that they were married. Most participants (n=15) reported that they had at least one sibling.

**Procedure**

Recruitment. I attained research ethics board approval from the University of Guelph, as my main location for recruitment (refer to Appendix A). I also attained research ethics board approval from McMaster University, as a secondary location for recruitment (refer to Appendix B). Receiving ethics board approval from multiple institutions allowed for a more ethnically and culturally diverse student population, than solely recruiting from the University of Guelph. In order to encompass individuals from differing educational backgrounds and social contexts, research ethics board approval was also attained from Humber College (refer to Appendix C), using the Ontario Community College Multi-Site REB Application form. The majority of interviews took place in the fall of 2016, with the first interview being conducted in August of 2016 and the last interview taking place in late April of 2017.

Recruitment strategies. The word “fundamentalist” was not used in recruitment posters (refer to Appendix D) and materials, to recruit individuals who were still raised in the culture of
Christian fundamentalism, may not have identified as being raised in Christian fundamentalists households or who may not have understood the way my research project was conceptualizing religious fundamentalism. Recruitment flyers were posted across the University of Guelph campus. In addition, information regarding the study was also posted on school-based forums that students access, including The Cannon. In addition, a recruitment script that was approved by the various ethics boards (refer to Appendix E) was sent to campus organizations and student groups affiliated with Christianity, theism or anti-theism, as a request to pass my study information on to their club members who may still be affiliated with the religion or may know individuals who would meet the study interested and perhaps be interested in participating. Examples of school groups that were messaged with my recruitment script included Campus for Christ and Chinese Christian Fellowship. Lastly, information regarding the study was also posted on online groups and forums with administrator permissions, including private church groups. Snowball sampling was also a recruitment strategy used for this study, where young adults who participated in the study shared the study information on their social media pages or with peers that were eligible for the study.

**Interview strategy.** Participants were asked to engage in a semi-structured interview of approximately one hour in duration, and were asked about religious socialization experiences; their current perspectives on their religious identification, beliefs, practices; the nature of their earlier and current parent-child relationships; and their future visions regarding religion and religiosity (refer to Appendix F). One-on-one interviews were conducted, both in-person and using Skype, a video conferencing program, dependent on the participant’s preferences and availabilities. Recruitment occurred at multiple post-secondary institutions and included individuals who had graduated from post-secondary education. As such, the video conferencing
option made it easier to accommodate participants who had time-consuming schedules or were living in difficult-to-access areas. Ten participants chose to have the in-person interview, and six participants number of participants chose the virtual interview option. There were no discernable differences in the quality and depth of the responses participants provided with the video conferencing option. I believe that allowing for two types of interview modes helped maximize participant recruitment.

**Pre-interview process.** When participants expressed their interest in participation through e-mail or text message, I provided them with the letter of information and consent (refer to Appendix G) through e-mail, which outlined the purpose of the study, types of questions that would be asked, their rights and responsibilities as participants, the potential risks and benefits for participation in the study and how their information would be stored and reported. The eligibility criteria were also discussed during this correspondence. Participants were made aware of their ability to ask any questions regarding the study during the communication process. Once participants had read over the letter of information and consent and agreed to participate in the study, a date, time and mode for the interview was determined based on participant’s preferences and availabilities.

**Interview process.** Participants who opted for the video conferencing option were asked to send their signed consent form prior to the beginning of the interview. For participants who opted for the in-person interview option, they were asked to sign the consent form at the interview location. Prior to signing the consent form, participants were asked to review the letter of information and were asked whether they had any questions, to ensure they understood what they were consenting to. The interview was conducted using the semi-structured interview script (refer to Appendix E). The three main parts to the interview included what their religious
upbringing was like and what their evaluations of their religious upbringing were earlier in life; their current identification and perspectives on their religious upbringing; and their current beliefs, values, practices and future expectations. These interviews were audio recorded and were approximately an hour long. Following the interview, participants were provided a $10 Starbucks gift card as compensation.

**Epistemological Stance**

I utilized an interpretivist epistemology for this research, which assumes the social construction of reality and the rejection of absolute truths (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Through this interpretivist epistemology, I acknowledge the existence of multiple realities and the role of social context in shaping my participant’s experiences and representations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). However, this epistemological perspective allowed me to better describe, understand and interpret the reported subjective experiences of young adults who were raised in conservative Christian households. I understand that the experiences of my participants never be fully understood, and that the interpretations in this research are shaped by my own understandings and experiences. I also understand the nature of my participant’s representations and evaluations will continue to change, due to socio-temporal context and future interactions with parents, peers and other individuals. I allowed my participants to share their own stories and perspectives within their own existing contexts, with the understanding that these experiences were subjective and prone to evolution. I acknowledge that my participants displayed their agency in selecting what they chose to report, and what they chose not to report during the interviews. Lastly, I acknowledge that my role as researcher has influenced this research process in some capacity, due to my own identity and upbringing and that I have also influenced the study due to my role in the research design and creating the research objectives. Because I am unable to wholly
delineate my role as researcher from my identity outside of research, my reflexive thoughts and personal influences will be documented below.

**Reflexivity**

As a researcher, I developed interests in examining this population of young adults due to my own experiences of being raised in a conservative Christian upbringing, and the questioning and self-reflection that ensued. I am considered an emerging adult according to literature, and still question and think about aspects of my religious upbringing. These internal conflicts and questions continue to be influenced by catalyzing sources including my peers and my educational community. Because of my own experiences, I was personally interested in others’ experiences who were raised in similar upbringings, including their own responses to their upbringing and religion and the influences that led them to their present status of internalization. Although I did expect some commonalities between my experiences and those of my participants, I did not assume that others’ experiences directly mirrored my own.

**Self-disclosure and reflections on interviews.** I chose to disclose that I was raised in a conservative Christian family at the beginning of the interview, so that participants would understand I was raised with similar beliefs, values and practices. I believe this disclosure made them more comfortable and open in sharing their own experiences. This statement was included at the beginning of the interview guide (refer to Appendix F). During several interviews, participants’ responses insinuated potential similarities in our experiences, using phrases such as “you might have experienced this too”. However, my current perspectives on religion and religiosity were not disclosed, because that could have biased the participants’ responses or led the participant to be uncomfortable in sharing certain aspects of their own thoughts or experiences. I was also mindful of my body language and facial expressions during the
interview, to ensure that the participants felt comfortable sharing their own personal experiences and opinions with me, and to ensure that my own potential disagreements or disagreements with participants’ responses were not influencing what was being shared in the interviews. I acknowledge that my knowledge regarding being raised in a conservative Christian family was helpful in understanding these participants’ experiences more than someone who was not raised with similar beliefs, values and practices. Due to my own experiences, I possessed an understanding of the core beliefs, values and practices as well as the language that is used to describe Christianity and Christian upbringing.

**Analyses**

All interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim, including non-verbal communication such as pauses or sighs. To ensure the accuracy of the transcripts, I transcribed all of the interviews and also reviewed the transcripts while listening to the audio recordings. During the transcription and review process, I made memos of common themes and ideas across interviews.

The interview transcripts were analyzed using Braun & Clarke’s (2006) six steps to conducting thematic analysis, in order to understand recurring patterns of themes and meanings that can be found within the data. MAXQDA, a qualitative data analysis program, was used to help facilitate systemic coding and the documentation of the coding process using memos. A theory-driven approach was utilized for these analyses; the theoretical framework of social relational theory (Kuczynski, Marshall & Schell, 1997; Kuczynski & Knafo, 2014) was used to inform the interpretations of the data. Sensitizing concepts (Kuczynski & Daly, 2003) from competing existing theories including unidirectional transmission models and concepts of child agency were used to guide the initial identification of themes. A list of sensitizing concepts was
generated prior to coding. However, I was alert to new themes that were expressed in these interview narratives that were not represented in existing research. The transcripts were first read several times, in order to generate preliminary codes that were informed by the research questions, relevant literature and sensitizing theories. These transcripts were coded in more detail and the codes were grouped into potential themes. These themes were reviewed and refined to ensure cohesiveness amongst the themes and to search for overarching themes; this process involved thorough discussions with Dr. Kuczynski. The software programs, PowerPoint and Inspiration, were used to illustrate and reorganize the final themes. The last two research questions regarding future visions and the parent-child relationship will not be included in order to limit the scope of this thesis.

Results

There are three research questions addressed in these results: representations and evaluations of early upbringing, conceptions of present status of internalization and sources of change. The themes illustrate participants’ reports of their interpretations and evaluations of their early upbringings, participants’ descriptions of internalization and modification of parental messages, and the catalyzing influences that participants reported as impacting on their present identifications and religious models. In order to protect the identities of the participants, pseudonyms (chosen by the researcher) will be used when reporting these results.

Representations and Evaluations of Early Upbringing

Representations of early upbringing. During the interviews, participants were asked to recall doctrinal and social aspects of their religious upbringing (refer to Appendix X). There were two themes that were found: recollections of doctrinal messages and recollections of socialization experiences.
Recollections of doctrinal messages. Participants all reported recollections of doctrinal messages which are beliefs, values, practices, world views and derivative values. These will be reported in this section in three categories: doctrinal prescripts, doctrinal proscripts and derivative values and world views. These remembered doctrinal messages contain both core fundamental beliefs from the Bible, in addition to derivative values, which are based on cultural interpretations within the Christian community. Participants recalled various doctrinal prescripts, which are literal interpretations of the Bible that they ought to believe and follow. Commonly reported beliefs included the Gospel story as truth, belief in humans as sinners, the Bible as one’s Authority and a commitment to building a personal relationship with Jesus, and modelling one’s life after Jesus and the Bible. A number of participants described these transmitted Biblical beliefs in an organized fashion, similar to memorized prose. Kristy described that “as a Christian, our authority is Scripture, so they taught me values from that like truth and honesty.” (P11, female, 20) She continued to say:

   We’re all sinners and we’re all in need of Christ because we have sinned against God and have rebelled against Him…we all fall short of His standard and His flaws and we didn’t want anything to do with Him, but because of God’s love for us, because of His kindness, He sent his Son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for us…and His sacrifice cleansed us from our sins. He…redeemed us, He’s our Saviour, because of Him we have…life with him, we’re right with God…we have eternal life with Christ. (P11, female, 20)

Similarly, Grace recalled the religious beliefs that were most salient to her:

   There was God and Jesus…it was always Father, Son and Holy Spirit…people were born perfect, there was the fall of man for all…of us are sinful. After that, there was no way we could approach God, and then Jesus came, died as the perfect sacrifice and then through Him, we can communicate with God and have a relationship with Him again. I was also taught that…a personal relationship with God is important. (P07, female, 24)
Diana also stated that she was taught “you should love God more than you love anyone” (P04, female, 22) and Olivia similarly recalled you should “love the Lord…and He’s the person that you lean on, you have a personal relationship with Him.” (P15, female, 22)

Participants recalled religious values for social behaviours that were based on interpretations of the Bible, including treating others like you would want to be treated, being honest and respecting others. Grace stated these values included “being kind to others, treating others with respect and honesty.” (P07, female, 24) Felicity similarly described “the Bible says …telling the truth, being honest…being kind to one another.” (P06, female, 23). Noelle described “the personal relationship with Jesus” as “where our morals came from.” (P14, female, 24). She continued to say that “because I…loved Jesus and…wanted to have a relationship with Him, I wanted to be a good child…and would do things to praise Him…there was a very strict sense of what was right and what was wrong.” (P14, female, 24)

Religious practices were also commonly recalled by participants, including church attendance, reading the Bible, prayer and participation in Christian holidays based on Biblical beliefs. All participants reported church attendance as one of the core religious practices they were expected to engage in. Barry described that “as a Christian household, we go to church every Sunday…when I was young, my sister and I would attend Sunday school.” (P02, male, 23)

Similarly, Mike recalled:

We went to church every Sunday. We went to special holidays, so Christmas Eve we would go to church…Easter, we would go to church, for sure…we would also sometimes do devotions together. So we would read the Bible together sometimes. We would pray before every meal. Sometimes…our parents would come into our room at night and pray with me. (P13, male, 21)

Isabelle particularly emphasized the importance of church attendance, noting “unless we were really sick, we went to church every Sunday…like that was really important.” (P09, female, 18)
Elaine also recalled the similar routine nature of these religious practices, stating that “we prayed before and after every meal. We prayed before bed, like individually and as a family. We prayed, read the Bible, every meal as well.” (P05, female, 23)

In addition to these commonly recalled prescriptions, participants also reported common derivative values; these were non-literal forbidden or discouraged behaviours for individual conduct, based on Biblical beliefs and Christian worldviews. Some of these discouraged behaviours participants recalled included not swearing, not lying and not associating with peers that engaged in behaviours such as drinking, drug use or smoking. Grace described that “we weren’t really ever allowed to swear” (P07, female, 24). She also explained “they definitely didn’t want us to drink…especially underage but even now. We couldn’t have it in the house, they didn’t want you to go places where they knew it’d be…so there was pretty much no tolerance for that.” (P07, female, 24) Diana similarly emphasized “swearing was a big one…and just being with friends in general, they didn’t really like.” (P04, female, 22). Noelle recalled that her parents “didn’t want me to …drink alcohol or be around people who did or go to dances” (P14, female, 24)

Several participants recalled restrictions “in terms of TV shows that other people were allowed to watch or movies.” (P07, female, 24) Mike also described restrictions surrounding “listening to secular music…it was taught to me that…the lyrics [were] bad and all these things.” (P13, male, 21) Harry Potter was used as an example by several participants as one of these proscriptions. As Grace described “when it first came out, it was this evil bad thing …and people said don’t read it. So I just didn’t read it.” (P07, female, 24).

