THEORY

Faith Development Research Revisited: Accounting for Diversity in Structure, Content, and Narrativity of Faith

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Based on the recent proposal in this journal (Streib, 2001a) to revise James Fowler's (1981) faith development theory, the article argues for a revision of faith development *research* to account not only for structural diversity, but also for narrative and content diversity. Therefore, it suggests the inclusion of content-analytical and narrative-analytical procedures into faith development research. The argument develops in light of a review of 53 empirical studies that all have used Fowler's faith development instrument or a variation thereof; this review pays attention to the instruments that have been proposed for quantitative research in faith development, but especially to the empirical studies that have already included narrative- and content-analytical approaches. The article concludes with a proposal for a revised research design that integrates attention for structure, content, and narrative and suggests a coherent methodological procedure for future research in faith development.

Within the relatively short time period of 20 years, James Fowler's (1981) theory of faith development has attracted attention and inspired empirical research both in the United States and worldwide. The growing reputation of faith development theory had its beginning in the Center for Faith Development at Emory University[1]—which, however, never claimed to be the sole faith development re-

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[1]The *Center for Faith Development* was renamed later the *Center for Research in Faith and Moral Development*.

search laboratory and never sought to establish rigid research coordination or to propagate a sacrosanct theory and methodology. Faith development theory has therefore experienced widespread dissemination from the very beginning and a creative evolution of both theoretical perspectives and research methods. Thus, the strategy for the operationalization of faith development theory in empirical research procedures has been designed mostly independently for every project that includes the faith development perspective. However, this does not mean reinventing the wheel each time, because there is a *Manual for Faith Development Research* (Moseley, Jarvis, & Fowler, 1986, 1993)[2] and because a large number of dissertations have been done on this topic, constituting a tradition that is, however, far from being homogeneous.

It could be left to each researcher to find his or her methodological procedure individually. However, common themes and also innovative proposals emerge across the research designs and call for more coherent reflection—a task taken up in this article. The methodological proposal in this article does not merely take a middle position, however. It benefits from the theoretical critique and advancement of structural-developmental theory in general and of faith development theory in particular (Streib, 1991, 1997b, 2001a, 2003b, 2003c) for which it sketches the methodological consequences. Attention to structural diversity, content-specific quality and narrativity of faith is the core of the proposal; their neglect in the "classical" faith development research design—which appears disconnected from faith development *theory* to some extent—is the focus of the critique.

STARTING POINT: ACCOUNTING FOR STRUCTURAL DIVERSITY

> Administering and coding the faith development interview is an exercise in hermeneutics. Language, in the form of verbal response to questions, is the observable datum upon which the interviewer/coder bases inferences about the mental and emotional processes of the person being interviewed. In order to do this, the interviewer must interpret these verbal responses and reconstruct them in terms of structural developmental theory. (Moseley et al., 1986, p. 16; 1993, p. 13)

As this quote from the *Manual* demonstrates, the "classical" faith development research design has affinity to an interpretative approach, because the core object of research consists of an underlying faith structure, rather than of surface phenomena such as knowledge, assent to a statement, or report of a practice. However, this very quote also explicates how the account for hermeneutical diversity is chan-

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[2]If not specified otherwise, *"Manual"* refers to the *Manual for Research in Faith Development*, revised version, published in 1993.

neled immediately: The "reconstruction in terms of structural developmental theory" implies to discern the relatively stable pattern of faith, understood as a structural whole whose development is seen as "change that eventuates in increasingly complex structures" (p. 3). Certainly, identifying the structures that may or may not be fully conscious to the interviewed person is an *interpretation*. The question is whether and how this interpretation is able to invite and fully reflect the *diversity* of faith structures.

The "Classical" Method According to the Manual for Faith Development Research

The data gathered in "classical" faith development research consists of responses to a series of questions that address basically four dimensions: life review, relationships, values and commitments, and religion. Thus, an interview of about 2 hours results in 30 to 50 pages of text abundant with belief statements and personal narratives. The *Manual,* however, gravitates toward a structural interpretation and explains that "a key point in learning to code a faith development interview is learning how to think in structural terms"—whereby "structure can be defined as those patterns of mental operation that operate on content" (p. 21). The interview texts are coded by assigning to each passage a faith stage score in light of the most appropriate Aspect(s) of faith (Form of logic; Perspective-taking; Form of moral judgment; Bounds of social awareness; Locus of authority; Form of world coherence; Symbolic function).[3] The responses are thus assumed to display the structure of faith in one of its seven Aspects—which, one for all others, can be taken as representing the coherent whole of the person's faith stage. To bring the evaluation process to a conclusion, the faith stage scores assigned to each response of the interview text are averaged into a final faith stage. The Aspects forming the basis for the stage assignments are noted during the evaluation procedure, but no further evaluative steps are undertaken using these assigned Aspects.

