
“Whether These Gifts Are from God, from Buddha, from the Universe, I Do Not Care, I Do Not Care at All...”— Quilt Spiritualities

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Abstract

There are some labels for those lay persons in the religious field who create their individual “spirituality” by drawing on different traditions and practices: “accumulative heretics” (Streib, 1998), “composers of religion” (“Religionskomponisten,” Zulehner, 2001), “pilgrims” (Hervieu-Leger, 2004; Davie, 2001), “spiritual wayfarers” (“spirituelle Wanderer,” Bochsinger, Engelbrecht, & Gebhart, 2009). For their creations there are expressions such as “patchwork religion” (Wuthnow, 1998) or “religion à la carte” (Saroglou, 2006), “religious bricolage” (Luckmann, 1967, 1979) or “hybrid religions” (“Religionshybride,” Berger, Hock, & Klie, 2013). These definitions focus on the parts taken from or time spent within different traditions, taking the individual work of integration more or less into account. Here, we focus on the personal accounts of integrating varied experiences with different traditions of relating to the transcendent (see Chap. 1). We suggest to rather speak of “quilt” spirituality to capture the process of configuring individual appropriations of different traditions, centering on ongoing personal experience. We also want to stress that we consider the products to be individual works of art as well as articles of daily use, which may be altered as their creators go through their lives.

„Das sind Geschenke, ob von Gott, von Buddha, aus dem Universum ist mir völlig egal, ist mir völlig egal.“ (from interact 46, FDI with Marion N.). The interview transcript in full length for Marion N. and all other cases in this chapter are available in Appendix B (B.7 and B.8).

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“The Question If God Does Exist or Not Is Not a Question Which I Deliberately Had. I Never Formulated that Question, I Was Rather a Seeker...”¹—Marion N.

The case of Marion N. has been selected because she scores high on *openness to experience* and relatively high on the M-Scale. We would expect her to be interested in exploring religious options, in experience-oriented religiosity. Marion also represents a type of deconvert from her original tradition who embarks on a life-long quest (Streib, Hood, Keller, Csöff, & Silver, 2009).

Introductory Biographical Outline

Marion N., 65 years old at the time of the interview, has left conventional Protestantism. Looking back, she characterizes her family as “more religious than spiritual” when she was 12 years old. Marion might be considered a “baby boomer” who studied (after a first marriage and caring for two small children) during the late sixties and early seventies of the last century (“68” being another label for her generation in West Germany). She was involved in demonstrations and wore the purple-dyed overalls (“lila Latzhosen”) which second wave feminists used to wear then in former West Germany. She has been married twice and has worked as a teacher. When the “esotericism boom”² started in West Germany, she went to an ashram in Poona, a large city in India with a spiritual center, guided by the then famous guru “Bhagwan” who was popular among German students looking for “alternative” ways of living. After having worked as a teacher, then in a hospice, she is now doing freelance work as a therapeutic clown in hospital settings, with children or elderly persons suffering with dementia. At the time of the

interview she is engaging in Zen practices. She has a close relationship to a female friend. Both women share projects and visions of what they consider an “art of aging.” She is taking care of her aged mother, “emotionally, not nursing.”

Mapping Marion N.’s Case Based on Questionnaire Responses

We have reported (see Fig. 17.2) that Marion scores high on *openness to experience* and relatively high on *mysticism*. A more comprehensive comparison of Marion’s individual responses to the questionnaire with the means for the focus group of the “more spiritual than religious atheists/non-theists” focus group in Germany is presented in Table 20.1.

Regarding the scales tapping into different facets of religion, Marion scores higher than the average of her reference group on all three subscales of the M-Scale, by one standard deviation for *introvertive* and *extrovertive mysticism*, and by half a standard deviation for (*religious*) *interpretation*. Her score on *attitudes toward God* is about average, and on the RSS she shows the interesting pattern of relatively high scores on *truth of texts and teachings (ttt)*, together with high scores on *xenosophia and interreligious dialogue*, with average scores on *fairness, tolerance and rational choice*. Her relatively high score on *ttt* corresponds to what we would expect from “equally religious and spiritual theists” in Germany.

On the “Big Five” personality scales, she shows high scores (besides *openness to experience*) on *extraversion* and *agreeableness*, while her scores on *neuroticism* and *conscientiousness* are a half a standard deviation below the average of her focus group. *Environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations with others* are the scales with high scores from Ryff’s measure of psychological well-being. Taken together, this profile describes a psychologically stable person with an outgoing, perhaps a little daring, attitude, invested in experience-based spirituality, who also seems to appreciate the tradition she grew up with.

¹„...die Frage, ob es Gott gibt oder nicht, die hat sich mir nicht bewusst gestellt. Ich habe die auch so nie gestellt, sondern ich war eher auf der Suche.“ (from interact 28).

²„Esoterikwelle“.

Table 20.1 Comparison of Marion N. With Respective Focus Group on the Most Important Scales in the Questionnaire

	Single case variable values for Marion N	Mean values for “more spiritual than religious atheists/non-theists” focus group in Germany	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Personality (NEO-FFI)			
<i>Neuroticism</i>	23	18.9	8.8
<i>Extraversion</i>	32	26.5	6.2
<i>Openness to experience</i>	46	35.9	5.6
<i>Agreeableness</i>	37	31.9	5.2
<i>Conscientiousness</i>	25	29.2	6.0
Mysticism (Mysticism Scale total)	148	112.6	27.1
<i>Introvertive mysticism</i>	60	44.1	10.8
<i>Extrovertive mysticism</i>	38	27.4	7.9
<i>Interpretation</i>	50	41.1	11.7
Psychological well-being			
<i>Autonomy</i>	26	25.6	3.8
<i>Environmental mastery</i>	31	25.3	5.3
<i>Personal growth</i>	34	29.5	3.1
<i>Positive relations with others</i>	33	27.0	3.7
<i>Purpose in life</i>	25	24.9	4.1
<i>Self-acceptance</i>	29	26.4	4.3
Generativity (Loyola Generativity Scale)	51	53.4	7.5
Attitudes toward God	49	51.8	8.8
Religious Schema Scale			
<i>Truth of texts and teachings</i>	14	7.8	3.2
<i>Fairness, tolerance and rational choice</i>	23	22.2	2.3
<i>Xenosophia/ inter-religious dialog</i>	22	17.4	3.2