Participants also recalled messages regarding ways of evaluating and resisting the mainstream values of secular society. These participants recalled ways of dealing with secular
messages regarding homosexuality and dating relationships, that were based on Biblical interpretations. Kristy said “secular society views marriage …as you can marry anybody but from how I was brought up, the Bible is our authority…marriage is solely between a man and a woman.” (P11, female, 20) Felicity discussed that “in regards to relationships…it was strongly encouraged to date another Christian”. (P06, female, 23) In remembering the past, she described:

There was a guy that was showing interest and my parents were quite concerned because he wasn’t a Christian and that caused some tension…trying to express the importance of dating another believer. In terms of pre-marital sex, that was talked about and was said…to refrain from that as well. (P06, female, 23)

Holly also reported that “you were supposed to not have sex before you get married…that was pretty big in my church and in my school and my parents.” (P08, female, 24) Grace detailed the potential consequences of not adhering to parental messages:

In terms of having a boyfriend, staying overnight was not a cool thing…when [I had a boyfriend], and when he was over in the house, we weren’t allowed to be in a room with the door closed. I did that once and had the Riot Act read to me even though there wasn’t anything going on…the door always had to stay open.  (P07, female, 24)

Mike also recalled learning about his parents’ world views towards homosexuality when stating:

I remember going to …I think it was a rally when I was really young…for homosexual marriage and it was against that. And in today’s society, looking back, that would’ve been pretty offensive to some people… [my parents] didn’t bash homosexuals, they were not homophobic but they would tell me that…this is what the Bible says and this is what it says. (P13, male, 21)

Participants also recalled several other derivative values, including not “explicitly expressing feminist or egalitarian beliefs” (P04, female, 22) and “pornography is wrong” (P05, female, 23).

Recollections of socialization experiences. All participants recalled parental socialization strategies by which parents transmitted their religious messages and associated values. These socialization strategies were direct instruction, indirect instruction through the
church community, cocooning and discipline. These messages were taught in similar ways, either through modeling by parents, older siblings or members of the church, in addition to explicit instructions and explanations. Jessica described that her parents “did a lot of talking…just teaching me, like, don’t do this…a lot of instructions.” (P10, female, 20). Kristy reported the importance of parental explanations and the modelling of church members when she said that her parents “disciplined me when I did something wrong… If I did something wrong, they told me to stop. If I did something right, they praised me”.

Several participants also recalled parental expectations to be attentive to messages of church community members who reinforced parental messages including ministers, Sunday school teachers and peers who held more authority. Kristy stated that “they brought me to church where I learned what was right and wrong.” (P11, female, 20) Adam also stated that “my mom was always pushing us to…look to others above us.” (P01, male, 23) Diana emphasized the importance of teachings in the church, stating “church would be like a big thing that we would listen to.” (P04, female, 22) In addition to community members, Christine explained how her older sister was a model for religious values, when she expressed “many things I feel like I learned from seeing my sister…kind of push boundaries more.” (P03, female, 20).

Many participants recalled encouragement to be active in the Christian community with peers and church members that reinforced parental beliefs, values and practices. These forms of encouragement took place in the form of church-related social activities, peers and education. The church-related social activities that participants recalled included attendance of youth groups or fellowships and serving in the Christian community. Noelle described how she was “really encouraged” to attend youth groups, youth rallies, Christian summer camps and mission trips in addition to her belief that these activities were viewed as corrective measures. She stated that
“they didn’t really encourage my sisters to go, but I think it was bad and they wanted me to be good…like seeing poverty and it would make me grateful and stuff? So they really encouraged that.” (P14, female, 24) Pam described that she “had youth group in elementary school…a junior and a teen club. So I was really encouraged to go to that…and a lot of youth retreats and conventions…a lot of group stuff and encouragement for me to go.” (P16, female, 23) Grace also recalled the continual pressure to be active in the Christian community. She remembered:

There were all the youth groups. My church always had a camp, when we were kids we were campers and we went to every week that was available…and then after, there was a youth group when we were 13. After we were too old to go, we were encouraged to work [at the camp]. Yeah…there would be a Friday night group and the church has a number of them…so they would have events of praise nights…and so we would be encouraged to go to those. And my mom was always willing to drive to those. (P07, female, 24)

Elaine recalled the frequency of church community events in her life, stating that “I could have something every weekend if I wanted to and…maybe every day is a little bit exaggerated but three or four times a week…I can go to some sort of activity related to church.” (P05, female, 23)

Some participants recalled that parents deliberately encouraged some friendships and discouraged others, to promote friendships with peers who held similar Christian or conservative values. Isabelle described:

I didn’t have a cell phone at a really young age and my parents…monitored actually, to some extent…who I hung out with. Like my mom told me at a young age: “who you hang out with is going to influence you”. So you kind of have to be wary of that because you can…adapt to the bad behaviours of other people. (P09, female, 18)

Noelle also explained how she was “definitely really encouraged” to build a friendship with the daughter of one of her mother’s best friends, who “was starting to get in with the ‘wrong crowd’ and none of them were Christian”. She further explained that this was an intentional proactive parental strategy, and that “I feel they made us best friends [on purpose].” (P14, female, 24) In
contrast, Pam described that her parents reactively “kind of made comments about certain friends because they thought they were bad influences on me”. While they would not explicitly restrict her from certain peers, they “had their opinions about certain friends being a better influence than others because of their morals” and it “was like hinting [they didn’t] like that person as much…and they might not be as morally sound.” (P16, female, 23)

Some participants also recollected that religion-based education was an important component of their early upbringing. Holly mentioned that her whole community was part of her religion, describing that she “went to a Catholic school and my whole neighbourhood was pretty much Catholic so everyone was the same”. (P08, female, 24). Isabelle explained the importance of a religious undertone to her education, when she explained:

[My mom] wanted us to have some sort of…Christian undertone to our schooling because now in the public school, there’s certain…restrictions even to what you can say, like you don’t talk about God in public schools, it’s kind of like a no-no subject. (P09, female, 18)

Mike also explained the importance of having Christian peers and attending Christian schooling. He stated:

So they put me in a Christian school so most of my friends were obviously professing Christians…so they wanted me to be around the people who were…I guess good, so they didn’t misbehave too much, they didn’t tend to do…crazy things…The type of friends that they wanted me to hang out with were…people that respected their elders, kind of thing. Just followed the rules, weren’t too…troublesome. (P13, male, 21)

Participants recollected similar disciplinary practices; all participants reported that corporal punishment was used as discipline. Kristy explained that “depending on what I did…sometimes they would scold me, other times I’d get spanked.” (P11, female, 20) Jessica recalled that “when I was really young…they would hit you on the wrist…that was rare, but it still happened and it freaked me out and I hated it so I would obey out of fear.” (P10, female, 20) Pam also described that “when I was really young, I was spanked…I was put in the corner
sometimes…and then it would just be like, banning me from things.” (P16, female, 23) Adam also explained that “my dad would kind of use the belt a couple times on us to…enforce good behaviour” and were also “threatened with …the belt or threatened to take away some of our stuff or not go to things.” (P01, male, 23)

Recollections of parent-child relationships and overall upbringing. None of the participants expressed explicit negative evaluations of their parent-child relationships during their early upbringing, and maintained positive evaluations of their overall early upbringing. These retrospective views of participants’ relationships with their parents were important in understanding the relationship context and participants’ maintenance of positive familial relationships despite disagreements or ambivalence regarding the religion or aspects of religious upbringing.

Many participants referred to their parents as authority figures, who they respected, loved and listened to. Grace explained “they were my authority figure. I had to listen to what they said…talking back was not an option. They were parents that loved me and…I loved too.” (P07, female, 24) Olivia similarly described “they were my mom and dad…they were my heroes. I really respected them as a kid. I wouldn’t really say they were my friends…they were…authority type of thing.” (P15, female, 22) Participants also stated that “I respected them and looked up to them” (P03, female, 20) and that “we’re a super loving family….we will always love each other unconditionally.” (P09, female, 18)

Although some participants expressed that there was distance or a lack of closeness in one of their parent-child relationships, they never explicitly evaluated these relationships as negative. For example, Jessica described that her relationship with her mom “was kind of distant” and she would be limited in sharing “the deeper stuff, the struggles.” (P10, female, 20)
Similarly, Adam recalled his relationship with his father, remembering “our dad didn’t really play a big role in my life” but also stated how “our mom was super supportive and she was always there to listen…everything else was relatively positive.” (P01, male, 23)

Participants recalled positive overall evaluations of their upbringing, including religious and non-religious aspects. Diana stated that “when I was younger, it was pretty…good….I did view it as wholesome and complete.” (P04, female, 22) Other participants also stated that “[family life] was good” (P11, female, 20) and that “we were pretty close as a family…we did a lot of things together…and they were pretty involved in our childhood.” (P13, male, 21) Additionally, Felicity also described her early upbringing as “very positive….it was a loving home.” (P06, female, 23)

**Evaluations of early upbringing.** When asked about their early socialization, participants chose to report on different age periods ranging from early childhood through to the start of their post-secondary education. Four major themes were identified regarding how young adults evaluated their earlier upbringings: internal disagreement, overt disagreement, unconsidered acceptance and acceptance of upbringing. These evaluations of their earlier upbringing reflect evaluations not only of the content of their religious upbringing, but also of the Christian community and social influences that are associated with their Christian upbringing. Table 1 will be an overview of all the themes and sub-themes pertaining to evaluations of early upbringing.

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<th>Table 1. Overview of Evaluations of Early Upbringing</th>
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<td><strong>Themes</strong></td>
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<td><em>Internal disagreement (n=12)</em></td>
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<td><em>Overt disagreement (n=10)</em></td>
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<td><em>Unconsidered acceptance (n=15)</em></td>
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<td><strong>Sub-themes</strong></td>
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<td>• Ambivalence (n=12)</td>
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<td>o Compliance without acceptance (n=8)</td>
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Internal disagreement. The majority of the participants described experiencing some form of internal disagreement regarding their religious upbringing earlier in life. These participants indicated that they had felt some disagreements about their religious upbringing but had not expressed these explicitly. Participants described a range and intensity of disagreement regarding various aspects of their religious upbringing. Several participants expressed complete disagreement with the restrictions imposed upon them earlier in life. For example, as Noelle described “there was a time where I was really bitter and against the church…it ruined me, like…I could’ve had all these cool experiences and like…growing up in a Christian home, kind of like…wrecked that” (P14, female, 22). However, other participants expressed mild internal disagreement towards some of the derivative values associated with fundamentalist Christian upbringing including Grace who noted:

The group that I… grew up with… women have a submissive role…I didn’t like that. I noticed that fairly early and wasn’t keen that the only roles for me growing up would be Sunday school or baking cookies… that was always something that needleed at me. (P07, female, 24)

Other participants expressed a similar level of mild internal disagreement, but attributed this disagreement to social or emotional reasons, rather than disagreement with the values or doctrinal aspects of their religious upbringing, such as core beliefs. Many participants disliked attending church or fellowship due to the inability to form meaningful friendships or due to the lack of a welcoming community. As Barry explained, “They’ve always wanted me to connect… at the time, I still remember I didn’t want to go…because I didn’t sense community at my church” (P02, male, 23). When confronted about the beginnings of a romantic relationship with a non-Christian, Felicity described that “there was some negative emotion played in there” even
though she wasn’t “mad or angry” it was more of just a “negative feeling” (P06, female, 23). All of these participants explained this dislike or disagreement of various aspects of their earlier upbringing through clearly negative emotions they recall experiencing, though these were never made explicit to any of their peers or family members.

*Ambivalence.* Ambivalence was also a theme expressed by the majority of the participants regarding the internal disagreement they felt during their early upbringing. Ambivalence was also not expressed explicitly or vocalized, but was explained as questioning, uncertainty or mixed feelings towards various aspects of their Christian upbringing.

One of the main indicators of ambivalence were reports of questioning or doubting certain aspects of their Christian upbringing, including the core content of Christianity. Some of these doubts and questions regarding the core content of Christianity included belief in whether God existed or God’s will. Regarding some of the internal ambivalence she felt earlier in her upbringing, Christine described “I didn’t really understand, why do we still have to do good things? Or…forgive other people? …Our salvation…is already free”. Jessica also expressed “when my parents separated, like why did God let that happen? …My mom taught me that, He was supposed to be our provider…then why is this stuff happening?” (P03, female, 20)

Participants also described ambivalence they felt regarding derivative values in their early upbringing. As Noelle asserted:

I questioned why should I respect someone because they’re older than me? Like…shouldn’t they have earned my respect?...Then in high school, I sort of began thinking more about issues like abortion and gay marriage and I just hated that…what I believed in excluded so many people…so that’s where I really began to struggle. (P14, female, 24)

Isabelle also described the topic of homosexuality as “something that I definitely wrestled with for a while”. She questioned “are these people, like made by God this way? Or …is this a
choice? Is this not biological? And...are these people condemned if they are homosexual?” (P09, female, 18) Rather than expressing outright disagreement or solely negative emotions, these participants expressed the questions and struggles they experienced with their core or derivative values. These examples illustrate the beginning of participants’ engagement with emerging contradictions.