Toward Better Accounting for Diversity Within the "Classical" Procedure

The disregard for the Aspect-specific character of the stage assignments is problematic and could be justified only under the assumption made by faith development theory that the stages represent a "structural whole." However, if we have reason to raise some doubts or simply want to test whether this assumption is correct, we need to pay special attention to the Aspect-specifity of stage assignments for the individual

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[3]The seven Aspects of faith can be visualized as a heptagon in which the seven Aspects form a coherent whole at a specific niveau of development. This is visualized in a figure in Fowler's chapter, "Faith and the Structuring of Meaning" (Fowler, 1980, p. 32).

TABLE 1
Steps of Analysis in Faith Development Research Revisited

Steps of Analysis	Procedures and Results in More Detail
Structural analysis	Structural coding sentence by sentence results in:
	1.1 Stage-aspect coding.
	1.2 Aspect-specific Stage Mapping.
	1.3 Stage Assignment.
Content analysis (using pre-defined categories or, alternatively, inductive-analytical procedures)	Important pre-defined categories:
	2.1 Values, Authority Images, Concept of Death (or other content in the Aspects).
	2.2 Social construction of self and of other (Noam, 1990).
	2.3 Image of God (Rizzuto, 1979).
Narrative analysis	Narrative analysis, according to Schütze (1981, 1983, 1984):
	3.1 Identifying and coding of narrative elements in the interview text.
	3.2 Coding of (estimated) biographical time of each narrative segment.
	3.3 Reconstruction of biographical trajectory by re-arranging the narrative segments.
	3.4 Interpretation in light of narrative psychology (e.g., McAdams, 1990; McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2001).

case and across the cases in entire research projects. In this way, we could identify Aspect-specific accumulation of stage scores. The results could be visualized in a Stage-Aspect map, which is a decisive step to better accounting for the diversity of faith structures (see Table 1).[4] This could be of relevance especially in research adopting the religious styles perspective (Streib, 2001a). For example, we can expect a predominantly "wordly" focus of those interview passages that fall under the Aspect of "Form of Logic" or "Perspective-Taking" and a more existential or religious focus of those interview passages that fall under the Aspects of "Locus of Authority" or "Form of World Coherence." If we keep these Aspects separate, we are able to document a potential Aspect-specific difference in the developmental niveaus; for example, a lag of development in existential or religious issues. The question addressed in previous research, whether the relation between religious fundamentalism and complexity of thought exist for existential content only (Hunsberger, Pratt, & Pancer, 1994; see also Pancer, Jackson, Hunsberger, & Pratt, 1995; and Hunsberger, Alisat, Pancer, & Pratt, 1996), can be reflected on in terms of faith development. This could be of special relevance for research with fundamentalist individuals, if we have reason to assume that a fundamentalist orientation consists of a revival of ear-

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[4]This procedure of Stage-Aspect mapping —using compter assistance—has been included in our third edition of the *Manual* (Fowler, Streib, & Keller, 2004).

lier styles that coexist with later developmental achievements as it is assumed in the religious styles perspective (Streib, 1997a, 2001a, 2001c).

A more precise account for the diversity of faith structures would require also a revision of the Aspects themselves in light of the recent discussions in developmental psychology. In particular, the description of the higher stages can achieve better adequacy and consistency. This is most obvious for the Aspect "Forms of Logic," which has been designed in reference to the Piagetian theorizing in the 1970s and 1980s; a revision needs to include the extensive discussions about post-formal operations (Alexander & Langer, 1990; Cartwright, 2001; Commons, Richards, & Armon, 1984; Richards & Commons, 1990; Sinnott, 1998), women's way of knowing (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986; Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Gilligan 1982; Labouvie-Vief, 1996), and wisdom research (Baltes, Glück, & Kunzmann, 2002; Labouvie-Vief & Diehl, 2000; Staudinger, Smith, & Baltes, 1994; Sternberg, 1990). "Perspective-Taking" (Selman, 1980) has been revised by Selman himself and his colleagues (Selman & Schultz, 1988; Selman, Watts, & Schultz, 1997), but the work of Noam (1985, 1988, 1990, 1996, 1999) should be included for a profiling of the interpersonal aspect. The discussion on moral development (Pasupathi & Staudinger, 2001; Rest, Narvaez, Thoma, & Bebeau, 1999) also calls for a revision of the Aspect "Form of Moral Judgment." These revisions of the first three Aspects and the related discussions have implications for the other Aspects, "Bounds of Social Awareness," "Locus of Authority," "Form of World Coherence," and "Symbolic Function," for which we cannot refer to extensive discussions. The Aspect "Bounds of Social Awareness," for example, which could be combined with "Perspective-Taking" into a single aspect, could gain by recent proposals for a developmental scale of attitudes toward strangeness, familiarity, and styles of interreligious negotiations (Streib, 2001b; in press), which in turn refer to Selman's work.