Note All mean values are based on covariance analyses with the variables for country and focus group as predictors, while controlled by sex, age, cultural capital, and per-capita income

Marion’s Semantic of “Spirituality”

In the questionnaire, Marion has given her definition of “spirituality”:

To be attentive and empathic in everyday life, be mindful of the moment, self-reflection, daily Zen-meditation, to be there for other creatures (without Mother Theresa-syndrome), to not kill and eat any animals, the middle way of Buddha and Buddhist psychology.³

She defines religion as:

Believing, not knowing, dogma, personalized God (which does not exist according to my view) church, a dead end, too little personal freedom, but new assertive approaches make discussion worthwhile. I welcome comprehensive dialogue.⁴

While critical of dogma, Marion appreciates innovative activities in the church and welcomes dialog. This mirrors her endorsement of her traditional religion along with her seeking and open attitude displayed in the scales reviewed above.

Marion’s ratings on the Osgood Semantic Differential (Fig. 20.1) display “spirituality” as neutral, scorings situated exactly between the respective opposites. Assessments for “religion” for most adjectives overlap with “spirituality,” with the exception of “awful,” “rough,” “harsh,” “powerless,” “dark,” “old” assessed as stronger characterizing religion. This renders “spirituality” neutral, while “religion” seems to be evaluated more negatively. Perhaps, different from other German “more spiritual atheists and non-theists” who evaluated “spirituality” more favorable compared to “religion” (Figure A.10), Marion did not feel comfortable to evaluate “spirituality” at all.

Marion’s ratings on the Contextual Semantic Differential (Fig. 20.2) also show, compared to the

³„Den Alltag aufmerksam u. emphatisch leben, Achtsamkeit in diesem Augenblick, Selbstreflektion, tägliche ZEN-Meditation, für andere Lebewesen da sein (ohne Helfersyndrom), kein Tier töten und essen, den mittleren Weg des Buddha und budd. Psychologie“.

⁴„Glauben-nicht wissen, Dogma, personifizierter Gott (gibt es m.E. nicht) Kirche- eine Sackgasse, zu wenig persönliche Freiheit, aber neue, offensive Ansätze lohnen eine Auseinandersetzung. Übergreifende Dialoge begrüße ich sehr.“

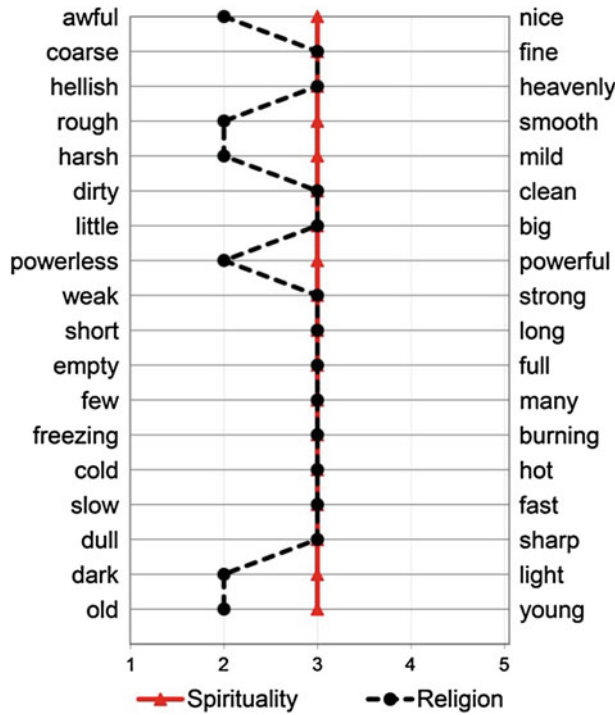


Fig. 20.1 Marion’s Ratings on the Osgood Semantic Differential

figure with the ratings of the German focus group (A.24), besides a tendency toward the middle, considerable overlap of the assessments of both “spirituality” and “religion.” “Spirituality,” however, is also characterized as more “creative,” “fascinating,” “moral,” more “complacent” than “religion,” and, interestingly, on this differential, even more definitely “old” than “religion,” while “religion” is characterized as more “flexible,” “oppressive,” “rigorous,” “demanding,” “traditional,” “boring,” “selfish,” “masculine,” “complacent,” and “weak.” Here, “spirituality” is evaluated not only neutral, but using the whole range of the scale. Positive and negative connotations are balanced, while religion has more negative, but less extreme, connotations.

Marion’s Faith Development

Based on the faith development evaluation of the interview with Marion, for which we have followed closely the *Manual for Faith*

Development Research, Marion’s interview shows predominantly a conjunctive faith or dialogical religious style. Her scorings span from mythic-literal faith and reciprocal style (found in *perspective taking/relationships*) to conjunctive faith or dialogical style (in the aspects *moral judgment, locus of authority, form of world coherence, symbolic functioning*). It seems that personal relationships are an area of early and more basic notions for Marion, while in other areas such as symbolic function, she shows a higher level of functioning according to FDI-evaluation (Fig. 20.3).

This corresponds to her scores in the Religious Schema Scale, where she shows high scores on *truth of texts and teachings*, supposedly related to stage two, mythic-literal faith or reciprocal religious style, and on *xenos*, which is supposed to indicate stage five or dialogical religious style. This may reflect a basic adherence to early commitments and forms of relating, while at the same time enjoying the wider perspective she has acquired.



Fig. 20.2 Marion’s Ratings on the Contextual Semantic Differential

Summary of Marion’s Faith Development

Taken together, Marion makes the impression of a mature person who reflects on her faith development, acknowledging shortcomings and crises as well as blessings. The range of her FDI scorings and the high scores on the oppositional RSS-scales *mtt* and *xenos* point to what Streib (1998) has called “heterodyning,” the presence of more than one style.

evaluated. In the interview with Marion, it is particularly interesting that the additional ratings of “wisdom” and “mentalization” received high ratings. This corresponds to her attachment status which was rated as secure. Her statements on the problems in her family, which motivated her to seek help in psychotherapy and, later, her affiliations with spiritual traditions (see below) suggest that this may be an earned security.