Participants also expressed ambivalence regarding specific religious practices and the reasons and meanings for these practices. Rather than agreeing or disagreeing with these practices, participants experienced mixed feelings when discussing church attendance and reading the Bible in their early upbringing. Noelle expressed that she “constantly felt guilty because I felt like I didn’t read the Bible enough...I thought it was boring...that was a challenge”. Pam also found that “devotions...were really repetitive....I would kind [of] make jokes and stuff”. (P14, female, 24) Regarding family worship, Barry also identified: sometimes I [had] mixed feelings just because I’m like, I don’t really want to do it”. (P02, male, 23)

**Compliance without acceptance.** Some young adults expressed experiencing compliance without acceptance, which is defined by adherence to religious beliefs, practices and values that were presented to them externally, while experiencing disagreement or ambivalence internally. An example of compliance without acceptance was explained by Pam, regarding not taking the Lord’s name in vain and not using cuss words. As she described, “I felt like it was a little bit overbearing to get caught up about someone’s language, so that’s something that I didn’t’ really like ...following as much”. (P16, female, 23) As evidenced by this quotation, she did not like having to monitor her language and experienced some mild disagreement, but continued to language expected of her in public situations regardless. Another example of compliance without acceptance included participation in religious practices, when Pam also expressed that she found
youth group “really cliquey… [she] didn’t always feel like [she] really wanted to go but was still really encouraged to go every week that it was available so…[she] went as much as she could”.

(P16, female, 23) Another participant, Grace, also echoed this behaviour and thought process towards religious practices, when she stated:

I didn't like wearing a hat to church so going to church every Sunday wasn't always my favourite thing. uhh... I also didn't like church conferences because they were...it was a bunch of...old men....sitting at the front talking and... yeah, you had to sit still and not fidget and sing...the hymns that you didn't like very much...or the hymns were kind of boring. Uhh...but for the most part, like I, went with it but that was...that was what you did. (P07, female, 24)

**Overt disagreement.** At the same time, the majority of participants exhibited some form of overt disagreement earlier in their upbringing in which they decided to act on or express their felt contradictions in social interactions. One form of this overt disagreement was behavioural; participants engaged in behaviours that were viewed as disobedient, or contradicted the values and expectations upheld by one’s parents and the Christian community. Noelle explained: “when I was 16, I started dating a guy who was an atheist”. She continued:

I think I learned towards dating him because his upbringing and his views were so like, radically different than mine that I found that really appealing, even though I didn’t realize that was part of the attraction at the time…it was not a great relationship but I think it was definitely a part of…my outlet of…this rebellion, and I was…dissenting from the views of the church…and that was kind of what led me to…realize that there was more in this world than just like this Christian perspective. (P14, female, 24)

A similar found of rebellion and overt disagreement was demonstrated by Diana. She stated:

I kind of did it in a behavioural way, especially in the summer leading up to my first year of university. I was disobeying the rules a lot and I was really defiant I’d say. And …we were having sex and they didn’t like it and it was like, this big thing and there was a lot of yelling that summer. (P04, female, 22)

Additionally, participants exhibited overt disagreement by voicing their disagreements to their parents. These overt disagreements were often related to feelings of unfairness or anger
regarding religiously prescribed corporal punishment and discipline. One participant, Noelle, noted that she “had always been spanked and once I was old enough to realize that was bad…I would tell my parents you can’t do that! That’s bad…it would just make me angry.” (P14, female, 24) Similarly, Grace said “I can’t say I liked it…I remember feeling kind of a hot surge of anger… [and saying] they’re doing it, why is it okay with them?” (P07, female, 24) Most participants had expressed similar feelings of anger or unfairness regarding spanking and other common disciplinary practices in their early upbringing. One participant, Diana instigated conversations with her parents about derivative values such as abortion and feminism which she had learned about in school, when she “expressed it sometimes” but “there was no point, like talking to a wall”. (P04, female, 22)

Participants also expressed discontentment with religious practices, including church attendance. Regarding Bible study, Isabelle reported “I was bored out of my mind. I was so tired.” (P09, female, 18) Isabelle also said “but my mom wanted me to keep going, but she knew. I would tell her and she understood, so there wasn’t as much…pressure to go.” (P09, female, 18) Additionally, some participants also expressed some discontentment regarding practices that were prevalent in the religious community that were based on religious beliefs, including refraining from participation in Halloween festivities. Christine expressed that she was “kind of mad and all of the other kids got candy” (P03, female, 20) on Halloween. However, later on, she described that “my parents…would start taking us out and we would do something else on Halloween….so it wasn’t as bad”. (P03, female, 20). In these instances, overt disagreement led to some parental change or compromise that benefited the participant, indicating the children’s agency in voicing their concerns.
**Unconsidered acceptance.** When asked about participants’ evaluations of their early religious upbringing, almost all participants expressed unconsidered acceptance at some point in time, in addition to previously described forms of disagreement. Unconsidered acceptance pertained to beliefs, values or practices that participants acquired without awareness by participation in cultural routines or passive exposure to messages in their environments. Most participants expressed that these religious beliefs, values and practices had become a part of their lives and they had not even thought to question them or think about them more deeply until later in life. For instance, Adam expressed that “it was something that I did and it was something that I knew I was supposed to do. I think… I went just because it was part of life”. (P03, female, 20).

Adam also indicated that these values, beliefs and practices were “built into me and my younger brother and …something that we kind of make routine in our lives, even to this day.” (P01, male, 23) These comments indicate the act of learning and accepting through doing, rather than acceptance following a period of critical thinking or deeper consideration.

Most participants reported that their acceptance was a result of not questioning and feeling that their existing beliefs, values and practices seemed “natural” and appropriate. Diana reported that “I guess I didn’t really mind it” and that “honestly looking back… I didn’t know any better.” (P04, female, 22) Similarly, Felicity stated “I’m more of a rule follower… I don’t really question it too much.” (P06, female, 23) Mike also expressed “I think I didn’t really think about this stuff. I didn’t really think about what was wrong or right until I grew older”. (P13, male, 21)

Another participant, Kristy, indicated that she had experienced unconsidered acceptance for a long period of time in her early upbringing, prior to being exposed to catalyzing influences outside of the Christian community. As she stated in the interview:

I mean I might have met someone who was from a different faith but I met someone who was Jewish in grade 11 and that was the first time I know for sure I met someone who
was a different faith and that was just strange to me, because I almost felt I realized I lived in a bubble. I didn’t know anyone was different. I was really missing out on a lot of interesting other people. (P11, female, 20)

As described, exclusive exposure to the Christian community and Christian peers limited opportunities to be confronted with alternative values and practices in society that would pose contradictions. These participants’ reported experiences demonstrate that acceptance can be a result of practice and habit. Participants can be accepting of their religion and religious upbringing without reflection or critical thinking. Perhaps, as demonstrated by Holly’s description of a lack of exposure to those outside of her religious community, external influences are important catalysts in developing questioning or promoting engagement with contradictions about religion and religious upbringing.

**Acceptance of upbringing.** While there may have been aspects of participant’s religious upbringing with which they disagreed or had not yet consciously accepted, all participants expressed simultaneous conscious acceptance of at least some aspects of their religious upbringing. Participants expressed initial agreement with the content of Christianity, including beliefs, values, practices and derivative values. For instance, Noelle said “I was like…drinking’s bad, dancing’s bad, swearing’s bad. Uhh…gay marriage is bad, abortion…like all these things that were bad and like dishonouring to God or whatever.” (P14, female, 24) Regarding religious beliefs, Pam also voiced “I accepted them for sure…I felt like they were an important part of everyday life because…they were backed up by reason”. (P16, female, 23) Similarly, Diana expressed that “youth group was a big one…I really enjoyed it”. (P04, female, 22)

Additionally, participants expressed their acceptance of religious practices primarily for social reasons. Felicity said:

I enjoyed going to church. I never really remember putting up a fight when I was a kid and…same with the worship assemblies and devotions. We were always so excited to
have to guess the key verse… I never put up a negative front to any of that. I think, too, my friends were at church so that influenced my wanting to go. (P06, female, 23)

Grace also described “yeah, you wanted to go to youth groups because that’s where your friends were going to be… because there was pizza or something”. (P07, female, 24) Isabelle similarly explained:

Youth group was awesome. It was a lot of fun. I looked forward to it. It was every Wednesday night, just like the meetings and we would do events once a month and I made some really good friends there. It was a good time. (P09, female, 18)

Participants also expressed that acceptance of their upbringing was not related to the practices themselves; instead, they attributed acceptance to their dispositions or a lack of personal importance placed on these values or practices. For example, Grace explained “I kind of, wasn’t really into a music for a long time so I didn’t really care” (P07, female, 24), regarding the restrictions her parents placed on secular music. Similarly, Adam described that he was restricted from attending parties at swimming pools and school dances due to the possibility of lust. He responded to this by saying “I knew myself and I knew I was self-controlled…I didn’t really think of that kind of stuff”. (P01, male, 23)

Participants also expressed that corporal punishment they received was fair or justified. For example, Olivia stated:

I wasn’t disciplined very often so I didn’t really have a negative view. It was kind of like if… it was happening to me and I knew that I probably deserved… it I guess, for a lack of better term. But… it wasn’t something that I thought they were punishing you and they shouldn’t be punishing me. (P15, female, 22)

Other participants also echoed similar thoughts including Pam who said that “I felt they were strict but I felt I had done something wrong to deserve the consequences.” (P16, female, 23) Overall, these participants indicated conscious acceptance of at least some aspects of their
religious upbringing through these positive evaluations of their early upbringing, for both social and doctrinal reasons.

**Participants’ Conceptions of Their Present Status of Internalization**

The participants’ conceptions of their present status of religious internalization referred to their reported current religious identification; acceptance of doctrinal aspects including beliefs, values and practices; and intentions and social components pertaining to these beliefs, values and practices. Four main themes that were found: *continuity and acceptance of aspects of religion; reinterpreted aspects of religion; contending or unresolved aspects of religion* and *rejected aspects of religion*. Table 2 will provide an overview for all the themes regarding conceptions of present status of internalization.

Table 2. *Overview of Participants’ Conceptions of Their Present Status of Internalization*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Number of participants</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td><em>Continuity or acceptance of aspects of religion</em></td>
<td>n=15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reinterpreted aspects of religion</td>
<td>n=12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contending or unresolved aspects of religion</td>
<td>n=11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rejected aspects of religion</td>
<td>n=5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Continuity or acceptance of aspects of religion.** Almost all the young adults reported continuity or acceptance of at least some aspects of religion. Fourteen of these participants reported that they currently identified as religious or Christian, although these identifications were more nuanced and complex than straightforward acceptance. Mike said “I would say I would consider myself religious just because… I am a professing believer”. (P13, male, 21)

Kristy explained:

> I know there’s a lot of connotations that go around religion and being religious…I guess Christianity is a religion but…for me it’s more than just…things I do …or practices…things that I do like, to make myself feel better. For me, it’s more a
relationship with God and...I guess relationship with God...it’s like my whole life...it’s like who I am. (P11, female, 20)

Similarly, when asked what he would say if someone asked if he was religious, Barry stated:

I would say I’m a Christ follower, I...believe in God. I believe that Jesus Christ came down to the earth to save my sins. He died for me and saved my sins...with that, I am in perfect union with Him, I’m a child of God...and you know with that love and that unconditional love being...presented before me, it allows me to show this kind of love to other people, as well. (P02, male, 23)

Participants also described internalization of the core theology of Christianity. They described belief in Biblical beliefs and values, in addition to extensive continued participation in religious practices. Adam described: “things like praying before meals and praying for others” as one of the primary examples. (P01, male, 23) He also discussed:

Trying to engage in...spiritual discussion whenever I can and inviting friends out to church whenever I can. Umm...still keeping up with...reading my Bible, so I kind of do it in the mornings when I’m eating breakfast...still going to church every Sunday. Actually. I go to two churches on Sundays...still going to church and singing songs, listening to sermons. Fellowship too when I can make it out too on Sunday nights, just kind of meeting up with other Christians my age and doing Bible studies or dinners or other kinds of socials...things like that. And also, volunteer and serve in the church a lot too in like kids ministries. (P01, male, 23)

Kristy also stated that “I still go to church, I still go to fellowship. I still hold Christian values...it’s still very much a part of my life”. Similarly, Lisa described “reading my Bible, going to church and praying. Those are like three big things...and being more connected with people at the church”. (P11, female, 20) Mike also explained:

So...praying just in general, reading the Bible...going to church...I think those are the main things...A lot of the things my parents taught me like good things and bad things...I still see [as] good things to do and a lot of the bad things that they told were bad are still...bad. (P13, male, 21)

In addition to continuance or acceptance of the doctrinal aspects of Christianity, some participants also described continued acceptance of some of the social benefits associated with their religious upbringing. Adam described how “a lot of things that you learn from church...are
generally very positive and good morals…it benefits humanity”. (P01, male, 23) Similarly, Barry expressed that “I’ve changed as an individual…the discipline part had really helped me…to get myself…involved in church… that’s a blessing”. (P02, male, 23)

Lastly, participants also described continuance or acceptance of aspects of their religion through acceptance and positive evaluations of their earlier religious upbringing. When asked about her current views towards her religious upbringing, Isabelle simply replied “I view it well.” (P09, female, 18) Olivia described how “I really liked how we were a family unit and how [my parents] incorporated into the family unit…it was like all intertwined”. (P15, female, 22) Mike also expressed:

I definitely see the value in a lot of what they did…you know, making sure that I understood a lot of things. Umm, you know even going to a Christian school I never really appreciated that you know…I guess, looking back in retrospect, a lot of things that I was taught were very useful. (P13, male, 21)

**Reinterpreted aspects of religion.** Concurrently, the majority of participants reported that they had reinterpreted various aspects of the religion they were raised with, including beliefs, values and practices. Participants described reinterpreting these aspects of religion for different reasons, including creative adaptation to fit their own needs and lifestyles or reinterpretations due to self-reflection and critical thinking about their religion and religious upbringing. The primary way which participants described reinterpreting their religion was through redefining the meanings underlying their existing beliefs, values and practices. Although their behaviours and beliefs did not necessarily change in significant or measurable ways, the intentions and meanings behind their current religious identification and actions were novel and as a result of significant critical thinking. Barry explained that although he disliked family worship when he was younger, he is “beginning to understand more as I’m growing older.” He also added that his “perspective had changed [from] the habit of doing this not just for the sake
of doing it but the reason why we’re doing it”. (P02, male, 23) Mike similarly asserted that
church was now “more something that I want to do…it’s not that same obligation.” (P13, male, 21) Regarding religious practices, Olivia also discussed that “all those things are really important but all those things are really important because of the motivation behind them…not just doing it because you’re told to.” (P15, female, 22) Although the participants continued to perform the same practices, the meanings and motivations behind these practices have now changed.