Numerous modification proposals in structural-developmental theory include the awareness that development, thus also faith development, may not proceed in a coherent and invariant series of stages,[5] but that there may be domain-specific progress (Cartwright, 2001), addition, and integration rather than abandonment and acquisition (Clore & Fitzgerald, 2002), regression (Nelson, 2002),[6] or replication of earlier stages (Streib, 2001a, 2001c) and even multiple paths in development (Streib, 2003c; cf. also Baltes, Lindenberger, & Staudinger, 1998; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998; Lachman & James, 1997). Taking account of these innovative proposals would increase the awareness of how diverse faith development may be.

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[5]A suggestion such as Sternberg's (2001a, 2001b) to teach wisdom in schools would be meaningless without the assumption that children already have the capacity to learn about and appropriate such competence.

[6]With reference to object-relations psychology, Nelson (2002) suggests to revise Fowler's faith development model to include regression as part of stage transition.

Beyond the "Classical" Procedure

Because structure is the key focus of the researcher's attention according to classical faith development theory, content, function, emotion, and life history are at risk to be marginalized. This is true despite the claim of faith development theory to account for the multi-dimensionality of "faith."[7] Faith development *research* claims to take such multi-dimensionality into account, if viewed against the background of research in the strict Piagetian model.[8] However, if we take a closer look at what kind of data are carried into the final analysis, it can be maintained that *structural evaluation* is the key dimension for research in faith development according to the *Manual*. The variety of factors in Fowler's (1982) dynamic model, such as "life history and marker events," "the contents of faith," "the dynamics of the unconscious," or "the religio-cultural force-field" are not evaluated explicitly; these factors are not operationalized. Hence, the claim in the *Manual* (p. 4) that faith development theory incorporates factors that are ignored or minimalized by Piaget may have some credibility for faith development *theory*; however, we cannot discern an operationalization of these factors in the coding procedure in faith development *research*.

As a consequence from a revision of Fowler's faith development *theory* (Streib, 1991, 1997b, 2001a, 2003b), we need to consider three points of revision in the faith development *research* design: (a) to attend to cross-domain differences and to structural diversity within one stage or style of faith, (b) to explicitly account for content and content diversity, and (c) to include the dimensions of life history and narrative dynamic. The first of these revisions has been addressed earlier. Before addressing the other two points, an overview of the numerous contributions that have been made to faith development research in the last two decades may help us identify the new lines of development. Some creative and innovative proposals for a revision of faith development research emerge from this great number of projects.

OVERVIEW OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH IN FAITH DEVELOPMENT

Within the last 20 years, Fowler's faith development theory has inspired a great number of theoretical and empirical projects. In a survey of databases, mainly Dis-

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[7]A good illustration for faith development's multi-dimensionality is Fowler's (1982) figure, "Toward a Model of the Dynamics of Adult Faith," which explicitly includes the dimensions of life history and marker events in time, the contents of faith, the dynamics of the unconscious, and the religio-cultural force field.

[8]The *Manual* claims: "Rather than isolate the developmental from the psycho-dynamic, as is done by Piaget and Kohlberg, we have attempted to integrate these two forms of activity. In so doing, we have heightened aspects of constructivist epistemology ignored or minimized by Piaget, for example, socio-historical conditions and their impact on the narrative structure of self-understanding." (p. 4)

sertation Abstracts International, but also some other search engines, well over 100 dissertations could be located for which Fowler's faith development theory constituted at least a significant position (Streib, 2003a). Out of this number, almost 90 dissertations focus primarily or exclusively on Fowler's faith development theory. Although a third of these Fowler dissertations discuss Fowler's *theory* and some 10% deal with *application* of faith development theory in religious education, pastoral care, and church work, the majority of these dissertations are *empirical studies*. I found 53 empirical studies in faith development, published in dissertations and articles up to the year 2001, that all use a faith development instrument—either in its classical form according to the *Manual* (29 studies), in a variation of this instrument (16 studies), or in a scale-type form (8 studies).