Wisdom and Mentalization in Marion’s Interview

As detailed in Chap. 15, the evaluation of the faith development interview gains depth and profile when additional dimensions are

The Narrative Structure and Content Aspects in Marion’s Interview

Attending to the narrative dynamics in Marion’s interview (see Chap. 16 for a methodological

discussion), it is noteworthy that early in the interview she makes clear how she wants to be understood:

What is important for me is that I always have been a creative and highly sensitive person and back then, when I was a child, this was more seen as a nuisance, people, or the grown-ups could hardly handle that, and therefore I find it important that I have created a space, not a virtual space, but a space for myself where I could be at home, so to speak. I find that important. External events, I grew up in a petty bourgeois home. When I am telling this with little emotion it does not mean that I am holding back, there are feelings about this, but these are no longer relevant. I have worked through those, therapeutically, and also spiritually, therefore I have to dig this up, these things are not present any more. (interact 10)⁵

She clearly focuses on her spiritual journey, informing the interviewer on how she sees herself and on her psychotherapeutic and spiritual experience. By letting the interviewer know how she wants to be understood she shows awareness of the possible response of being perceived as removed from her emotions.

Life Review

When Marion names her life chapters, she starts with a conventional taxonomy of developmental phases: “childhood, adolescence,” then names in a more idiosyncratic way a “chapter with my personality, kind of estranged, so to speak,” then combines the label of a life phase and an idiosyncratic label for the next chapter: “aging, getting back to myself, to me, as a person” (interact 4).

⁵„Also was für mich bedeutsam ist, dass ich immer ein kreativer hochsensibler Mensch war und zu meiner Zeit, als ich Kind war, war das eher störend, also die Menschen oder die Erwachsenen konnten kaum damit umgehen und darum finde ich das wichtig, dass ich mir einen Raum geschaffen habe, also einen sozusagen nicht virtuellen, aber einen eigenen Raum geschaffen habe, in dem ich dann zu Hause war sozusagen. Das finde ich bedeutsam. Äußere Ereignisse, also ich bin aufgewachsen in einem sehr kleinbürgerlichen Haus. Wenn ich das mit wenig Emotionen erzähle, liegt das nicht daran, dass ich da was zurückhalte, also dazu sind Gefühle da, durchaus, aber die sind nicht mehr relevant. Also ich habe die therapeutisch und in meinem Leben verarbeitet, u. a. eben auch spirituell, deswegen kann ich das auch, ich muss das hoch holen, das ist nicht mehr in mir präsent in dem Sinne.“

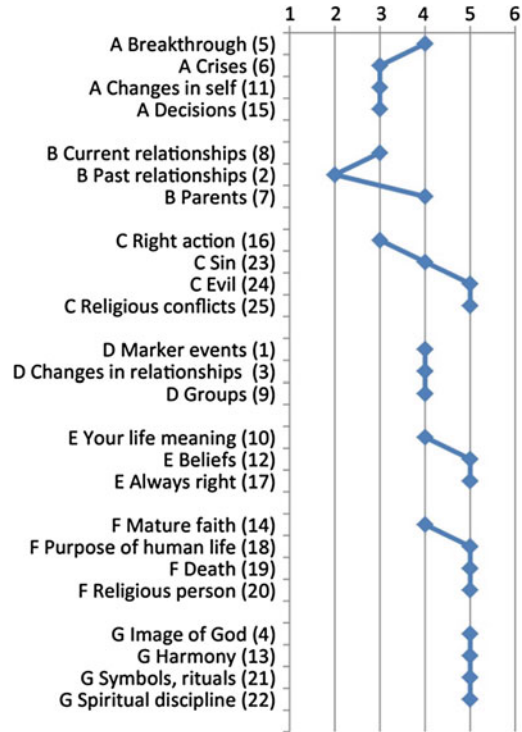


Fig. 20.3 Faith Stage Assignments to Marion’s Answers to the FDI Questions

Her combination of conventional life phases and personal issues points to her awareness of conventional trajectories and personal developmental issues. Attending to her response to the “life chapters” question in the faith development interview, we see that Marion sees her development as a movement toward finding her destination, toward individuation. Growing up in a petty bourgeois environment and being close to her mother, she married for the first time when she was 18 years old. In hindsight, she claims that she “fell into” marriage and family, and only later became aware that she had other tasks in life. She has known crises: to work through the separation from her first husband and father of her children she sought psychotherapeutic support. A second crisis occurred when her son had a mental illness at age 18 (interact 10). This seems to have been an existential challenge which led her to critically look at the situation of her family and to ask big questions of guilt and atonement, of what it means to be human (interact 12), motivating a spiritual

Table 20.2 Marion’s Narrative Segment “Surrender and Loving Myself”