Participants who no longer identified as Christian also had reinvented religious practices that they were brought up with. Although prayer to the Christian God was no longer a part of Noelle’s life, she did mention that she “still kind of likes the idea of praying…like saying grace when I go home and…sometimes I’ll say it in my head…not particularly any god…giving thanks.” (P14, female, 24) Diana also explained that despite her rejection of religion and dislike of Christian connotations and meanings associated with certain holidays, she said that she “still…celebrates Christian holidays, but I don’t go to church on the holidays”. (P04, female, 22) These examples indicate how religious practices can continue to be a part of non-religious identifying participants’ lives, but with new interpretations and meanings.

Some participants also said that they were now more relaxed in their observance of certain religious practices. Previously, practices such as church attendance or Sunday as a day of rest would have been a strict rule participants adhered to, but there was now reinterpretation and increased flexibility regarding whether these rules were followed. Although Christine still identified as a Christian with a strong faith, she stated that: “I wouldn’t say I’m as involved in fellowship. Like I go to it, but not all the time”. (P03, female, 20) When probed about the reasoning behind this change, she mentioned social reasons for this reinterpretation, stating: “I’m not that invested with the people.” (P03, female, 20) Isabelle also described less rigidity in her
religious practices. She explained: “I’ve been to church twice, but I should probably go more but I’m either back home in my hometown or I’ve got a midterm coming up and I’m studying or I went out too late on a Saturday night and I can’t get up…which is bad, but it happens.” (P09, female, 18) Pam also explained that her “personal devotions are pretty lacking…I just feel like it’s never something that natural to keep or maintain.” (P16, female, 23) As demonstrated by these examples, engagement in certain religious practices for the sake of following parental rules no longer occurred, and participants had reinterpreted their religious practices as flexible, rather than mandatory and necessary.

Some participants also described being more flexible and open minded to topics surrounding derivative values. Grace explained: “I don’t think I’ve shed that much. I think I’ve become more open minded towards certain things. I’m willing to embrace topics of conversation…that I wouldn’t have when I was younger.” (P07, female, 24) Regarding her current thoughts on the precept of predestination, Isabelle declared: “it’s okay to…looking around for answers. I’ve definitely…asked my pastor questions and …I’ve watched a couple Youtube videos even…debates between well-known Christian or well-known atheists or well-known scientists”. (P09, female, 18) While the participants’ identifications or status of internalization may not have changed, there are some minor reinterpretations of existing beliefs, values and practices as these young adults continue to explore and become more open minded.

**Contending or unresolved aspects of religion.** Despite continuity and acceptance or reinterpretation of certain religious aspects, many participants continued to grapple with various aspects of their religion that remained unresolved. Many of these contentions were related to their religious upbringing and the different ways that they wished they had been raised. Many of these contentions were a wish for parents to be more open to discussion when participants were
younger, particularly about topics outside of Christianity. Pam described there being an “assumption in terms of sexual education” and “wish[ed] there was more …room for discussion about that.” (P16, female, 23) She also added that there were some non-negotiable practices including eating at restaurants on Sunday, that she wished there had been more discussion about. She stated: “that should have been more discussed…just…being a little bit more open to discussing things rather than oh, that’s wrong.” (P16, female, 23) Mike also described wishing his religious upbringing had been more open and communicative. He stated:

One of the biggest things I wish was different was…a bit more freedom to explore instead of just being told what…was wrong, what was right, what values to hold,…why you should do this, stuff like that…one thing that I [would] change was…the intentions behind everything and explanation of why we do certain things. (P13, male, 21)

Christine also described experiencing ambivalence regarding religious practices growing up, particularly the lack of celebrating Halloween. She continued to experience “kind of mixed things…I definitely understand the reason behind not celebrating it…at the same time, you shouldn’t exactly…shut the door and…pretend it’s not going on.” (P03, female, 20) Although she does not experience disagreements with the derivative values themselves, she continues to contend with the lack of openness regarding non-religious practices in her earlier upbringing.

Several participants also stated that they wished they had been exposed to different religions by their parents. Holly said that “I wish that I would’ve known different religions…so I could see what other opinions are out there”. (P08, female, 24) Similarly, Isabelle stated “looking back…I almost wished that I was…taught about other religions as well…I didn’t know anything about Buddhism, Hinduism or being Muslim or Jewish or anything.” (P09, female, 18) Adam also mentioned that his feelings regarding the lack of openness regarding other religions and the need to pursue this knowledge himself. As he explained: “it is kind of very closed minded of them…I don’t recall on any other religion. It’s something more that I discovered on my own,
kind of reading books and …pursuing that knowledge myself later on in…university.” (P01, male, 23) These examples illustrate the contradictions that young adults continue to face, particularly regarding the lack of exposure and discussion surrounding the values and beliefs of secular society.

Some participants continued to struggle with contradictions regarding the derivative values that they were introduced to in their earlier upbringing. One of the largest derivative values of concern was sex before marriage. Pam said: “absolute abstinence is very something that…I am not really sure about…that’s something that I would probably question.” (P16, female, 23) Grace also expressed being “deeply divided on…sex outside marriage”. (P07, female, 24) She described this as a strong contention due to the consequences that would results. As she explained: “I would actually be removed from my church community, if they…knew what happened.” (P07, female, 24) She also described a continual struggle with objections to gay marriage, a derivative value that was contentious for some participants. She stated:

I still struggle with the idea of…gay marriage…’cause I don’t think it’s wrong but…I just don’t know what to think because deep down I learned that marriage was between a man and a woman and there’s verses in the Bible that say man lying with man is bad. So …that’s where I’m coming from but at the same time I’m thinking…how can two people loving each other be wrong? So…I’m deeply divided on that. (P07, female, 24)

Lastly, some of these contentions and unresolved questions were related to the content of Christianity itself, and the core beliefs and values of this religion. For instance, Lisa stressed: “there’s definitely…questions…what does this mean in the Bible, what does that mean, why did God decide to do this?” (P12, female, 20) Similarly, Holly also experienced similar questioning of the core beliefs and values of her religion. She explained: “I do have questions…the whole free will thing…why do bad things happen to some people and not others? …Why can’t other people pray and get better from cancer? That …kind of bothers me a lot….I would love answers
too, but I’ll never get them.” (P08, female, 24) These examples demonstrate how participants continued to engage with contradictions, uncertainties and ambiguities resulting from the transmitted products of their religious socialization and were actively in the process of making sense of these contradictions. In some instances, participants continue to question or struggle with these contradictions, or accept that the lack of a resolution regarding these contentions was a resolution in itself.

Rejected aspects of religion. Although most young adults in this sample continued to identify as Christian, some participants reported that they had rejected various aspects of religion. Two participants explicitly rejected identifying as a Christian, and had taken on new non-religious identifications. Diana stated: “I’m not religious at all. I’m completely non-atheist, non-denominational.” (P04, female, 22) Noelle also rejected identifying as a Christian, but explored the possibilities of identifying as agnostic or spiritual. She said:

I would say, I’m definitely not religious. I’m…open minded about it, I might be…agnostic. I think there might be some sort of higher power or god…but I don’t think it’s like the Christian God. I think maybe we just share the same god or that god is more of an idea or a feeling we all share. So definitely not religious but maybe a little bit spiritual in some senses? (P14, female, 24)

Both participants outlined that there was not a single turning point or event that led them to a sudden change; rather, it was a process of self-reflection and exploration that allowed them to reach their current identification as non-Christian. Noelle described this new religious identification as the outcome of a process of self-reflection and exploration and not due to any one any event or turning point. Noelle compared her religious upbringing to being “raised in this bubble”, where she described it to be “judgmental and…harmful”. She also added that she continued to disagree with her religious upbringing primarily because “it [didn’t] provide a lot of room for discussion…or self-discovery”. (P14, female, 24) Diana also shared a similar
experience, likening her journey to “a process of just trying to find my own way.” (P04, female, 22)

Other participants who still maintained a religious identification also described rejecting gender inequality and restrictive views on romantic relationships which were among the derivative values that were promoted during their religious upbringing. Grace emphasized that she wanted “to be able to have a relationship where I’m equal with my partner as opposed to there being a hierarchy”. Similarly, Holly also stated:

I’m pro-choice! I still consider myself to be Catholic and I don’t know if that’s acceptable. Also homosexuality… I have no problem with that… I think a lot of people do. Also, I don’t have a problem with living with someone before you’re married or sex before you’re married. I think that’s a little out of date. But I do still consider myself to be a part of this religion even though I don’t follow all these things a hundred percent. (P08, female, 24)

Some participants also described rejecting some of the behaviours associated with derivative values that they were brought up with. For example, Mike said “I just don’t have those restrictions on myself” (P13, male, 21) when referring to violent video games and secular music that were not permitted when he was younger. In another example, Grace described how at age 18 she read Harry Potter, a series of children’s novels that were largely accepted as promoting witchcraft amongst the Christian community, and found the experience as “[not] nearly as bad as they made it sound.” (P07, female, 24) Such examples suggest that individuals can exercise their own judgment in rejecting aspects of their religious socialization and still maintain for themselves a religious or a Christian identification that was different from those of their parents or community.

Sources of Change

Participants identified a large variety of sources that influenced them to change or reinterpret the outcomes of their religious socialization. These included the religious community,
media, peers, education, self-reflection and life events (refer to table 3). It was apparent that participants did not regard these sources as causing change in a direct linear manner; rather, they discussed the sources as indirect catalysts that provided opportunities for reinterpreting their religious beliefs, values and practices. Various experiences or situations may have exposed young adults to contradictory perspectives which provided the catalyst for thinking more critically about their religious identification and upbringing, which may in turn, lead to positive reinforcement, negative reinforcement, contention or innovative change in their values, practices or behaviours. It is important to note that these sources are not inclusive of parents or clergy members including pastors or ministers. Table 3 provides an overview of themes pertaining to sources of change.

Table 3. Overview of Sources of Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Sub-themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Religious community as positive personal influence (n=6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media * (n=16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings* (n=10)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Peers * (n=16)</td>
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<td>Self-reflection and personality* (n=11)</td>
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<td>Education * (n=10)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Life event * (n=5)</td>
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</tbody>
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*Influence of

**Religious community as positive personal influence.** Throughout the interviews, some participants described the Christian community as being a positive personal influence in their lives. These participants appreciated the social aspects of their religious upbringing and commented on the socioemotional benefits that their religious community brought them, rather than the benefits of doctrinal aspects of Christianity. Participants described the church
community as a support system which helped them feel reassured and comforted, especially in times of distress or struggle. As Holly described:

I liked having a religion and it was always something that was there for me. Whenever I was really stressed, I knew that I had a strong community and I always had a …God that I could turn to and feel comforted in a sense? …I really liked that I never felt alone. (P08, female, 24)

Isabelle echoed similar thoughts about feeling supported and how this support was demonstrated through positive and encouraging social interactions with fellow Christians:

When I’m surrounded by other Christians, it’s really great. I love the sense of community you get…and to talk about your upbringing and …hardship, if I’m feeling really low or …struggling to come to terms with something, but also when I’m happy and [having] a really great day. (P09, female, 18)

These perceptions of support from the Christian community, may have contributed to continual engagement with the Christian faith, and maintenance of a religious identification.

