



Relationship, Relationship, Relationship: An Exploration of Supportive Adult Behaviors in the Faith Development Of Catholic-Raised Youth



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Abstract

This study aims to analyze whether specific adult behaviors during the adolescent period could be associated with the participants' current religious identity; defined as Currently-Catholic or Previously-Catholic. Participants were asked to tell their story of growing up Catholic and to describe relationships with adults who played a role in their views and understanding of religion.

Participant Demographics

Twenty-four junior and senior students at a Catholic University were interviewed. All participants were Catholic-raised adults.

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender Identity		
Female	15	62.5
Male	8	33.3
Other	1	4.2
Religious Identity		
Catholic	12	50
Non Catholic (i.e. Agnostic, Atheist, Christian, None, Spiritual, & Unsure)	12	50
Racial Identity		
White	12	50
Latinx	8	33.3
Multi-racial	2	8.3
Asian	1	4.2
Black	1	4.2
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	19	79.2
Gay	2	8.3
Other	2	8.3
Bisexual	1	4.2
<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Age	20.83	1.34
Adults Listed	12.54	4.60

Adult Demographics

The 24 participants described a total of 275 adults. Adults were categorized into 6 different groupings and 7 different religious groupings.

	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>		<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Adult Type			Religious Identity		
Parish Adults	79	28.7	Catholic	207	75.3
Family Adults	75	27.3	Unknown	44	16.0
School Adults	70	25.5	Lutheran	4	1.5
Groups	20	7.3	Atheist	3	1.1
Other Adults	18	6.5	Buddhist	2	0.7
Retreat Adults	13	4.7	Methodist	1	0.4
			Protestant	1	0.4

Adult Behavior Themes

Positive Behaviors

- Provided unconditional support**
 - Adult's support and approval was not contingent on religious identity
- Facilitated/Had discussions about religion**
 - Adults encouraged, started, and were open to conversations about religion
- Taught the Catholic religion**
 - Adult taught and supported Church teachings
- Modeled a Catholic lifestyle**
 - Adult applied faith to their daily life
- Respected other religions**
 - Adult respected and encouraged respect of other religions
- Connected youth to Catholic people/experiences**
 - Adult connected participants to other Catholic adults and events

Negative Behaviors

- Provided conditional support**
 - Adult's supportive or lack of supportive behavior was due to participants' religious identity
- Lacked/Discouraged religious conversations**
 - Adult exhibited negative reactions to questions/doubts and did not have complex religious conversations with participant
- Taught incorrect religion information**
 - Adult incorrectly taught Church teachings
- Did not model a Catholic lifestyle**
 - Adult did not put their faith into practice
- Disrespected other religions**
 - Adult was not respectful or open minded to other religions
- Negative connections to Catholic activities**
 - Adult forced participant to participate when they did not want to or prevented participation because of gender or age

	Currently-Catholic <i>M (SD)</i>	Previously-Catholic <i>M (SD)</i>	Mann-Whitney U Test <i>U, p-value</i>
Positive Behaviors			
Provided unconditional support	0.67 (0.65)	1.00 (0.85)	<i>U</i> = 57.00, <i>p</i> = 0.33
Facilitated/Had discussions about religion	4.83 (2.52)	2.08 (2.27)	<i>U</i> = 32.50, <i>p</i> = 0.02
Taught about the Catholic religion	2.92 (1.38)	2.83 (1.47)	<i>U</i> = 69.00, <i>p</i> = 0.86
Modeled a Catholic lifestyle	2.75 (2.01)	1.92 (1.44)	<i>U</i> = 54.50, <i>p</i> = 0.30
Respected other religions	1.25 (1.14)	1.25 (1.29)	<i>U</i> = 69.50, <i>p</i> = 0.88
Connected youth to Catholic people/experiences	2.17 (1.85)	1.33 (1.67)	<i>U</i> = 54.00, <i>p</i> = 0.28
Negative Behaviors			
Provided conditional support	0.08 (0.29)	1.25 (1.14)	<i>U</i> = 22.00, <i>p</i> = 0.001
Lacked/Discouraged religious conversations	0.75 (0.87)	2.50 (1.51)	<i>U</i> = 24.00, <i>p</i> = 0.004
Taught incorrect religion information	0.50 (0.67)	0.50 (0.67)	<i>U</i> = 72.00, <i>p</i> = 1.00
Did not model a Catholic lifestyle	0.58 (0.67)	2.00 (1.60)	<i>U</i> = 33.00, <i>p</i> = 0.02
Disrespected other religions	0.17 (0.58)	0.33 (0.49)	<i>U</i> = 56.00, <i>p</i> = 0.19
Negative connections to Catholic activities	0.33 (0.78)	1.08 (0.90)	<i>U</i> = 35.00, <i>p</i> = 0.02

Note: Data highlighted showed statistically significant differences between Currently-Catholic and Previously-Catholic participants

Results

Currently-Catholic participants mentioned statistically more adults who "Facilitated/Had discussions about religion" than Previously-Catholic participants. No other positive behavior themes differed significantly between the two groups.

Previously-Catholic participants mentioned statistically more adults who "Provided conditional support", "Lacked/Discouraged religious conversations", "Did not model a Catholic lifestyle", and "Negative connections to Catholic activities" than Currently-Catholic participants. "Taught incorrect religion information" and "Disrespected other religions" did not differ significantly between the two groups.

Discussion

- "Facilitated/Had discussions about religion" differed significantly between the Currently-Catholics and Previously-Catholics. This shows the importance of adults having conversations and having bad conversations.
- Besides "Facilitated/Had discussions about religion", both groups reported similar amounts of positive behaviors in their religious narratives. Where groups differed was the reporting of negative behaviors, which were more numerous in the memories of the Previously-Catholic.
- Frequency of "Taught incorrect religion information" and "Disrespected other religions" did not differ between the groups. Participants in both groups reported the same amount of adults teaching Catholicism correctly/incorrectly as well as being respectful/close-minded about other religions.