Title	Surrender and loving myself
Abstract/orientation	<p>Many small experiences, but one is really special. When I was in Poona, it was about surrender, let’s say. There is a really big hall, for 5000 people, and I saw people of every nation, men and women, too, who did not show any signs of dependency and they went to the front after the event and they lay down or they bowed in front of a poster of Osho, on the floor, and I often had watched that...</p> <p>(Sicher viele kleine, aber es gibt einen ganz besonderen. Als ich da in Poona war, da sah ich, da ging es um diese Hingabe sage ich mal. Das ist eine riesige Halle wo 5000 Menschen reinpassen und ich sah Menschen jeglicher Nationen, auch Männer und Frauen, die keinerlei Abhängigkeiten zeigten, die nach dieser Veranstaltung, die dann da stattfand, nach vorne gingen und sich vor diesem, ich sag mal Poster, ich sag das mal absichtlich so platt, so einem Poster von Osho da auf die Erde legten und verneigten und das habe ich mir oft angeguckt...)</p>
Complication	<p>And when you are in this atmosphere you can easily get the feeling I have to watch myself, have to take care not to run after a guru and give up everything else. I had this feeling and I was fascinated anyway. Then I thought if these people radiate such self-confidence then something different must happen, and I waited a long time, and then I want, it is a nice story, and I do not want to go into the details, and then I dared and it was like the walk to Canossa, like there, in front, is the end of the world and when I do this and lay down and bow I will be dependent forever, I do not know on what, but I did it. There is something very personal which I need not go into...</p> <p>(und wenn man in dieser Atmosphäre ist, dann hat man schnell das Gefühl, ich muss aufpassen, dass ich hier nicht irgendwie so auf eine Weise hinter einem Guru herflattere und alles aufgabe oder so. Also ich hatte das Gefühl und es hat mich trotzdem fasziniert. Da dachte ich, wenn diese Menschen, die ein Selbstwertgefühl ausstrahlen, dann muss da was anderes passieren sozusagen und ich habe lange gewartet und dann will ich das, also das ist eine schöne Geschichte, aber die will ich jetzt nicht weiter ausführen, sondern eben halt nur so im Kern und irgendwann habe ich es gewagt und das war für mich wie ein Gang nach Canossa so psychisch gesehen, da vorne ist jetzt die Welt zu Ende und wenn ich das mache und mich dahinlege und mich verneige oder irgend so was dann, dann bin ich für immer und ewig abhängig von keine Ahnung was und ich habe das gemacht und das sind auch sehr persönliche Gefühle, das lassen wir jetzt mal außen vor...)</p>
Evaluation/attempts to solve	<p>But when I got up and turned around, there was something that had made an imprint on my life. And this was: the world keeps turning. No one had taken notice. I had thought everyone would stare, here is she walking, but everything around me just went on and for humankind nothing much had happened</p> <p>(Aber als ich aufstand und mich umdrehte, da gab es etwas, was mein Leben von da an geprägt hat und das war, die Welt ging weiter, niemand hatte mich zur Kenntnis genommen, vorher hatte ich so ein Gefühl, alle gucken jetzt, wie die dahingeht, also um mich herum ging alles weiter wie bisher und es war eigentlich für die Menschheit gar nichts passiert)</p>
Resolution	<p>All of a sudden I realized that I had had an encounter with myself, and to me, this is, if am allowed to use that expression, something divine also</p> <p>(Und ich wusste mit einem Mal, ich war mir selbst begegnet und das ist für mich, wenn wir diesen Begriff schon gebrauchen wollen, auch göttlich.)</p>
Coda	<p>From then on I have loved myself</p> <p>(Von da an habe ich mich selber gern gehabt) (interact 40)</p>

quest. Later, living in an ashram in India had an impact on her development, and then, again some years later, leaving teaching and starting to work as a clown in health care settings (interact 28).

A third crisis, some years prior to the interview, was related to the loss of her grandchild due to the separation of the parents. Marion tells that this made her turn to a church for support, and she

Table 20.3 Marion's Narrative Segment "Celebrating Being an Old Fool"

Title	Celebrating being an old fool
Orientation	Genius locus, the initiation of an old crow or of an old fool, we went to that place, to celebrate being old, the two of us, and were you have not, and the correct expression is genius loci. I do not want to lecture you, but in poetry this is the genial location, were you, well, a place with a spirit, translated, and we wanted to create something sacred, something beautiful, and the funny thing is, in that moment my belly started to rumble (Also Genius Locus, die Initiation einer alten Krähe bzw. einer alten Närrin sagt, wir sind an einen Ort gefahren und haben das Alt sein gefeiert, wir beide und das, wo man das dann nicht, eigentlich heißt dieser Begriff ja Genius Loci, also ich will Sie nicht bevormunden, aber in der Dichtkunst ist das der geniale Ort, wo man eben, na ja eben übersetzt ein genialer Ort und (Lachen) wir wollten nun das auch alles ganz schön heilig gestalten, also so einfach schön gestalten so und der Witz ist, in dem Moment grummelte es bei mir im Bauch)
Complication	Everything was sacred and I needed to find a toilet (laughing). (alles war heilig und ich musste zum Klo (Lachen))
Evaluation/Attempts to solve	And this is the fool, it is the fool who finds this funny, but also friendly and funny in a loving way (So, und das ist dann die Närrin, das ist die Närrin die das so komisch findet, aber auch so freundlich und liebevoll komisch)
Resolution	I would never think "now the ritual is ruined" or something like that, I just thought, "yes, this is exactly what is also part of it all" (Also ich käme nie auf die Idee, das ganze Ritual ist im Eimer und so was, sondern ich habe nur gedacht, jawoll das genau gehört dazu.)
Coda	And this is what belongs to a whole life and to me this feels liberating, again, and I will tell this story until I am 90, provided I get this old. (Und das ist das was eben zum ganzen Leben gehört und das finde ich wieder mal befreiend und das werde ich, wenn ich solange lebe, noch mit 90 erzählen.) (interact 136)

began to pray again. What saved her, however, was her work as a clown, who turns to the sick and demented, giving love and laughter, and who, to her understanding, is a representation of the idea of the fool (interact 46). The religious identity narratives identified in her interview focus on her experiences in India (see Table 20.2) and on her way of being spiritual as an old fool (see Table 20.3).

Narrative Segments

To the question exploring breakthrough experiences Marion responds with a narrative structured according to Labov and Waletzky (1967), with orientation, complication, evaluation and resolution, as shown in Table 20.2. As this narrative segment demonstrates, Marion centers on her change of perspective from concern with her

appearance in the eyes of others to her own individual development.

Relationships

When asked to discuss relationships which were important to her development, she responds: "Yes, in any case my mother. And then I did not engage in relationships. Excepting, not, in a spiritual sense. I have never, ever adored anyone, relationships, yes, but not in a spiritual sense, there I was always alone on my way." (interact 14).⁶ Later, she explains that her second marriage ended when her husband did not share her

⁶„Ja also auf jeden Fall meine Mutter. So und dann habe ich mich nicht auf Beziehungen eingelassen. Also außer, also jetzt nicht im spirituellen Sinne. Ich hatte niemals, ich habe niemals jemanden angehimmelt, auf Beziehungen ja, aber nicht im spirituellen Sinne, da war ich immer alleine auf dem Weg.“

spiritual interests and that her spiritual journey led her to the (non-sexual but close) relationship with another woman which she enjoys at the time of the interview (interact 18). In her view, situations have had more of an impact on her than people (interact 16).