**Influence of media.** The media was also described as catalyzing influence for all of the participants and caused participants to think more critically about their existing perspectives and how their Christian identification could be viewed by secular society. Participants reported that Christian media, in particular, aided in reinforcing their existing identifications as Christians or their existing religious beliefs, values and practices. For example, as Adam explained:

I do follow the pages of some Christian celebrities and a lot of my friends Facebook post up Christian related things too. So I think stuff like that, when you see the stories of how God has helped them, I think it’s kind of…faith building for me. And it helps reinforce…my belief in God. (P01, male, 23)

Similarly, Jessica also expressed that “there’s also like Christian stuff [in the] media… they have…articles and resources online and ideas that help you…learn more about…Christianity or God and stuff which is like super helpful.” (P10, female, 20)
Secular media also had effects of reinforcing one’s Christian identification. Participants explained that exposure to secular media, which contained values and perspectives contradictory to those of Christianity, caused them to ultimately reflect on their Christian perspectives and construct new meanings that enabled them to defend their identifications as Christians. When discussing homosexuality and discourse surrounding LGBT rights in the media, Christine explained… “In most ways, it has definitely made me question more, I believe…it kind of makes me question. A lot of the things you see in the media I have to consciously side with. Do I agree with that, do I disagree, am I neutral?” (P03, female, 20) Ultimately, Christine’s exposure to discussion of LGBT rights in the media caused her to consciously choose to adopt the derivative values of the Christian community. As she explained, “I believe that being gay is a sin…but that doesn’t mean that…we can’t still live together and get along, right? … I do respect them and...hate the sin, not the sinner.” (P03, female, 20) Another participant, Lisa, also expressed holding closer to one’s identification after viewing the varying and opposing perspectives of secular media. She stated:

With our society becoming more accepting of everybody…So it doesn’t matter what religion you are, doesn’t matter your sexuality, doesn’t matter what you believe, we’re accepting. But because we’re so accepting of everything, you lose sight of what is right and what is wrong…there’s so many grey areas ‘cause everyone wants to accept everybody. But you can’t accept everybody. It’s just impossible…seeing society being like that, I would say that…I actually hold fast to God more. (P12, female, 20)

Most participants described that they had viewed negative portrayals of Christians in the media, which they believed were unfair or inaccurate. These feelings of being portrayed negatively influenced participants to think more critically about how Christians could still openly discuss and support their values and perspectives, particularly when secular society viewed these as discrepant and immoral. Felicity explained:
I think it’s hard because the church hasn’t really figured out the best way to become involved. Some churches…groups of Christians want to be…so forceful, like it happened in the past…like Crusaders forcing religion on people…As Christians, we need to figure out how we are taking our stand in society and what is appropriate…to approach any topic in general and how to be heard appropriately. (P06, female, 23)

In some instances, these portrayals of Christianity in the media also influenced participants into experiencing negative emotions, which indirectly caused participants to be less willing in disclosing their identifications as Christians. Grace explained:

I suppose it makes me feel like religion is a bit of a weakness. There’s that idea that…if you’re religious or you need God than there’s something…intrinsically wrong with you…it’s not something you want to necessarily share…I’ll catch myself saying that the religion I grew up with is my personal variety of crazy. It’s not necessarily crazy but the way society would determine, the various rules and restrictions I grew up with would be considered kind of crazy. (P07, female, 24)

Holly also explained how she felt the need to qualify her religious identification to others:

When someone says…are you religious? I say yes, but I’m not like those extreme people…I always …feel like I need to defend myself and be like, oh we’re not those extreme people who like…are trying to convert you and constantly shaming you and criticizing you, I’m not like that. So I feel like those people in the media give religious people a bad reputation, and are causing more problems. (P08, female, 24)

These participants reported critically examining their religious identification within secular society, illustrating the nature of media as a catalyzing influence on participants’ actions. Although their status of internalization is not necessarily changed, maintenance and continuity of their religious identification required active and effortful thought and contradiction regarding dissonant ideas in secular media.

**Influence of siblings.** Siblings were an important catalyzing influence on the current status of internalization for most young adults. Some participants commented that their siblings acted as role models for Christian behaviours and practices to model. Kristy described, “It was like looking up and seeing how she…was serious with her faith growing up, how she was involved in different activities…I think influenced me.” (P11, female, 20) Barry also described
that her sister’s mentor “[had] been helping her a lot in her walk…I see her beginning to grow maturely and [that’s] something that I would love to learn too as well…from her.” (P02, male, 23) In these examples, participants viewed their younger or older siblings, as positive models of Christian values and action.

Other participants described their siblings as peers with whom they could have meaningful conversations and share personal experiences which enabled to ask new questions and think more deeply about their own upbringing and current status of internalization. When discussing siblings who were not believers, Grace said:

I guess they’ve helped me know it’s okay to ask questions or not necessarily accept…what’s there. Like …them being the way they are haven’t made me want to leave my faith. I suppose I look at them and wonder, would it be simpler if I was like you? Uh…they’ve made me…I suppose what they’ve gone through has made me realize what the…church environment…what our family environment did to someone who wasn’t me…I see how things could have maybe been done differently. (P07, female, 24)

Adam also experienced similar thought-provoking conversations with his own non-believing sibling, which caused him to think more critically about his own beliefs. As he explained:

As we’re a lot older, we do have more…educated conversations and so we are able to discuss more spiritual matters…especially my older brother…he really questions a lot of the validity of the Bible and the genuineness of Christians…I think he has influenced me by challenging me and opening my mind a bit too because a lot of the times after discussion maybe I’ll search up a topic or search up one of his questions to see if there’s a better explanation. (P01, male, 23)

Additionally, the actions of participants’ siblings also catalyzed participants to question or more critically reflect on their own behaviours and practices, particularly when siblings’ values were different from their own. Holly explained:

She moved like out of the province…far away with her boyfriend…it was difficult for me, I guess? Because there was more like…this is unfair. I think in the sense that it was like, how can she be okay with it and I’m still undecided how I feel about it because I have this strong…like it’s ingrained in my mind that it’s wrong, but she’s more like…it’s not wrong…so it would bother me in that sense. (P08, female, 24)
Although these conversations and actions of siblings did not necessarily cause participants to change their own behaviours or identifications as Christians, they did influence them to think more deeply about their own beliefs, either reinforcing their existing status of internalization or posing more contradictions that caused participants to engage in thinking about differing perspectives.

**Influence of peers.** Peers were a significant catalyzing influence for all young adults and their conceptions of their current status of internalization. Both peers and significant others were reported to be influential in challenging or reinforcing participants’ thoughts and perspectives.

**Influence of peers.** Peers were the most frequently reported catalysts for changing or maintaining internalized religious beliefs and practices. Participants who continued to identify as Christian, identified Christian peers as influential in promoting the maintenance of this identification and its associated beliefs, values and practices. Many participants attributed this maintenance to the strong and positive relationships that were formed with Christian peers due to common interests and values. These shared values and experiences were well-described by Adam when he stated: “a lot of the times it’s when I’m interacting with other people around you in the church who also have similar upbringings and similar…experiences as I have and it’s kind of neat sometimes to share their faith, our faith and how we’ve been growing in the Lord”. (P01, male, 23)

As a result of shared belief and value systems, young adults who identified as Christian reported that they respected and valued the opinions of their Christian peers more than non-Christian peers, and felt that these relationships strengthened or reinforced their own identification as Christian or religious beliefs, values and practices. For instance, Barry explained:
Predominantly, my friends are all Christian. So a lot of them are more spiritually mature than me and have a lot more wisdom… I would like to learn from them and as an opportunity where I can even apply it in my life so… I would say… they have influenced me heavily…and some of them I even look up to. (P02, male, 23)

Felicity also described the importance of Christian peers in the maintenance of her faith and values. She described:

I made sure once I left elementary school that I kept Christian close friends and because I went to that… group in high school, I made quite a few Christian friends and I would say, half of my high school friend group is Christian. So that influenced me in keeping my faith. And then I went to a Christian university, so… that kept me grounded in morals, especially living away from home. (P06, female, 23)

Participants found that building relationships with Christian peers encouraged the acceptance of Christian beliefs, values and practices. These relationships with fellow Christians were viewed as more important and influential on their behaviours and decisions than relationships with non-Christian peers. For example, Mike described:

A majority of the friends I have are professing believers but the ones that aren’t… I can see the differences of what we believe and you know… what we’re striving for I guess. We have different goals, kind of thing… In terms of influence, I think my Christian friends have… more influence on me. … When they tell me stuff, when they say things… when they tell me something I’ve never heard of… maybe they tell me something that I did wrong… their words bear more weight. (P13, male, 21)

Some participants also reported that when Christian peers challenged their doctrinal interpretations of Christianity and what it meant to identify as a Christian; their influence was often beneficial to their faith. For example, Olivia found that being a part of a Christian fellowship on campus challenged some of her Christian values and beliefs, but these challenges and differences ultimately led to stronger understandings of what it meant to identify as a Christian. As she described:

Being more involved… really influenced my… beliefs? There was the over-arching same belief and there’s been a couple of smaller doctrinal things that I kind of really disagreed with and was challenged by… and just realized we’re not on the same page that way. So I think it’s really helped me further define my understanding of what it means to be a
Christian and the Gospel… and like sharing your beliefs…so I think [Christian fellowship] has been huge in influencing me. We would never have been challenged on those different points because it maybe would have never actually had those points brought to my attention. (P15, female, 22)

Non-Christian peers also exposed participants to new perspectives and values that influenced young adults into thinking more critically about their identifications as Christians, and status of internalization. For instance, in an incident at university, Pam described:

I was talking…with my roommate in first year about religion and I was trying to explain…why I would date people of the same faith. And she was asking me…”oh but…that’s kind of being closed minded, isn’t it? Like not wanting to date people in like other religions?” And I was trying to explain the difference and conversations like that, with other people…So I feel like tin the conversations I had that kind of like made me…forced me…to actually… think deeper about what I believed. (P16, female, 23)

Isabelle also commented on being challenged by her non-Christian peers when they questioned her beliefs and derivative values. As she explained:

I find that challenging sometimes when they’d ask questions about why…do bad things happen to good people? So like if God’s so great, why does he let all these wars and genocides occur? Why does God let these earthquakes happen and like, kill, millions of innocent children, for example? …I wouldn’t say it’s just challenging for me, I’d say it’s challenging for the whole Christian community and it’s the kind of the same question as like how does God view homosexuals or does God choose us or do we choose God? (P09, female, 18)

These questions and challenges non-Christian peers did not necessarily directly influence the perspectives and belief system of Christian-identifying participants. Instead, these challenges led participants to critically think about their beliefs and further engage with potential contradictions.

Some participants who identified as Christians reported that they perceived that religion was a barrier in forming relationship with peers who did not share their religious beliefs. Isabelle described that being a Christian in North American sometimes had a “social outcast…feel to it”, and was a barrier to forming relationships with her fellow dorm-mates. (P09, female, 18)

Participants also avoided discussing religion or controversial topics that would lead to their disclosure of their own religious views. Lisa described certain experiences when “they would
even ask me hey, what are you doing tonight and I’m like oh I’m busy, I have a meeting when I’m going to fellowship or even when I’m going to small group”. (P12, female, 20) Participants appeared to understand how their religious identification could be viewed as being in opposition to mainstream society, which served as a catalyst for further reflection or modification in their behaviour so they could be viewed more favourably or be more accepted by their peers.

One participant who no longer identified as Christians, found that Christian peers influenced her by alienating her further from Christianity due to their discrepant value systems. Diana found that “those peers have…helped me push away from religion” because they “weren’t very nice [and] were pretty judgmental.” (P04, female, 22) Another non-religious identifying participant found that finding a community of non-Christian peers helped rebuild and become accepting of her new identification after leaving her Christian community. As Noelle explained:

I met my boyfriend who is atheist…and he is actually part of this, group of friends that I had known…I think that was a huge part of just like, coming to terms with it. Like I no longer have this bitterness because…another group of people that I was with that was like my new community. (P14, female, 24)

These examples illustrate the importance of non-familial peers in indirectly reinforcing or instigating changes in internalized religious beliefs, values or practices.

**Influence of significant others.** Of the 4 participants who reported having a long-term relationship with a significant other, all said that their partner had an influence on their current status of religious internalization. Some significant others also identified as Christian helped reinforce their current identifications as Christians, but also served as a catalyst for reinterpreting their religious beliefs, values and practices. Felicity explained her relationship her husband ad his impact when she stated:

So it makes me think more grey on different topics. Like bringing up questions on…well, God…if God is so merciful and he’s judging, how can he send all these people to hell when we maybe…the whole predestination versus pre-will, he’ll bring up and right now
God is just…He figures it out and that’s enough for me. But for him, he’s more of a deeper thinker and I’ve learned from that so he brings up those questions, so we’re able to grow in faith together, but he definitely brings up questions that I could have never thought on my own. (P06, female, 23)

She also explained:

Now that I’m married…just having the other family dynamic being added, it can definitely change your view when you’re with your family, you’ve contained views but when you’re exposed to a different family and become part of that family and there’s a certain shift as well…just the way I’m thinking…or just different ideas…[I think] that there are different views of being a Christian that might be different from another Christian home and I Think…just going through that together now with my relationship with my husband is, just another journey in general. (P06, female, 23)

Significant others who identified as non-Christsians presented different perspectives and questions that challenged the participants to think more critically about their beliefs. Holly described her boyfriend and his impact on her contradictions. She stated:

Like one time he asked me... if I really believe like, God has a plan for everyone? Like we have no choice…we don’t have to worry about things because He has a plan for you or if you believe in free will and your own choices do matter. And I find that really interesting. And I don’t know how to answer that. I mean I told my mom that and she’s like oh yeah, everyone…God has a plan for everyone. And I’m like yeah, but why do certain people get cancer and babies are sick and dying and what about their plan? Is that part of it? And we started …thinking about it more and maybe we have a plan but …it’s very hard to understand the concept for me. Like we have a plan but then we are able to affect it and all other people affect it and our choices…but the cancer and sick people and accidents like that, I don’t have all the answers. (P08, female, 24)

These examples illustrate the impact significant others have on participants’ thoughts, whether they choose to engage in contradictions, and what contradictions may emerge.