Replication of the "Classical" Faith Development Interview

The faith development interview according to the *Manual* (1986, or 1993) was used in more than half of the empirical studies (Backlund, 1990; Bassett, 1985; Bradley, 1983; Broun, 1984; Chirban, 1981; Chychula, 1995; Drewek, 1996; Driedger, 1998; Farc, 1999; Furushima, 1983; Gardin, 1997; Grossman, 1991; Haggray, 1993; Hamrick, 1988; Hitchens, 1988; Howlett, 1989; Johnson, 1989; Kalam, 1981; Leary, 1988; Lee, 1999; Mischey, 1976; Moseley, 1978; Shulik, 1979; Snarey, 1991; Spencer, 1996; Tulloch, 1985; Vanden Heuvel, 1985; Vergouwen, 2001; White, 1985). Some studies are applications of the faith development instrument in the analysis of specific groups, such as people dealing with HIV diagnosis, chemical dependency, or the loss of a relative. Cross-cultural studies and research focusing on women's religious development put the faith development instrument to the test. Other studies use the faith development instrument together with other measures and could be labeled correlational studies. One goal of such correlation is to test whether two or more theoretical and methodological perspectives may complement each other. But most of these replication studies focus primarily on structure and offer no decisive modification of the research method.

Scale Construction for Measuring Faith Development

Quantitative faith development measurements and scales (Barnes, Doyle, & Johnson, 1989; Canavan, 1999; Clore, 1997; Green & Hoffman, 1989; Hammond, 1993; Hiebert, 1993; Leak, Louks, & Bowlin, 1999; Swensen, Fuller, & Clements, 1993) promise a less time-consuming procedure and open the possibility that data on faith development could be correlated easily with other scales such as on personality factors, well-being, or fundamentalism. There is, however, no coherent and homogeneous faith development scale construction, but six different proposals:

   1. The instrument developed by Green and Hoffman (1989) was a newly formulated series of questions reflecting what the authors assumed to be compatible

with the questions in the Fowler research tradition. These questions do not meet the standards of faith development research because they reflect a closed Christian worldview and because they pose very sophisticated and self-reflective questions. Their instrument has never been used in research again.

2. The Fowler Scale by Barnes, Doyle, and Johnson (1989) was the first scale to receive some attention and has been re-used in research (Gillan, 2001; James & Samuels, 1999). The Fowler Scale is a short nine-item measure and was constructed for Fowler's Stages Two through Five. For this scale, we have only initial evidence of validity; issues of reliability have not been addressed (Timpe, 1999). It is not perfectly clear what the scores really mean (cf. Leak et al., 1999, p. 106). Further, answering the items requires some previous logical reflection by the interviewee (Timpe, 1999). Finally, like the scale of Green and Hoffman, the Fowler Scale of Barnes et al. cannot be used among non-Christians (cf. Timpe, 1999).

3. Swenson, Fuller, and Clements (1993) developed the Stages of Faith Scale in order to measure faith development in an empirical study about the impact of terminal cancer on the lives of patients and their spouses as a function of the stage of faith. This scale was subsequently used in Canavan's (1999) dissertation. This scale is a very brief five-question selection from the *Manual*. It leaves out important dimensions of the *Manual* entirely, such as the entire section on relationships (significant others, parents), the openness to value commitments beyond the individual, specific aspects of religion (prayer, death, sin), and crises and peak experiences beyond the experiences of hope and faith. It is too brief and has not been tested for validity.

4. Hiebert (1993) developed and tested a 48-item scale that is significantly more comprehensive than the earlier scales. He used it for data collection by means of a mail survey of a sample of 796 freshmen and senior students. He presents the scale as a validated alternative to Fowler's interview. However, in agreement with Canavan's (1999) judgment, it is questionable that Hiebert's scale has achieved "adequate standards of validity and reliability" (p. 34). In part, the questions from Hiebert's scale have been included in Clore's (1997) scale composition.

5. Clore (1997) constructed an original psychometric measure that he tested in a sample of 509 participants and used again in a more recent study (Clore & Fitzgerald, 2002). This scale has 30 items and is thus more comprehensive than the earlier scales. Nevertheless, it deviates from the classical faith development instrument because the questions address themes from Fowler's interview (such as authority issues, meaning of death, significance of rituals) somewhat selectively. It also would require more testing for validity and reliability before it could be widely used in future research.

6. The Faith Development Scale, a short eight-item scale developed by Leak and his group, is the most recent development of a brief instrument for quantitative research in faith development. Leak et al. (1999; Leak, 2003) present results of studies to evidence validity. However, this scale also has a narrow focus on Chris-

tian belief systems; people from new religions or non-Christian participants would not find their views represented well in this instrument. The style in which the questions are formulated elicits rather self-reflective statements.

Taken together, the construction of scales for measuring faith development is an unfinished project. Certainly, Burris (1999) is right that "quickening the empirical pace is a vital task" (p. 166) for future research in faith development. But besides developing new scales and putting them through thorough testing for reliability and validity, consistency with Fowler's conceptualization deserves special attention. Because of the increasing variety of religious and new religious orientations within our societies and the need for inter-religious and cross-cultural research in a globalizing world, a faith development scale construction should not narrow the wide-angle focus on faith that has been Fowler's concern in his conceptualization of faith development from the very beginning.