Values and Commitments

It is important to her, since she gave up work in the hospice, that she has no obligations to groups or causes but has the freedom to decide where she wants to invest time and energy. While she strives to be mindful, she concedes that she is not a saint and prone to failure. Human rights are important to her—she thinks about the Ten Commandments and comments that she would not accept all of these. She displays a harm-care orientation (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009) (interact 96).

Religion and World View

Asked if she considers herself to be religious, spiritual, a believer or if she would prefer a different description, Marion comments that she feels that for her these concepts converge. She uses the traditional figure of the “fool,” which, for her, is involved in how she understands her work as a clown:

The traditional fool has all three elements and I would burn it down to this, or actually, it is an extension. I am allowed to be curious, to get away with everything, everything is there, and at the same time I am mindful and loving even with rough jokes, and therefore the concept of the fool is the figure, which, in a spiritual religious sense, is a unification of all this.⁷

Marion describes her practices of Zen meditation as “reduced to the elementary, no-frills”

(interact 78). Rituals, however, are important to her, and she displays her view in another narrative.

Marion plays with language here, “Lokus” being used in Germany as an old-fashioned expression for “toilet.” She contrasts her spiritual and ritualistic aspirations and dignified Latin vocabulary with the mundane condition of needing to use the toilet. Thus, she illustrates that her approach to “spirituality” includes very earthy aspects.

Marion’s perspective on death and afterlife is interesting because she is very aware of mortality. She does not believe in an afterlife, argues that she is open to what she perhaps cannot grasp yet, and claims not to be afraid of death. She has already made arrangements to be buried in a forest which serves as a cemetery, at the roots of a tree. Telling this, she comments that this is how she feels about these ultimate questions now, that it may be different when she is getting there. Her answer to the question on how to solve religious conflicts is very practical. She suggests that this would have to be a bottom-up process. If every person in the world would talk, like in the interview that is about to end, for about two hours about God and the world, that might promote peace in the world, adding that she doubts this to happen, but enjoys the fantasy (interacts 158, 160). Her fantasy for solving religious conflicts shows her, albeit skeptical, belief in dialog.

General Interpretation of Marion’s “Spiritual” Journey

Taking it all together, we conclude that Marion’s case might be a biography typical of the generation of ‘68 in Germany: leaving a conventional life to embark on a quest that includes political engagement (demonstrations) as well as inner development, nowadays called “spiritual” (Ponona, Zen). Perhaps she might be called an “accumulative heretic” as suggested by Streib (1998) (see also Streib et al., 2009). The “accumulative heretic” describes a person who engages in different communities, keeping something valuable from each affiliation with which they have been involved. Marion states: “I am still a

⁷„Ja, ich würde wenn dann alle drei nehmen und z. B. in dieser traditionellen Närrin sind alle drei Elemente drinnen und wenn dann würde ich das darauf reduzieren oder eigentlich ist es für mich eine Erweiterung. Dann darf ich neugierig sein, mir alles gestatten, da steckt alles drinnen und gleichzeitig gehe ich achtsam und liebevoll selbst mit den derben Scherzen um und darum ist für mich dieser Narrenbegriff im spirituellen, religiösen Sinne die Figur, die für mich das alles vereint.“ (interact 122).

sannyasin with heart and soul, not dependent on any guru, but I have grown beyond that” (interact 32).⁸ It is striking that Marion reports that her second marriage ended when her husband could not understand her spiritual interests. She seems to have put her spiritual development first, and have chosen relationships accordingly. Her disengagement from hospice work and turn to very personal work on aging corresponds to Fowler’s conception of a turn inward in later midlife (Fowler, 1981, p. 274), and resonates with C.G. Jung’s ideas on individuation (Jung, 1971). The religious styles-conception of faith development helps us to understand the co-existence of different ways of being “spiritual” acquired at different times and places in her life and part of a pattern she continues to work on.

“I Am Religious, but I Don’t Know What My Religion Is.”⁹—Julia D.

The case of Julia D. has been selected because Julia is typical for a person who, although she has made an exit from one type of belief, also incorporates aspects of it into her current belief system. In the context of this chapter, Julia D. represents a person who combines notions and rituals of the Catholicism she grew up with the Wiccan tradition in which she sought training as an adult.

Julia D. is a 43-year-old American female born in northeast United States who is living in one of the northern states at the time of the interview. She is in school working to complete her bachelor’s. She identifies herself as a pagan in the Wicca tradition, although she has been a member of the Catholic Church in the past. Currently Julia D. describes herself as “more spiritual than religious.”

Table 20.4 Comparison of Julia D. With Respective Focus Group on the Most Important Scales in the Questionnaire

	Single case variable values for Julia D.	Mean values for “more spiritual than religious, not atheist or non-theists” focus group in the USA	
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Personality (NEO-FFI)			
<i>Neuroticism</i>	19	20.6	8.6
<i>Extraversion</i>	27	29.7	6.7
<i>Openness to experience</i>	36	33.3	6.6
<i>Agreeableness</i>	26	32.3	6.1
<i>Conscientiousness</i>	28	32.4	7.3
Mysticism (Mysticism Scale total)	134	119.9	23.7
<i>Introvertive mysticism</i>	51	44.1	10.2
<i>Extrovertive mysticism</i>	31	28.7	7.8
<i>Interpretation</i>	52	47.4	8.7
Psychological well-being			
<i>Autonomy</i>	28	27.0	4.1
<i>Environmental mastery</i>	26	24.5	4.6
<i>Personal growth</i>	29	29.4	3.7
<i>Positive relations with others</i>	26	27.9	4.4
<i>Purpose in life</i>	29	26.8	4.5
<i>Self-acceptance</i>	27	25.7	4.7
Generativity (Loyola Generativity Scale)	56	60.6	8.5
Attitudes toward God	73	75.1	20.8
Religious Schema Scale			
<i>Truth of texts and teachings</i>	13	13.4	5.9
<i>Fairness, tolerance & rational choice</i>	23	21.8	3.0
<i>Xenosophia/ inter-religious dialog</i>	22	18.7	3.9

Note All mean values are based on covariance analyses with the variables for country and focus group as predictors, while controlled by sex, age, cultural capital, and per-capita income

⁸„...ich bin mit Leib und Seele Sannyasin nicht abhängig von irgendeinem Guru, aber ich habe mich darüber hinaus entwickelt.“

⁹From interact 205 of Julia D.’s FDI.