**Influence of education.** Education, particularly attending post-secondary education, was a notable influence for the majority of participants (n=10). Some participants reported that university exposed them to different world-views than those with which they were raised and this promoted self-reflection and critical thinking. Elaine discussed her exposure to people with different lifestyles at university, and how that helped reinforce her own beliefs by recognizing the benefits of her own religious identification and lifestyle. She explained:
One thing that I was influenced by university [was]…seeing what certain lifestyles can do to you…or seeing…how people’s lifestyles had unfolded…I remember meeting a philosophy student in a philosophy class and he was really into philosophy. Like…what is the meaning and what is the purpose…from a non-religious view. And I remember just thinking how bitter he was and how cynical…that was just sad to me because…he couldn’t find the meaning of life or happiness or joy but he couldn’t see that he was missing that because he was looking so hard… (P05, female, 23)

A participant who identified as non-Christian, Diana, also explained the promotion of deeper thinking about her religious identification. She asserted:

Religion became increasingly associated with hatred and intolerance and…since I’m…such an advocate of like women’s rights and pro-choice and …affirmative action and…equal pay and all this other stuff and all these very liberal beliefs…it especially drove me to that end. And university is definitely an environment that definitely fosters that kind of thinking, that critical thinking…So things like the more educated I become, the further apart my beliefs are. (P04, female, 22)

However, in addition to exposure to non-Christian perspectives at post-secondary education, participants were also exposed to differing Christian perspectives that both challenged and reinforced their current status of internalization. Jessica referenced her exposure to different types of Christians at university when she stated:

So I’m Chinese, so like Christians in the Chinese culture are very conservative…but then if I meet a Caucasian who is more European Christian or like an Indian Christian…they still believe in the same thing you do but they might be a bit more liberal or they might have a different stance on this and you’re like, oh it’s not wrong but that’s not what I believe in so you become more open minded to it, like oh, I never thought about that verse in the Bible that way and that’s basically based off your culture and your teachings. (P10, female, 20)

One participant also explained how university provided an opportunity to engage in certain subject matter that would be atypical of one’s Christian upbringing. Noelle, who currently identified as non-religious, explained that “some of the areas I read….about performativity and all these different gender theories…my Christian upbringing wouldn’t have allowed for that.” (P14, female, 24) This example illustrates the exposure to secular perspectives
post-secondary brought that promoted new ways of thinking or perhaps, introduced new contradictions that led to a non-religious identification.

**Influence of self-reflection.** Many participants attributed their current identification and status of internalization to their personality or own decision of personal pursuit after a period of self-reflection. Although participants largely identified as Christian, most participants identified that they had critically re-evaluated their faith, and had made a conscious decision to continue identifying as a Christian. Participants also explained that they needed to define the Christian faith as their own rather than just the faith of their parents. Jessica stated: “Yeah, I grew up in church my whole life but like, am I really going to dedicate my whole life to this or…have a choice to do something else?” (P10, female, 20) Similarly, Pam said: “when I went to university, my faith was challenged more and I had to actually articulate what I thought and actually decide…if it was something I still thought or something that I had always known and accepted”. (P16, female, 23) Kristy expressed similar thoughts: “As I grew older…and took my faith more seriously, my faith became more something of my own and not just my parents”. (P11, female, 20) Barry also described a similar experience when discussing his own personal pursuit of Christianity. He explained:

> It changes when you take ownership of your own faith and I think that was more prevalent when I stepped into university…you basically have this freedom to do basically what you want. You don’t you’re your parents telling you to do things anymore…you’re an adult too, right? So…I think, with that it’s very easy to you know, continue with your faith or walk away from it. (P02, male, 23)

These examples illustrate the participants’ deliberate and conscious decisions to continue identifying as a Christian after a period of self-reflection and critical thinking.

Participants who no longer identified as a Christian also experienced a period of self-reflection and critical thinking about their non-religious identification. Diana and Noelle both
discussed a period of time where they were uncomfortable with their ambivalence and
disagreement with Christianity. They both required a period of self-reflection in order to come to
terms with identifying as a non-Christian. Diana explained:

There was a specific time where I was like I don’t like Christianity but I don’t like the
idea of no religion. So I remember I was looking into some different ones and like
religion shopping almost…I think I was too…attached to the idea of like, believing in
something. I was too scared of the idea of atheism…I moved away from that obviously
and now I’m more comfortable with just having no religion. (P04, female, 22)

Similarly, Noelle expressed her struggle with coming to terms with a non-Christian
identification. She said:

I was pretty angsty and I think a lot of the angst was because deep down I didn’t really
agree with it. But I wanted to so badly because all my friends are Christians, my whole
life…everyone was a Christian. So I was trying to…somehow come to ter-
ms with it? (P14, female, 24)

Both participants who identified explicitly as non-Christian also experienced a period of self-
reflection and critical thinking in order to accept that they now disagreed with Christianity.

**Influence of life event.** Significant life events such as marriage or a death of a loved one
in the family influenced several participants through promoting critical reflection of one’s
present status of internalization. For 2 participants, deaths in the family were very critical in
causing questioning and ambivalence regarding their beliefs. The death of Diana’s grandfather
was a critical moment that led her to deeply question her Christian upbringing and beliefs. As
she recalled:

My grandfather had become sick in the hospital. I think…it was the first time I actually
prayed…So I did and then it didn’t work…he still passed. And I think after that, I was
like why even is this? What’s the point of this? …I started to really look into it for
myself, question it…and then I think that I was getting…a more negatively coloured view
of religion itself. (P04, female, 22)
The death of Christine’s mom also triggered similar patterns of questioning. She explained “that was the around the time that …my mom died. It was like…God…why is this happening?...I didn’t really understand…why He let that happen”. (P03, female, 20)

Additionally, typical struggles and difficulties in participants’ lives also triggered further questioning about their present status of internalization and identification as a Christian. Jessica used the analogy of a “dry season” in her explanation of ebbs and flows in her experiences as a Christian. She stated: “when I’m struggling with something…I always question what God is doing, if He’s really there…where you kind of question…what your purpose is”. (P10, female, 20) Other participants including Holly echoed similar questioning and thoughts “when something goes wrong in your life”. (P08, female, 24) These examples illustrate how significant life events can act as a catalyzing influence for periods of questioning and critical thinking regarding their present status of internalization and beliefs, values or practices.

Discussion

This study makes theoretical and empirical contributions to the existing body of literature on religious socialization and internalization. In contrast to existing unidirectional models of the socialization process (Bader & Desmond, 2006; Bengtson, Copen, Putney & Silverstein, 2009; Van de Pol & Van Tubergen, 2013; Vermeer, Janssen & Scheepers, 2012), this study adopts a dialectical model of internalization (Kuczynski & Knafo, 2014) that considers children to be active agents in the religious socialization and internalization processes. Empirically, the study highlighted the nature of young adults’ interpretive processes in the reworking of their socialization experiences and on their perceptions of change in their religious internalization. The study also contributes to knowledge regarding young adults’ perceptions of the sources of change in their internalization processes. These sources were interpreted as catalyzing influences
that promote self-reflection and introduce conflicting and new perspectives, but do not necessarily cause direct changes in the process of internalization. This section will discuss how participants enact their active agency through three main ways: their ability to challenge and reinterpret parental religious messages, their construction of acceptance, and their ability to interpret messages from their ecology of models. Through viewing young adults as active agents in a dialectical lens, this study will provide new insights on the interpretive processes young adults engage in during their religious socialization and internalization.

The findings regarding young adults’ interpretations of their early socialization experiences and present status of their religious beliefs and practices are consistent with dialectical perspectives that emphasize children’s agency in constructing their own internalized working models (Kuczynski, Marshall & Schell, 1997; Kuczynski & De Mol, 2015). The interviews indicated that rather than passively accepting parental messages and socialization efforts, children engaged in active processes of evaluation, interpretation, selection, rejection, reconstruction and modification of these parental messages. Even though the majority of participants maintained a Christian identification and provided evidence of continuity, this continuity also showed evidence of novelty and change.

In contrast to existing research that focuses on parental actions as socializing agents, this study provides a restorative balance by focusing on what children do as agents in the internalization process, even during early upbringing. Children act as interpretive agents as evidenced by themes of internal disagreement, ambivalence, compliance without acceptance and overt disagreement. These processes indicate that even during early upbringing, parental messages and religious models were being challenged or evaluated at a conscious level. While the nature of these conflicting emotions or thoughts differed, participants frequently recollected
internal conflict, indicating active agency in the religious socialization process, through the interpretation and evaluation of religious models they were presented with from an early age. These apparent processes challenge existing assumptions and predictor models that children simply adopt or internalize parental religious messages and behaviours (Erickson, 1992; Flor & Knapp, 2001; Hoge, Petrillo & Smith, 1982) without consideration for their ability to actively filter, evaluate and interpret these messages.

The theme of compliance without acceptance highlights the complex nature of active agency in children’s interpretations and evaluations during early religious upbringing. Grusec & Goodnow (1994) distinguish between the accurate understanding of the content of a message and the motivational acceptance of the message. Even though children reported engaging in religious practices and were able to report Biblical messages, they nevertheless showed ambivalence or internal conflict. This phenomenon of compliance without acceptance in religious socialization is reminiscent of the construct of resistant compliance, in which adolescents followed the “letter of the law” but not the “spirit of the law” (Parkin & Kuczynski, 2012). An implication of this finding is that it may be important to distinguish outward conformity from true internalization by acceptance or ownership or religious practices and beliefs. Thus, children who reported engaging in religious beliefs and practices may have been acting without motivations or meanings intended by parents. Instead, compliance could be reflective of accommodation strategies (Kuczynski & Parkin, 2007; Parkin & Kuczynski, 2012) such as avoiding confrontation or a desire to maintain positive parent-child relationships. In this light of agency in compliance, behavioural measures such as the Devotionalism Index which quantifiably measure variables such as “frequency of prayer” (Hoge, Petrillo & Smith, 1982) do not accurately or adequately
account for transmission of religious practices as intended, because they measure external adherence but not full internal acceptance.

A novel finding in my study is that acceptance of parental religious messages also requires a process of construction. In my research, acceptance of Christianity was not described as passive or defined by direct replication. Instead, participants construct their own acceptance of religious messages following evaluation and interpretation of parental messages. Fifteen of sixteen participants said they showed unconsidered acceptance during their early upbringing. Although they incorporate religious practices in their routines and were able to accurately recall religious beliefs and values they had not necessarily understood or consciously accepted them. As young adults, participants described their active agency in their personal pursuit of discovering their religious identification. Following a period of interpretation, evaluation and self-reflection, they no longer regarded these religious messages and models as those of their parents, but had now redefined these as their own. Their new acceptance included applying new motivations and meanings to the beliefs, values, practices and worldviews that their parents had taught them. This deliberate and thoughtful process of reinterpreting parental religious messages as their own demonstrates how young adults construct their own acceptance.

For instance, one’s construction of acceptance is theoretically similar to the processes of internalizing external messages in Bakhtin & Horquist’s (1981) views of language. In this view, there was a transition from language as half alien to “one’s own”, when intentions and meanings were associated with the language (Bakhtin & Horquist, 1981). This application of intentions and meanings is visible in young adults’ concepted internalization of religion. They described an inability to understanding intentions or meanings with religious beliefs, values and practices in
their early upbringing, but application of intentions and meanings later in life led to full conscious acceptance of their parents’ Christianity as “one’s own”.

Findings documenting young adults’ agency in their present status of internalization, is a novel contribution to the literature on religious socialization. Although the majority of my participants could verbally describe parental messages about beliefs, values and religious practices, they also injected novelty and reconstructed parental religious models to reflect their own needs perspectives and experience. Most quantitative measures have an implicit idea that variables such as church attendance and frequency of prayer (Bader & Desmond, 2006) is a mark of internalization. However, my findings suggest that this is not an accurate depiction of the processes occurring in internalization or the constantly changing outcome. I propose that continuity of religious messages such as beliefs should not be confounded with the lack of change. Although most young adults appeared to continue to accept core doctrinal elements of Christianity, non-doctrinal elements of these models are more prone to change or modification. For example, participants apply new meanings and motivations to existing doctrine and practices, such as loving God as a reason for church attendance, while previous participation may have been associated with obedience and submission to parental control. In addition, participants had revised views regarding derivative values and world views including homosexuality, abortion and abstinence before marriage, despite maintaining a Christian identification. By examining religious internalization through a dialectical transactional lens, we are able to understanding how young adults modify and reconstruct their religious working models.

It is important to emphasize that the majority of participants described seemingly contraductor themes in their narratives. For example, participants highlighted how they experienced acceptance of a Christian identification and its core beliefs, but also simultaneously
experienced contentions with some of the social values associated with their religion. These simultaneous processes demonstrate the complexity of religious internalization and the ability for young adults to consciously reflect on contradictions, while fervently accepting religious messages from parental working models. I speculate that perhaps these contrasting simultaneous evaluations and conceptions of internalization vary based on social context and the associated values in different domains of their lives. Thus, religious socialization, internalization and acceptance is not all or none. Religious socialization in a particular faith group offers a complex amalgam of core beliefs, derivative values and associated values, each component of which offers different challenges for understanding, interpretation and acceptance.