We have, however, still enough reason to consider other proposals for a research variation that advance the qualitative approach. With an exclusive quantitative procedure, the dimensions that are neglected in the classical procedure of faith development research would have almost no chance of being recovered and reintegrated. This is especially true for narrativity and content. But also the identification of cross-Aspect and intra-Stage diversity is more difficult to investigate, especially with brief scales.

Other Variations of Research in Faith Development

There have been a number of proposals for further modification of the faith development research instrument. Two early studies have been focusing on selected Aspects of the faith development perspective, such as Locus of Authority (Lansdell, 1980) or Symbolic Function (Sweitzer, 1984). For classroom research (Nipkow, Schweitzer, Faust-Siehl, & Krupka, 1996), Fowler's evaluation method has been combined with other perspectives such as Oser's (Oser & Gmünder,1984). Some proposals have sought to modify the instrument more creatively (Hoffman, 1994; Rose, 1991).

Looking for a briefer measure than the faith development interview, Rose (1991) developed a new method to investigate faith development in large samples: a four story instrument. This pencil-and-paper instrument is rather close to a scale construction. It consists of the presentation of four brief story-like imaginary situations (your doctor tells you, father of two children, that after 8 years of smoking, you have terminal cancer; you learn that your marriage counselor is being divorced; you feel that your professional work with children is very exhaustive and leading to a burn-out situation; a symbol has been vandalized) and then asks to respond to about 20 questions relating to these stories on a Likert-type scale. Each answer is associated with one of Fowler's Stages Two through Five and computed respectively. Rose's claim that preliminary reliability estimates appear reasonable

is inconclusive,[9] also his way to judge validity by using the stage estimates of the pastor is highly questionable. Furthermore, Rose does not present an argument supporting his alignment of the questionnaire responses with Fowler's faith stages. Although one can assume that he has invested some reflection on this, it appears that Rose has developed his own version of faith development theory which, however, remains rather implicit. Rose's instrument is creative in that it introduces a story stimulus approach into faith development research that brings him close to the dilemma research method in moral development research; however, the necessity and advantage of this innovation remains unclear. The only advantage of Rose's development lies in its potential for saving time and money.

When further improved and tested for validity, the instrument variation of Rose (1991)—or that of Hoffman (1994), who has developed a Faith Development Essay Instrument (FDEI)—may be considered in further research. However, neither of the instruments presents an advancement with regard to the project of revising the faith development instrument to become more comprehensive, because they do not move beyond structural analysis and do not include dimensions such as content or life history. Therefore, we will turn to the studies that have pursued such inclusion of dimensions that are not incorporated in the classical faith development research procedure, and thus make use of narrative analysis (Anderson, 1995; Morgan, 1990a; Nahavandi, 1999; Smith, 1997) or types of content analysis (Bolen, 1994; Cowden, 1992; Marcato, 2000; Morgan, 1990b; Pender, 2000; Rael, 1995; Watt, 1997).

ACCOUNTING FOR CONTENT DIVERSITY

Contributions to Content Analysis in Faith Development Research

The problem of the relation of structure and content in faith development theory and research has not come to a conclusion because of Fowler's own discussion of the issue in *Stages of Faith.* Entire dissertations or at least chapters have been dedicated to this problem, discussing the topic primarily from theoretical perspectives. Some more recent contributions decide this question less in theory discussion than in the design of empirical research by including content analysis into their faith development research projects—which, however, has been labeled differently. Names vary between "qualitative" approach (Rael, 1995), "phenomenological hermeneutical" approach (Pender, 2000), "Grounded Theory" approach (Bolen, 1994), or "thematic analysis" (Watt, 1997). Watt, for example, has used the ques-

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[9]Reliability estimates for the four stages assessed in a sample of 371 participants were as follows: .75 for the Mythic-Literal scale, .16 for the Synthetic-Conventional scale, .78 for the Individuative-Reflective scale, and .19 for the Conjunctive scale.

tions from the *Manual* to structure a focus group discussion and elicit responses that are then "analyzed by themes" by the interviewer herself and another qualitative auditor (p. 86f, 109f.). Bolen, in his analysis of five case studies, has used a Grounded Theory approach that seems to be methodologically sound, but very time-consuming, because the content dimensions have been identified without the help of computer assistance. Two content-analytic projects should be discussed in more detail, one of which has incorporated a kind of "several-reading content analysis" (Cowden, 1992), the other a computer-assisted Grounded Theory type method (Marcato, 2000).