Mapping Julia D.’s Case Based on Questionnaire Responses

As detailed in Chap. 17, *openness to experience* and *mysticism* have been used for mapping the cases in a two-dimensional space. In this map (see Fig. 17.2), Julia is located in the upper right-hand segment, which indicates her higher than average scores in both openness to experience and mysticism.

A more comprehensive comparison of Julia’s individual responses to the questionnaire with the means for the focus group of the “more religious than spiritual, not atheist and non-theist” (FG 3) is presented in Table 20.4. She was near the mean for her focus group on the vast majority of measures. However, a few differences are noteworthy: Julia is more than one standard deviation below the mean on *agreeableness* in the NEO-FFI, and she is almost one standard deviation above the mean on the *xenosophia/inter-religious dialog* measure of the Religious Schema Scale.

Julia’s Semantic of “Spirituality”

In the questionnaire, Julia has given her definition of “spirituality”:

Spirituality is internally driven - the need to connect with Deity comes from within the Seeker; connecting with the Divine for one’s own sake regardless of the outcome.

This shows that Julia’s understanding of “spirituality” contrasts to her definition of “religion:”

Religion is a structured way to worship –constructed by humans to define and dictate what is believed, and how that belief should be expressed.

On both the Osgood and the Contextual Semantic Differentials for the “more spiritual than religious” focus group, the spirituality line is to the right of the religion line, small overlaps notwithstanding. In Julia’s case, she shows some differences on both differentials. Her Osgood Semantic Differential shows that she views spirituality as being more “slow,” “short,” and “old” than religion, a pattern not exhibited by the overall group. On the Contextual Semantic Differential, she views

spirituality as being more “dwelling,” and “complacent” than religion, again in a pattern not exhibited by the focus group (for comparison, see Appendix A, Figures A.7 and A.21). Interestingly, she rated religion and spirituality the same on several measures. For example, on the Osgood differential, they were rated the same on the “harsh-mild,” “dirty-clean,” “little-big,” “powerless-powerful,” “weak-strong,” and “empty-full” measures, among others. Julia’s overall responses on this scale may be seen in Fig. 20.4.

Her Contextual Semantic Differential responses do not tend to parallel each other, as noticed in Fig. 20.5. This suggests that the way Julia views the words “spirituality” and “religion” is different from the central tendency in her focus group.

Julia’s Faith Development

Based on the faith development evaluation of the interview with Julia D., for which we have followed closely the *Manual for Faith Development Research*, Julia’s interview shows predominantly a synthetic-conventional style (Fowler, 1981; Fowler, Streib, & Keller, 2004). This rating may reflect her religiosity, which draws on intermingling Catholicism and Wiccan traditions.

The faith development evaluation of Julia’s interview corresponds to her scores in the Religious Schema Scale by showing her near-average. Responses on the three sub-scales do not pull her strongly toward mythic-literal, individuated-reflective, or conjunctive faith styles. Her almost one standard deviation above the mean response on the *xenos* subscale, however, may set her, again, apart from the average “more spiritual than religious” person in this focus group, and, perhaps, point to a different profile of development (see Chap. 24).

However, attending to Julia’s single responses to the faith development questions sorted by aspects of faith, Julia appears to be less developed in perspective taking, social awareness, and symbolic function than in the other aspects. Figure 20.6 shows the differences in her ratings. She appears to be more developed in how she

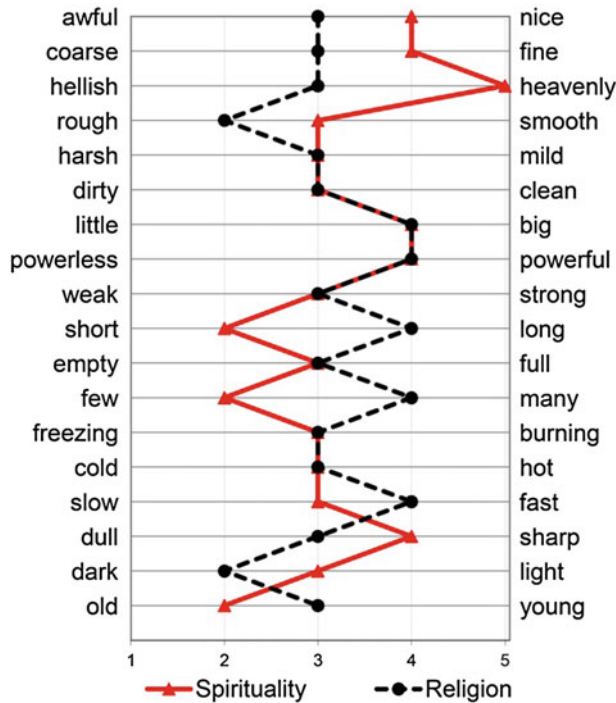


Fig. 20.4 Julia’s Ratings on the Osgood Semantic Differential

thinks about existential questions than in how she deals with others. As can be seen, she scores at the individuative-reflective level on several questions, but her perspective-taking is at the mythic-literal level.

Summary of Julia’s Faith Development

Taken together, Julia’s faith development aspects show a higher appreciation and sophistication concerning ideas about faith than in applying those ideas to other people. That may indicate her willingness to try unconventional religious expressions such as Wiccan practice. However, her responses to several questions about sin and evil show that she still has some of the conventional views to which she was exposed while growing up.