The findings of this study also contribute to understanding how sources of change (e.g. peers, education, media) impact young adults’ religious internalization. Young adults identified that the ecology of models (Kuczynski, Marshall & Schell, 1997) does not cause direct change, but introduce contradictions to religious messages that act as catalysts for self-reflection. These contradictions included mainstream cultural values such as acceptance of homosexuality, or differing interpretations of religious messages, such as predestination. Young adults actively evaluated and interpreted this new information to see how they fit within their existing religious models. Thinking about these contradictions led to stronger identification with existing religious models, modification of existing models or the insertion of ambivalence in their models. Ambivalence was accepted as continual and never-ending, because participants will continue to be exposed to new contradictions. These findings are theoretically important and consistent with Kuczynski & De Mol’s (2015) dialectical models. Participants’ exposure to catalyzing events or influences (e.g. peers) creates uncertainties, which when confronted, lead to new meaning making. However, this process is cyclical; as new meanings emerge, so do new contradictions
(Kuczynski & De Mol, 2015). My study addresses the potential and probability for change in religious working models, especially because new contradictions within the ecology of models (Kuczynski, Marshall & Schell, 1997) will continue to emerge.

My study also contributes to understanding the role of peers in the religious internalization process. Peers (e.g. non-familial, siblings, significant others) were described as the most significant catalyzing influence for all participants. In interactions with peers, young adults’ religious models are challenged by differing views. Additionally, religious messages are discussed and evaluated. Young adults discussed theological interpretations of Biblical texts with fellow Christians. In contrast to religious messages, mainstream culture, values and practices were discussed with non-Christian peers. This discussion of contrasting messages is in line with Corsaro (1992), who emphasized being critical of parental messages and evaluating adult culture in peer interactions. However, Kuczynski & De Mol (2015) provide an understanding of messages from peers which both oppose and align with parental efforts and their influence on working models in young adults. These discussions and evaluations of both types of religious messages allowed for new interpretations of their religious models. Thus, reflection upon these peer interactions led to modification or reinforcement of existing routines and working models.

Finally, my findings contribute to understanding the role of indirect parental socialization strategies through a dialectical lens. Although parents engaged in direct socialization through discipline and explicit teaching of beliefs, values and practices, parents also implemented indirect socialization strategies through cocooning (Goodnow, 1997) and mediation of peers. As described by participants, parental support of Christian social contexts through these strategies were successful in fostering the maintenance of Christian identifications and religious working models through non-parental sources. However, despite alignment with parental goals, young
adults continue to enact their agency in evaluating and reinterpreting these strategies. Presently, they evaluate and select the role of these social elements within their current religious working models. Across the interviews, young adults reported they decide whether to maintain relationships with peers possessing similar religious identifications and values, or to continue participation in religious community activities intentionally. Although the social influences through these cocooning strategies continue to promote religious messages aligning with parental efforts, young adults continue to enact their agency in their religious internalization through reinterpretation and selection.

Previous studies described these cocooning strategies as mediators of value transmission (Padilla-Walker & Thompson, 2005). In addition, some research discusses the channeling hypothesis, which uses quantitative models in depicting the role of influences such as the church community or religious schooling in mediating the effects of religious internalization in earlier upbringing (Cornwall; 1988; Himmelfarb, 1979). However, these models continue to assume parents as the primary and direct influence (Cornwall, 1988; Francis & Gibson, 1993; Martin, White & Perlman, 2003) and do not qualitatively examine the role of the child as agent in these processes. Therefore, my study provides qualitative insight on the role of these socialization strategies, and the underlying processes required in their interpretation and adoption into religious working models.

Limitations & Future Directions

Although these interviews with young adults captured novel findings and new perspectives of viewing religious socialization, there were several limitations in this study that should be addressed. The first significant limitation of the study is the small sample size of 16 participants. Existing research on sample size in qualitative research is inconsistent. Bertaux
(1981) suggests that 15 participants should be the absolute minimum sample size for qualitative research, but Charmaz (2006) suggests 25 participants as an adequate sample size for smaller research projects. Mason (2010) discussed qualitative criteria including the importance of reaching saturation and quality of transcripts as also being important when considering sample size. Although the transcripts were very rich and detailed, and saturation was reached during the coding process in the present study, it would be beneficial to attain a higher sample size in future research.

Another limitation of this research is that the sample did not equally represent participants who had different religious trajectories. In this sample, 14 of the participants displayed continuity with parental religious models and maintained a Christian religious identification, but only 2 no longer identified as Christian. Participants also reported continuity with parental efforts and positive evaluations of parent-child relationships. Theoretically, I argue that the agentic interpretive processes underlying internalization would apply to individuals from both trajectories and with differing familial contexts. However, it would be beneficial to examine more participants who no longer identify as Christian and who have different evaluations of their family environment, to be able to make more accurate claims regarding the similarities in agentic processes occurring during religious socialization and internalization.

Another significant limitation of my research is that there were only three male participants and the other thirteen of my participants identified as female. This gender disparity did not prove to be significant in impacting my findings, but there may have been additional gender-based differences or derivative values that were not able to be examined during my study, due to the gender discrepancy in my sample.
Lastly, although I mentioned that my own upbringing and experiences were an asset to this research, I must also consider the possible drawbacks of being a researcher raised in a conservative Christian household. Although I strived to remain objective throughout the research design, data collection and analysis processes, I understand that I cannot wholly separate my identity from this research project. I acknowledge that I cannot be completely objective, and that some of my own history, experiences and assumptions will have influenced the study’s design and interpretation in some way.

**Implications and Conclusion**

My research study illustrated the importance and utility of examining religious socialization through a transactional dialectical perspective. This perspective uncovered the agentic processes that occur throughout early upbringing to young adulthood. This dialectical view and qualitative method allowed for more thorough understandings on the ways religious models are interpreted, evaluated and constructed, in contrast to existing literature which utilizes models that focus on describing final religious identities and trajectories, through a narrower and more quantitative lens. My research offers a contrasting perspective to religious socialization literature in alignment with constructivist and acculturation theories (Kuczynski, Marshall & Schell, 1997; Kuczynski & De Mol, 2015), through highlighting continual evaluation and reconstruction of religious models.

Based on the findings of this study and the importance of understanding experiences of religious socialization qualitatively, more qualitative investigation is needed in this domain of literature, to shed light on the processes and identity development that are occurring, and which cannot be accounted by quantitative measures alone. Additionally, common measures in the field which are based on unidirectional transmission models and literal beliefs, values and practices
can be reconceptualised because of my findings and contributions. For example, studies have primarily utilized behaviours and attitudes such as church attendance (Bader & Desmond, 2006; Bengtson et al., 2009) and frequency of prayer (Bader & Desmond, 2006; Smith, Faris, Denton & Regenerus, 2003) to determine successful transmission of religion, or use these variables as final determinants of religiosity. However, I propose that these quantitative measures can be modified to include derivative values, evaluations of socialization practices and other non-doctrinal aspects of parental religious models. In addition, I believe that processes such as ambivalence, questioning, disagreement or internal conflict can also be addressed quantitatively, as found amongst my research participants. While I recognize the merit and benefits of utilizing quantitative measures and predictor models, these modifications and inclusions can be highly beneficial to understanding the complex and multi-faceted nature of religious internalization and identity.

Additionally, many of the participants described that while they maintained identifications as Christian, their siblings did not necessarily retain similar religious models. For ten of my participants, they described that at least one of their siblings no longer identified as religious, or had reconstructed their religious models in very different ways. Future research on siblings within same conservative or fundamentalist Christian families would be informative, and would provide greater insight into the differences in interpretation, construction and internalization of religious models and the ecology of models that influenced these differences in models.

Lastly, I have examined young adults’ experiences through a dialectical transactional perspective but I have not examined parents’ points of view. Although my research outlines the agentic processes that occur in children of these families, it would be consistent in a dialectical
perspective to also understand the experiences of the parents as they seek to pass on their religious models and messages. Based on this research, it would be useful to understand their representations and evaluations of how religious messages were taught, their evaluation of both past and present parent-child relationships, their evaluation and reinterpretation of children’s responses to religious messages and how their religious models may be influenced by their child and the ecology of models as well. This framework for viewing research can guide future research into shedding light on processes and factors that influence religious socialization, rather than focusing solely on static outcomes, through primarily quantitative and unidirectional perspectives.
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Kuczynski, L., & Daly, K. (2003). Qualitative methods for inductive (theory-generating)


Appendix A

REB Certificate: University of Guelph

UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

RESEARCH ETHICS BOARDS
Certification of Ethical Acceptability of Research Involving Human Participants

APPROVAL PERIOD: July 19, 2016
EXPIRY DATE: July 19, 2017
REB: G
REB NUMBER: 16JN022
TYPE OF REVIEW: Delegated Type 1
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Kuczynski, Leon (lkuczyns@uoguelph.ca)
DEPARTMENT: Family Relations & Applied Nutrition
SPONSOR(S): None
TITLE OF PROJECT: Children’s Perspectives on Their Religious Socialization

The members of the University of Guelph Research Ethics Board have examined the protocol which describes the participation of the human participants in the above-named research project and considers the procedures, as described by the applicant, to conform to the University's ethical standards and the Tri-Council Policy Statement, 2nd Edition.

The REB requires that researchers:
- Adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB.
- Receive approval from the REB for any modifications before they can be implemented.
- Report any change in the source of funding.
- Report unexpected events or incidental findings to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants, and the continuation of the protocol.
- Are responsible for ascertaining and complying with all applicable legal and regulatory requirements with respect to consent and the protection of privacy of participants in the jurisdiction of the research project.

The Principal Investigator must:
- Ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of facilities or institutions involved in the research are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.
- Submit a Status Report to the REB upon completion of the project. If the research is a multi-year project, a status report must be submitted annually prior to the expiry date. Failure to submit an annual status report will lead to your study being suspended and potentially terminated.

The approval for this protocol terminates on the EXPIRY DATE, or the term of your appointment or employment at the University of Guelph whichever comes first.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: July 19, 2016

Johanna Goertz
Chair, Research Ethics Board-General
Appendix B

REB Certificate: McMaster University

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**Certificate of Ethics Clearance to Involve Human Participants in Research**

**Application Status:** New  Addendum  Project Number: 2016 145

**Title of Research Project:**
Children's Perspective on Religious Socialization

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<th>Dept./Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
<th>E-Mail</th>
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<tr>
<td>L. Kuczynski</td>
<td>University of Guelph</td>
<td>519-824-412</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lkuczynski@uoguelph.ca">lkuczynski@uoguelph.ca</a></td>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J. Thumb</td>
<td>University of Guelph</td>
<td>647-938-032</td>
<td><a href="mailto:jthumb@uoguelph.ca">jthumb@uoguelph.ca</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The application in support of the above research project has been reviewed by the MREB to ensure compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement and the McMaster University Policies and Guidelines for Research Involving Human Participants. The following ethics certification is provided by the MREB:

- The application protocol is cleared as presented without questions or requests for modification.
- The application protocol is cleared as revised without questions or requests for modification.
- The application protocol is cleared subject to clarification and/or modification as appended or identified below:

**Comments and Conditions:** Ongoing clearance is contingent on completing the annual completed/status report. A "Change Request" or amendment must be made and cleared before any alterations are made to the research.

**Reporting Frequency:** Annual: Aug-03-2017

**Date:** Aug-03-2016  Chair, Dr. S. Bray
October 31, 2016

Leon Kuczynski and Johannah Thumb
University of Guelph

Dear Leon and Johannah,

Your project, Young Adults’ Perspectives on Religious Socialization has been approved by the Humber Research Ethics Board for one year, until October 31, 2017. Your protocol number is MS-0011.

If you amend your approved protocol in any way, or if you would like to extend the timeframe of your approval, please login to the Humber Research Ethics Board online application system (http://humberreb.fluidreview.com) to access the appropriate form.

Upon completion of your project, please submit a Project Completion Form, which can also be found on the Humber Research Ethics Board online application system.

Best wishes as you pursue your research interests.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Jasteena Dhillon, BA, J.D, LL.M
Chair, Humber Research Ethics Board
Appendix D
Recruitment Poster

WERE YOU RAISED IN A CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIAN FAMILY? (ALL DENOMINATIONS WELCOME!)

DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF RELIGIOUS NOW?
ARE YOUR FAMILY’S BELIEFS DIFFERENT OR THE SAME AS YOUR OWN?

REGARDLESS OF YOUR EXPERIENCE, WE WANT TO HEAR ALL ABOUT IT!

JOIN FOR ME FOR A 1 ONE HOUR INTERVIEW TO TALK ABOUT:

• YOUR RELIGIOUS UPBRINGING
• CONTINUITY & CHANGE OF BELIEFS & VALUES
• WHAT RELIGION MEANS IN YOUR LIFE NOW

You will receive a $10 Starbucks gift card as a thank you for your participation. If you are interested in participating in this research project, contact me at jthumb@uoguelph.ca or (647)-938-0323

(REB#16JN022)
Dear all,

I am a graduate student at the University of Guelph and I am looking for volunteers to participate in my study. Specifically, I am looking for young adults between the ages of 18 to 25 who were raised in Christianity, with either parent(s) you consider to be conservative Christians, or if you or your family were involved in the Christian community while you were growing up. All denominations are welcome! This study focuses on your experiences growing up, as well as your current perspectives on your religious upbringing and religion in general.