Cowden (1992) has developed a method of content analysis based on adaptations of Gilligan's and Fowler's approaches. This content-analytic approach is divided into several "readings": a reading in which the evaluator seeks an understanding of the overall narrative in the interview; a reading focusing on themes that are present throughout the interview and can be categorized; a reading of moral dilemma situations that may display moral orientations of care or justice; and finally, a reading that analyzes the faith stage with respect to Fowler's seven Aspects of faith. Despite the fact that the number of "readings" should be discussed in more detail, Cowden's research strategy of restricting structural faith development analysis to one reading and introducing content analysis in faith development research is a helpful suggestion and should be considered in our search for a new faith development research design, which should eventually use computer assistance but definitely include a focus on content analysis.

Cowden has investigated the faith development of 10 American Baptist clergywomen, 5 African American and 5 White, ranging in age from 30 to 45. Cowden found that in five of the women morality of care was predominant, four had a predominant orientation of justice, and one an integration of the two moral orientations. In a further evaluative step, Cowden determined that the women's different moral orientations are expressed in different faith language and that the women represent three different stages in Fowler's theory. It can be seen as the most provoking result in Cowden's study that she identified two different moral orientations in the five women at Stage Four: "Three of the women at Stage Four evidenced a moral orientation of justice, whereas the other two reflected a care orientation" (p. 132). Cowden concludes that "the results of this research would suggest that in order to obtain a fuller understanding of the dynamic process of faith development in women, Fowler's theory would have to accommodate insights from Gilligan's theory of moral development in order to adequately portray the faith development process in women's experience" (p. 143). Cowden's research would not have been possible without content analysis.

Marcato (2000) investigated the faith, spirituality, and concepts of religion among Generation X Roman Catholics and sought "a greater understanding of the experiences of God among this generation in order to determine whether the gen-

eration is experiencing a crisis of faith, a struggle in cultivating spirituality, or abandoning religion" (p. VI). In terms of method, Marcato has introduced new avenues: the data of 30 Xers were collected through interviews and drawings. For the verbal data, Marcato used the questions from the *Manual* and also Rizzuto's (1979) God Questionnaire. The interviews were coded and categorized. Through the Constant Comparative Method (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992), common themes could be identified and the frequency of certain themes within and across the interviews could emerge (p. 40).

Despite limitations in regard to her sampling method and the restriction to the Roman Catholic Generation X, Marcato's research indicates that the faith development instrument has great potential for eliciting content-specific data about a person's faith that can be organized in computer-assisted content analysis.

Methodological Proposal for Content Analysis in Faith Development

These modifications of the faith development research instrument with a stronger focus on the content dimension are inspiring. Content analysis should be considered as an advancement and be included in subsequent research. However, the research design in Cowden's, but especially in Marcato's, projects tend to put structural analysis into the background, results emerge predominantly from the focus on content analysis—either in the form of various readings or in a computer-assisted procedure. What is lacking in these proposals is a more convincing methodical account for the *relationship* between the content dimension and the structural dimension.

The hypothesis of the "structuring power of the contents of faith," to use Fowler's (1981, p. 273; passim) terms—or, to phrase it less ambitiously, assumptions about the content affinity of the developmental structures—has not yet been redeemed in empirical method. This is our project here. We have reason to assume that, not only in the individual interview, but also across the interviews of a certain sample, the styles of faith and their development correspond to specific contents and beliefs, such as images of God or the Ultimate, symbolic expressions about God's relation to oneself and humanity, beliefs about personal and human destiny, interpretations of experiences and contingencies, moral implications for the individual, religious community and humanity, to name a few.

The methodical procedure (see the summary in Table 1) should thus include a second step in addition to structural analysis: The contents must be coded using content-analytic approaches. Then the two kinds of codes can be correlated. Computer programs allow for such two-dimensional coding and for establishing a relationship between the two dimensions.

ACCOUNTING FOR NARRATIVE DIVERSITY

Regard for the Narrativity of Faith in Faith Development Research

Regarding the narrative structure of the life history, faith development research claims to pay due attention. The *Manual* aims to include the socio-historical conditions and their impact on the narrative structure of self-understanding and therefore appreciates the fact that the interviews yield data on the individual's life history. This importance of life history is also claimed for *evaluation*; the *Manual* (1986) presents a resolute statement: "When abstracted from the context of life history such 'scores' are meaningless. … Faith development theory takes seriously the narrative structure of life history" (pp. 2–3). Certainly, life history is important to faith development theory and research. The entire project of faith development theory consists of telling developmental stories, of recognizing these developmental stories in the interviews. In other words, research is meant to reconstruct the developmental narrative from the interviewee's reflective and narrative responses in terms of the structural-developmental theory. Furthermore, for the classical faith development research procedure, the *Manual* suggests a decisive step toward an inclusion of an interviewee's life history, the Life Tapestry Exercise, in which the interviewee is asked to divide his or her life into chapters and to note events, crises, images of God, and so forth, in a table. The inclusion of the Life Tapestry Exercise is an indication of the tendency to ascribe increased importance to life history. This may even pave the way toward investing the domain of the narrative of a respondent's life story with the degree of importance it deserves in the evaluation procedure for the interview material. When we read the present *Manual*'s instructions for the raters, however, we learn that the Life Tapestry Exercise is "optional," and that it is "not coded directly"—although regarded as a useful source of background information for the coding process.