Wisdom and Attachment in Julia’s Interview

As detailed in Chap. 15, the evaluation of the faith development interview gains depth and profile when additional dimensions are

evaluated. In the interview with Julia, it is particularly interesting that her attachment was rated as “insecure/avoidant” (Keller & Streib, 2013). As she mentions in her interview, she cut off contact with her parents at one point. She seems to have an average view of herself, and she is not extremely forgiving of her father. This type of attachment would have a definite effect on Julia’s religious journey (Kirkpatrick, 1992). On the wisdom criteria, Julia seemed average in most respects, but she appears above average in looking at the developmental dimensions of her life and value-relativism (Staudinger, Smith, & Baltes, 1994). This helps us understand Julia’s “spiritual” biography. She did not rely solely on the religion of her caregivers due to her attachment not being secure, but gravitated toward New Age spirituality (Granqvist, Gransson, & Hagekull, 2009). Luhrmann (1989) places those who practice magic under the New Age broad cultural ideology, further delineating them into four broad groups such as Julia’s: witchcraft, Western Mysteries, ad hoc ritual magic, and non-initiated paganism. Julia’s appreciation of

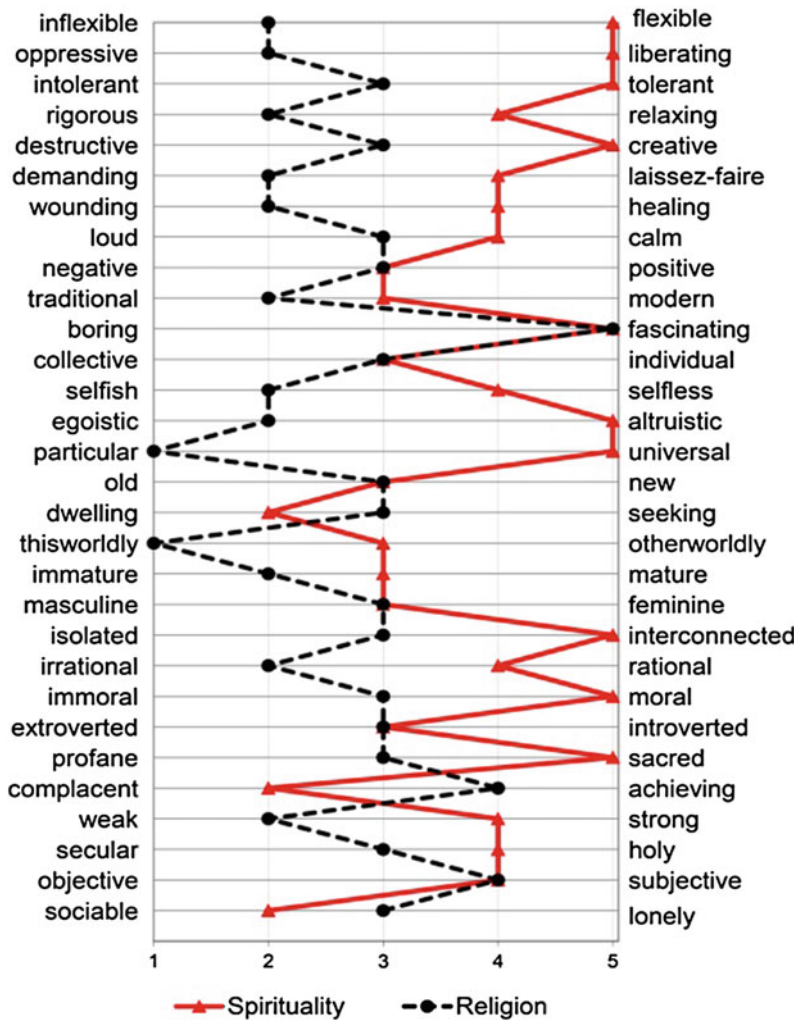


Fig. 20.5 Julia’s Ratings on the Contextual Semantic Differential

value-relativism can help explain her willingness to try out pagan religious expressions.

The Narrative Structure and Content Aspects in Julia’s Interview

Attending to the narrative dynamics in Julia’s interview (see Chap. 16 for a methodological discussion), it is noteworthy that she uses the temporal method of giving her autobiography, according to a cultural concept (Bluck & Habermas, 2000). The chapter titles are location-based, another common way of organizing narratives.

Life Review

When asked about her life chapters, Julia gives them four state names: one in the Northeast, two in the South, and the one she currently lives in.¹⁰ She ties them to different developmental milestones in her life, however:

And what stands out I guess, I just, I moved, I was born in a [State E, northeast], and then I moved to

¹⁰One of these Southern states is famous for its Cajun/Creole population (French combined with African influences), which is known for dealing in voodoo/mojo/gris-gris. The state she lives in has a substantial pagan community, as is discussed later in this chapter.

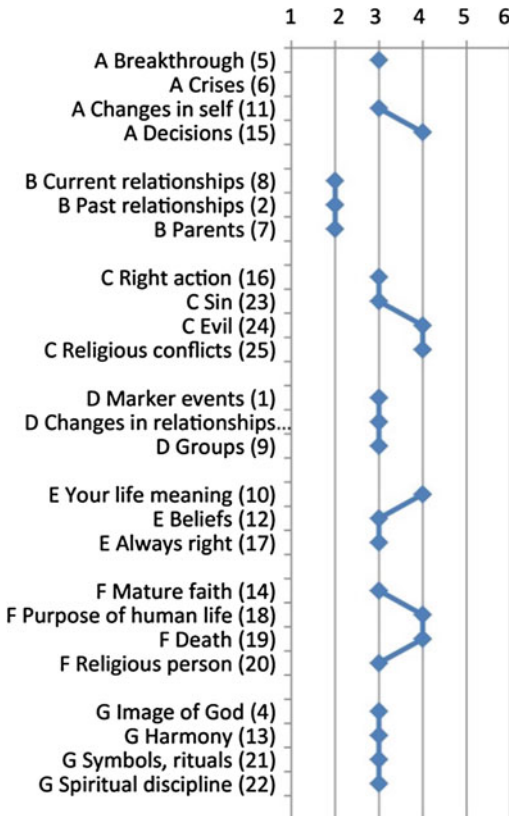


Fig. 20.6 Julia's FDI Ratings in the Different Aspects of Faith

[State A in the south of the USA], kind of a critical time you know, I was like seven, which you know just starting school and that kind of developmentally, I guess a significant time of awareness, and then I was there until I was in my early '20 s. Then I moved to [State D], which was very formative as far as independence from my parents. I lived in the big city, I lived in [City B] which was (...), it is a big city by any standard especially from [State A], you know. And then [State C in the north of the USA] was a big...I guess I got here when I was 26, so that was kind of the beginning of your real adulthood in a lot of respects, so that's how I would kind of divide that. (interact 21)