My study is about your experiences being raised in a conservative Christian environment, and your thoughts and reflections on your upbringing. Additionally, I am also interested in how you currently view your religious upbringing and religion, particularly the continuity and change in your beliefs and values, what religion means in your life now and the influences such as family and peers that may factor into your thoughts and opinions on religion and religious upbringing.

As a participant in the study, you will take part in an interview that will last approximately an hour.. The interview can take place on Skype or in-person, depending on your availability in preferences (e.g. on campus, at a coffee shop). You will receive a $10 gift card to Starbucks, as a token of our appreciation for participating. If you or someone you know are interested in participating in this study, please e-mail me at jthumb@uoguelph.ca or call me at (647)938-0323.

Thank you,

Johannah Thumb, M.Sc Candidate
Department of Family Relations & Applied Nutrition
University of Guelph
I am trying to understand the experiences of someone who was raised in a conservative Christian household through this interview. The questions that I ask will be about your experiences growing up in a religious household and about your current thoughts and perspectives on religion and your religious upbringing. I, myself, was raised in a conservative Christian household and have thought about both the positive aspects and challenging aspects of my own experiences. I am interested in how young adults think of their own experiences and how these experiences have affected them. Please feel free to share any of your experiences and you are also free to skip any questions if you do not wish to answer them. You may also wish to stop the interview at any time. This interview should take about 1 hour and I will be recording this so it can be transcribed at a later time. Do you have any questions before we start?

**Warm Up Question:**

Just to begin, can you tell me a little about your family in general?

Probe: Who lived with you when you were younger?

Probe: Who lives with you now?

Probe: What was family life like for you when you were younger?

Probe: What is family life like for you now?

Probe: What denomination would your family consider themselves a part of?

Okay, there are three parts to this interview. First, we will be talking about the past, so when you were younger and about your childhood and upbringing. Later, we will talk about some of your thoughts now, and lastly, we will talk about your expectations and thoughts about your future.

**Part One**
Okay, first, I am interested in what your parents taught you about right or wrong. What were some of the religious values that your parents taught you when you were growing up”?

(values and morals)

a. Probing question: Were there some things that your parents considered as “morally correct”?

b. Follow-up question: How did you feel about these? (internal conflict on derivative values)

c. Probing question: Can you give me a specific example?

d. Probing question: Are there any values that your parents taught you that you disagreed with or had trouble accepting? Are there any values that your parents taught you that “secular” society would not agree with?

e. Probing question: Can you give me a specific example?

f. Follow-up question: How did you feel about these when you were younger? (internal conflict on derivative values)

g. Probing question: Can you give me a specific example?

2) How did they teach you what was “right” or “wrong”? (e.g. beliefs, valuespractices)

a. Probing question: Can you give me a specific example?

3) (if experienced some disagreements) How did you deal with your feelings of disagreement? (dealing with internal conflict)

a. Narrative prompt/follow-up question: Could you share an important moment with me when you remember feeling these feelings of disagreement (turning point/bifurcation point)?
b. Probing question: Did you talk to anyone about these feelings?

c. Probing question: Did you ever express these disagreements to your parents?

d. Probing question: Could you share with me a specific example in which you expressed your feelings or disagreements?

4) What were some of the religious beliefs that were taught to you? (background information)

a. Probing question: Are there any religious beliefs that you questioned or disagreed with? What were they? (internal conflict)

b. Probing question: Could you give me a specific example?

5) What were some of the religious practices that your family engaged in? (background information)

a. Follow-up question: Were there any practices that you questioned or disagreed with? (internal conflict)

   Probing question: Could you give me a specific example?

b. Follow-up question: What were your thoughts or feelings on these practices?

6) Now I’d like for you to think about your friends and your community outside of the home growing up that were relevant to your religious upbringing (e.g. cocooning)

a. Probing question: For example, who did your parents encourage you to be friends with? Were there any peers or groups in particular your parents wanted you to associate with? Were there any peers or groups that your parents discouraged associations with?

b. Probing question: Could you give me a specific example?
c. Follow-up question: At the time, what were your thoughts on these peer
groups? (acceptance or internal conflict on cocooning)

d. Follow-up question: Were there any social activities that your parents wanted
you to participate in that were relevant to your religious upbringing?

e. Probing question: Could you give me a specific example?

f. Follow-up question: At the time, what were your thoughts on these activities
or events? (acceptance or internal conflict on cocooning)

g. Probing question: Could you give me an example?

7) What were some of the things your parents did not want you to do? (e.g. cocooning)

   a. Probing question: What were some of the things your parents prevented you
      from doing?

   b. Probing question: Could you give me a specific example?

   c. Follow-up question: At the time, how did you feel about these restrictions or
      limitations? (acceptance or internal conflict on cocooning)

8) How did your parents discipline you when you were younger? (authoritarian
   parenting)

   a. Probing questions: What were the consequences if you misbehaved?

   b. Probing question: Could you give me a specific example?

   c. Follow-up question: At the time, how did you feel about these disciplinary
      strategies? (acceptance or internal conflict on parenting style)

9) If someone were to ask you if you were religious when you were younger, what would you
   have said?

Part Two
Now I’d like for you to think about where you are now and how you currently think about your religious upbringing.

1) How do you currently view your religious upbringing? (evaluations of religious upbringing/current internal conflict)
   a. Probing question: What did you like about your upbringing?
   b. Probing question: Could you give me a specific example?
   c. Probing question: What do you wish was different about your upbringing?
   d. Probing question: Could you give me a specific example?
   e. Follow-up question: Do you still have any disagreements about the way you were raised? (current internal conflict)
      i. If so, what are these disagreements?
      ii. How are you dealing with these current disagreements?
      iii. Probing question: Could you give me a specific example?
   f. Narrative prompt/follow-up question: Could you share with an important moment in which you began to view your religious upbringing in this manner? (turning point/current internal conflict/ecology of working models)

2) How did you view your relationship with your parents as a child? (relationship context)

3) How do you currently view your relationship with your parents? (relationship context)
   a. Follow-up question: In terms of religion, do you think your parents’ views have changed? (dialectical influence)
i. Follow-up question: If so, how do you think your parents’ views on religion have changed?

ii. Probing question: Could you give me a specific example?

iii. Follow-up question: So we’ve already talked about your parents’ influence on you. Do you think you’ve had any influence on your parents’ thoughts on religion or religious practices in the family?

iv. Probing question: Could you give me a specific example?

1. If so, how?

Part Three

Now I’d like to talk a bit more about your current identity, beliefs and values and practices as well as your expectations and thoughts on the future.

4) If someone were to ask you if you were religious now, what would you say?

a) Follow-up question: When do you feel a stronger connection with your religious upbringing?

Probe: Could you give me a specific example?

When do you feel a less strong connection with your religious upbringing?

b. Probing question: Could you give me a specific example?

4) What aspects of your religion upbringing do you still retain? (current working model)

a. Probing question: Are there any religious beliefs, values and practices that are still important to you?

b. Probing question: Could you give me a specific example?

5) Why do you think your views of religion have (or haven’t) changed?
a. Follow-up question: How do you think your peers have influenced your perceptions of religion? (ecology of working models)
b. Probing question: Could you give me an example?
c. Follow-up question: Do you have any brothers or sisters? How do you think their experiences were similar or different to yours? How do you think they have influenced your perceptions of religion? Is there anything specific that they did or said that made you think about your upbringing differently? (ecology of working models)
d. Follow-up question: How do you think the media has influenced your perceptions of religion? (ecology of working models)
e. Probing question: Could you give me a specific example?
f. Follow-up question: How do you think post-secondary education has influenced your perceptions of religion? (ecology of working models)
g. Probing question: Could you give me a specific example?

6) What do you hope your views on religion and your religious upbringing will be like in 10 years? (possible selves)
   a. Probe questions: What religious practices do you expect to continue? What religious values do you think will still be important to you? (possible selves)
   b. Probe questions: Are there any religious practices, beliefs or values that you think will no longer be as important to you in the future? (possible selves)
   c. Probe question: Could you give me a specific example?

7) What do you hope your relationship with your parents will be like in 10 years? (possible selves)
a. Probing questions: Do you expect your relationship will stay the same? How do you expect your relationship could change? (possible selves)
b. Probing question: Could you give me a specific example?
c. Probing question: What do you fear most about your relationship you’re your family in the future?

8) Probing question: Could you give me an example? We have come to the end of the interview but I would like to ask if there is anything you would like to share about your experiences in a religious family that we haven’t already talked about or anything that came to mind during this interview? (closing question)

Thank you very much for your time.

--End of Interview—
Appendix G

Letter of Information & Consent

A Young Adult’s Perspective on Religion & Their Religious Upbringing

Study Information & Consent to Participate in Research

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Johannah Thumb from the Department of Family Relation and Applied Nutrition at the University of Guelph. The results from your participation will contribute to Johannah Thumb’s thesis requirement for a Master of Science degree.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY
The purpose of the study is to explore the experiences of children who were raised in a conservative Christian environment. Specifically, we are interested in understanding what your religious upbringing was like, how you currently view your upbringing and religion, and the influences that led to your current thoughts and perspectives. We are also interested in continuity and change of your beliefs and values and what religion means to you in your life now.

PROCEDURES
You will be asked to participate in a one-on-one interview with the researcher, either in person or through video conferencing (e.g. Skype), according to your preferences and convenience. If you choose to meet with the researcher face-to-face, the interview will take place at a location of your choice such as a coffee shop or on the university campus. The interview will take approximately 1 hour. You will be asked questions about your family, how you were raised, how you currently view religion and your upbringing and your thoughts on religion and your relationship with your family in the future. A sample question is “If someone were to ask you if you were religious now, what would you say?” Another sample question is “What were some of the religious practices that your family engaged in?” The interviews will be audio recorded so that we can make sure we do not miss anything you say.

RISKS & BENEFITS
Some people may feel uncomfortable talking about their thoughts and feelings on their family relationships, upbringing or religion. However, many people may feel that that they enjoy sharing their experiences and will find this to be an enjoyable time of self-reflection. You may also benefit by knowing that you are contributing to our understanding of how children are raised in religious families and think about religion and their religious upbringings.

PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION
You will receive a choice of a $10 gift card to Starbucks for your participation. You will still receive this token of appreciation, even if you do not answer all of the questions or choose to withdraw from the study. You will be asked to sign a form confirming that you have received the gift card at the interview in-person, or over e-mail if you choose to take part in a video conferencing interview.
CONFIDENTIALITY
Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality of any identifying information obtained for this study. Your confidentiality will be protected to the extent allowed by the law; limitations of confidentiality include information subpoenaed in court, mandatory reporting of child abuse or neglect, and imminent harm to yourself or others.

All interview recordings will be destroyed once they have been transcribed, which will be within 2 weeks of the interview. Pseudonyms will be used on the transcripts. All transcripts and study data will be kept in a locked cabinet or an encrypted and password-protected computer. Your name and directly identifying information will not be used in the completed study or any other document that may arise from the study. Only Dr. Leon Kuczynski, the principal investigator and Johannah Thumb, the student investigator, will have access to the identified data. However, verbatim quotations may be used for the purposes of reporting the study’s results later. If you choose to participate in an online interview such as through Skype, your confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, as there are certain risks to data collection over the Internet.

PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL
You can choose whether to be in this study or not. You can change your mind or stop being in the study at any time, or you can choose not to answer any questions if you do not want to. You have the option of removing your data from the study, in which your interview recordings and transcripts will be erased and eliminated from future analysis. If you decide that you would like for your data to be removed from the study, you can e-mail the principal investigator (lkuczyns@uoguelph.ca) within 2 weeks of the interview.

RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS
This project has been reviewed by the Research Ethics Board for compliance with federal guidelines for research involving human participants. If you have any questions regarding your rights and welfare as a research participant in the study (REB#16JN022), please contact:

Director, Research Ethics; University of Guelph
Phone: (519)-824-4120, x56606
E-mail: sauld@uoguelph.ca

You do not waive any legal rights by agreeing to take part in this study.

Johannah Thumb: Student Investigator OR Leon Kucznyski, PhD:
Faculty Supervisor
Telephone: (647)-938-0323 OR Telephone: (519) 824-4120, ext.
52421
E-mail: jthumb@uoguelph.ca E-mail: lkuczyns@uoguelph.ca

POSSIBLE RESOURCES
There are many support services that are available to you if you need them. The following contact information is included for your information:
Here 24 Seven
1-844-437-3247
www.here247.ca

Family Counselling & Support Services
of Wellington-Guelph
1-800-307-7078

Mental Health Helpline
1-866-531-2600
http://www.mentalhealthhelpline.ca/

Community Counselling Centre
(905)-529-5400
www.cfshw.com

Good 2 Talk Postsecondary Help Line
1-866-925-5454
http://www.good2talk.ca/

Couple & Family Therapy Centre
(519)-824-4120 x56426
http://www.uoguelph.ca/family/cft-centre

SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information provided for the “A Young Adult’s Perspective on Religion & Their Religious Upbringing” study as described herein. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

___________________________________
Name of Participant (please print)

___________________________________
Signature of Participant                      Date

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

___________________________________
Name of Witness (please print)

___________________________________
Signature of Witness                      Date

If you are interested in receiving a summary of the results of the study, please provide us with your e-mail address: ______________