Contributions to a Narrative Approach in Faith Development Research

The transcribed text of the interview contains a rich narrative representation of the interviewee's life history and developmental history. This invites narrative analysis and the development of specific evaluation procedures. Some more recent empirical projects have gone in this direction and should be considered before a proposal for a more systematic narrative analysis in faith development research is presented. Three empirical projects using a narrative approach are of limited value for a revision of the faith development research procedure, but are summarized briefly, before a more promising research design will be reviewed.

E. F. Morgan (1990a) applied a proposed narrative scale model, containing eight stages (early religious experiences, drifting, exile, indifference, "stasis," re-awakening, rapprochement, and integration), which is a combination of a rather broad collection of approaches, narrative critical research methods, theological inquiry, developmental psychology, theories of aging, and faith development, as well as ethnographic methods. A similar broad and rather intuitive approach has been developed by Anderson (1995); she characterized her interpretive method as "descriptive narrative research." The interviews were evaluated in a series of readings, searching for narrative structures according to Bruner (1987) and Lakoff & Johnson (1980). Finally, Smith (1997) announced the goal of developing a grounded theory about the faith and professional development of women religious leadership through qualitative research on the stories of women religious leaders from the past and the present using narrative analysis. However, Smith gave no clear account of the method of narrative analysis she used and presented a kind of systematization of the various stories of women religious leaders and illustrated the common themes with many quotes from the interviews. Also this "whirlpool" approach—the author's own final characterization of a "model"—did not suggest any theoretical or methodological advancement for research in faith development.

Nahavandi (1999) presents two integrative case studies of elderly persons. For these case studies, she demonstrates the advantage of compiling the faith development interview with McAdams's (1993) Identifying Personal Myth Interview Protocol, thus creating a new research instrument that intends to increase awareness of how the spiritual dimensions of the elderly may bring forth greater understanding of communities and societies. Nahavandi reports that the combination of the two interview models brought forth greater, more in-depth, and more complete understanding of her participants, especially regarding the complex and multifaceted world of the elderly, their spirituality, and their faith, from the perspective of the narrative theory of personality development. Two case studies are by no means a large sample. Nevertheless, Nahavandi's compilation of the two research protocols is inspiring because it may show a way to approach both personal mythology and faith development in a research design, thereby integrating a narrative approach into faith development research.

Methodological Proposal for Narrative Analysis of Faith Development

Narrative analysis opens the door for taking account of the interviewee's own narration of his or her developmental trajectory. It is important to note thereby that the narrative in the interview text yields access to the dynamics of latent structures below the conscious reflective statements of the interviewee about his or her past. The narrativity of the interview text allows us to access a biographical depth dimension. In addition to the synchronic dimension of a person's present state of

faith development that we are used to identifying in the analysis of the responses in the interview, narrative analysis brings the diachronic dimension into view. Furthermore, the interviewee's narratives present the biographical integration by which the narrator has more or less successfully attempted to come to terms with past experiences that, may they be traumatic or exciting, may have required some biographical psycho-hygienic type of work.

The narrative in the interview is, in the first place and on first sight of the text, of course, the narrator's own narrative reconstruction of his or her development, and thoughtful methodological steps are necessary to reconstruct the interviewee's own more or less conscious subjective theory from the interpreter's (foreign) analytical perspective.[10] Schütze's (1981, 1983, 1984) methodological approach—which suggests demarcating narrative segments and further distinguishing narrative supra- and subsegments—gives the interpreter the freedom to reconstruct and possibly rearrange the interviewee's story in a new way. This perspective is most adequate for narrative interviews in the proper sense in which we invite the interviewee to tell his or her story and continue telling until the story has come to an end in his or her perception. However, we find many narrative segments in almost all of the interviews, even if they are "semi-structured" by the faith development interview questions. These narrative segments, when highlighted and (re-) arranged, present, at least in part, the person's narrative. The interpretative task of reconstructing a story line or plot is the first and foremost task of narrative analysis. The reconstruction of the type of narrative dynamics in a specific interview then allows for a contrasting comparison with other narratives. From this contrastive comparison, certain narrative-structural similarities or contrasts come to the interpreter's attention. The final result of narrative analysis is a typological chart in which the individual biographical trajectory can be located in a typological field.[11]

Our project here, however, is an integration of narrative analysis with developmental analysis—which, according to the methodological proposal in the previous sections, combines the classical structural-developmental analysis with content analysis. The important step we must take in order to combine the structural, the content-specific, and the narrative-analytic dimensions is the evaluation of each narrative segment in terms of structural and content-specific style, that is, the assignment of labels indicating a style or stage code of the narrative segment thereby focusing on the story told, rather than on the way of telling. This way, we may obtain a faith development profile of the (reconstructed) course of the person's biographical development.

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[10]See also Chapter 10 in my dissertation (Streib, 1991) where I propose a methodological perspective in reference to the work of Ricoeur.

[11]For this step in narrative analysis, the works of McAdams (1990, 1993; McAdams, Josselson, & Lieblich, 2001) are inspiring.

CONCLUSION: FAITH DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH REVISITED

The Religious Styles Perspective

The proposed advancements of research in faith development integrate well with, and are inspired by, a new perspective on the structural-developmental theory of religion that is a modification of James Fowler's faith development theory, the typology of religious styles (Streib, 2001a).[12] This revision is aimed at accounting more fully for the life history and life-world relatedness of religion at its principal interactive, interpersonal origin and shape. Thus, the phenomenologists Merleau-Ponty's and Ricoeur's philosophical perspectives, Noam's developmental perspective basing upon interpersonality, as well as Rizzuto's view of the psychodynamic development of religion play a significant role for the reformulation.

The religious styles perspective is able to provide an explanation of fundamentalist orientations and turns that the structural-developmental theories of religious or faith development have not been able to provide because their framework cannot account for regression, or the kind of partial regression onto, or revival of, earlier rigid or do-ut-des styles. The cognitive-structural theories of development in their traditional form of structural, hierarchical, sequential, and irreversible logic of development result from an all too optimistic interpretation of the project of modernity. If left unchanged, they cannot provide us with an explanatory framework for understanding fundamentalism and individual fundamentalist revivals. Fundamentalism is a special and outstanding instance, but only one instance, of the more general complexity of faith trajectories that includes the possible presence of more than one style in a person's life. There is reason to call into question the assumption of a "structural whole" in faith development—and implement this view in the research method.

Consequences: The Revised Research Strategy in Faith Development

For future faith development research, a coherent and consistent improvement of the qualitative instrument is essential. Thereby, the inclusion of narrative approaches and the accounting for content dimensions hold the greatest promise for a significant innovation. As detailed earlier, a series of empirical studies have already moved in this direction and included a narrative approach; others have opted for a content-analytical design. However, these creative new research designs tend toward throwing out the

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[12]In the article (Streib, 2001a), an overview of religious styles is presented and illustrated in a figure (p. 150).

baby with the bathwater by favoring narrative or content analysis at the cost of the structural dimension. A decidedly integrative and consistent approach is desirable.

If we cannot exclude the possibility that more than one style is present simultaneously within one and the same orientation of a person, as the religious styles perspective suggests, then we must adjust the research method to this expectation in order to at least assure that we account for the potential diversity of styles. The fundamentalist revival of earlier styles may be but one of the most obvious instances of such a mix and mingle of styles. We must account for cross-domain differences and for diversity within one stage or style of faith.

Thus a conclusion from the methodological proposals of the previous sections suggests a significant revision of research procedure in faith development research. The connection between two of the evaluative dimensions, structure and content, has already been indicated here. However, all three dimensions, structure, content, and narrativity, need to be included and integrated in a procedure. It is the concluding proposal of this article that the evaluation of a faith development interview should proceed in three steps. This could be accomplished by three consequent readings, or, in computer-assisted research, in three different types of codes (see Table 1).

Through a combination of all three codings, a more comprehensive and coherent image of the interviewee's faith and faith development emerges. The richness of coding suggests systematizing and charting the relationship between structural codes and content codes. This would result in a map-like portrait of structure-content assignments—which may allow not only for inferences about the content-specific character of this person's faith structure(s), but also for an analysis of the internal consistency of the person's faith style(s), or for differences, contradictions, and revivals, respectively. The narrative-analytical segmentation and reconstruction allows us to place these findings in the diachronic relief of the participant's life history, as reconstructed from the interviewee's own narration. Finally, in form of a map or table, these results provide most inspiring data for writing a case study and for locating the individual case in a typology of biographical trajectories.

A revision of faith development research is both necessary and possible. Notwithstanding the need for a solid faith development scale construction, the proposal here is primarily concerned with the advancement of the qualitative research design to which faith development research has been inclined from the start. Although the possibility and direction of such revision has been demonstrated in a number of creative design variations in previous faith development research, a coherent procedure has been missing that is able to integrate attention to structural, narrative, and content diversity. The proposed procedure, through its methodological triangulation of structure, content, and narrativitiy, may yield a better portrait of the variety and complexity of people's faith development.

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