The question about exploring “breakthrough experiences” elicits a narrative in her FDI, focusing on her experience of being one with everything during meditation while being an initiate. She seems be aware of her problems of giving words to what for her has been a breakthrough experience, meaningful to her but for others perhaps “crazy,” as is shown in Table 20.5.

Relationships

Here we attend to how Julia discusses her relationships and her development. Focusing on content, we see that Julia mentions several relationships that have been influential in her life. Most of them are in her family, although she

Table 20.5 Julia's Narrative Segment “Being One with Everything”

Title	Being one with everything
Orientation	But in meditation I was in a coven, I think it was the (...) witch and you spent a year and a day in training with a particular group coven—usually it is the priest and priestess lead the group, and you have to train with them for a year and a day, which is a year and a day of once a week discussions, there is assigned readings, they had to write papers; it is...it is hard to get into, easy to get out of is what they, you know, that is our joke it's an anti-cult and so in a meditation during the outer court ritual I was again an initiate
Complication	I had an experience where I was one with everything, I mean it just was so brief, it could not have lasted more than a split second but it was a divine
Evaluation/attempts to solve	I do not know what level of connection there was, I do not know which divine it was, I do not know if I just was in its presence or if it was inside of me, it does not matter, I am sure. But in that moment I knew everything, you know. And it just was—it was like a lightning bolt flash, but I can remember being in that moment still and I felt my whole being expanded and contracted at the same time—I do not even—
Resolution	It sounds crazy but it was deeply meaningful for me
Coda	And I did not take anything away from it, it's not like I felt like I was (...), I felt the drive home, I felt the work that day—you know like nothing changed on the mundane level, but I just- it was moving. (interact 39)

does reference a few people who are not related. She mentions her deceased parents, although she was estranged from both of them for five years at one point, and her father for longer. Her ex-husband is also a significant figure from the past, as well as a couple of her mother’s older women friends. In addition, there was a music teacher who was also a nun that Julia gravitated to as a child. She has a brother with whom she still is close, and she mentions her husband and her extended Irish Catholic family out East as being of special import in the present. Julia’s children are also crucial relationships, although she finds them at times to be annoying, and she has several close friends.

In Julia’s account of relationships, we may regard as striking that she speaks a bit deprecatingly about the pagan community of which she is a part:

They love me, but they all (look), you know it’s a lot of fat girls in broom stick skirts and guys with long hair, even though they are bald on top, and you know, just Google “pagan festival,” and that’s what we all look like the world over . . . We have our yearly gather once a year . . . so I identify with that that (...) group, but they irritate me at the same time. (interact 79)

This may be reflective of her lower than average score on the *agreeableness* scale.

Values and Commitments

When asked about her values and commitments, Julia states that religion is a very strong value for her. However, she expresses this in an irreverent way:

My commitment to exploring religion is important to me even though I’m now forbidden to major in religion by my husband who I (giggling) love and he- I understand his point. I wanted to go to college and major in religion and get a Master’s in Divinity. There’s a super hippie seminary right in the next town. I think it’s hippie; it’s probably not. But it’s not Baptist you know (giggling) or Lutheran . . . Because I have always been attractive to people who seem to be hurting, I don’t (laughing) seek some help, I don’t maybe, I don’t know what that means. . . And so that’s what lead me to - to be a chaplain because I thought why I should, well, I should learn how to do it right, and I really

wanted to be an interfaith chaplain. My husband (*not wanting me to finish?*) up a \$60,000 master’s degree to work as a chaplain where you can at best make 25 grand a year wasn’t helpful, and he is right (laughing), you know, like that. (interact 101)

Julia’s other commitment is to her family. As she states, “helping my family stay stable, then, that is a big commitment, that’s an everyday thing, that’s important too” (interact 105).

Julia has quite a bit to say about her moral convictions. Her first discourse sounds like the Hippocratic Oath:

Well, you’ve got to look at harm. To me, if your action harms someone, but you feel good from that temporarily, then that’s absolutely prob- you know, you made a wrong choice, and it’s easy to rationalize actions . . . Actions can be wrong. And they can be right. Harm is the measure. Or whom does it serve? Who’s being served by that action? That’s another good question to ask. (interacts 155, 157)

This is a direct exposition of the harm/care foundation listed in moral foundations theory, and it puts her at the liberal end of the spectrum (Graham et al., 2009). She believes that people can agree on some moral opinions, such as “murder is bad” (interact 159) or that hunger is wrong, and we need to preserve life. She talks quite a bit about the death penalty and how she disagrees with it. She reminisces that she even had a scrapbook about Gary Gilmore (a convicted American killer who was executed in 1977 following the reinstatement of the death penalty) when she was young, much to the concern of her parents.

Julia’s definition of “sin” is fairly traditional, and she talks a bit about her grandmother’s way of looking at it. Her summary of her own view is as follows:

Sin is something- sin is an act for which you must atone. So penance- you have to be sorry; I know that there is a list of sin, but I think any- basically any action that is craven, that is purely feeding the will of a pers- the want of a person and not the will, an act that causes you or someone else, that causes you or someone else to become separated from the divine. (interact 219)

Although Julia says she does not believe in evil in the Christian sense, her personal definition does not stray very far from Christian belief:

Because there are people in the world and that people are what make evil...people are what makes things evil. It's actions, it's the Holocaust, it's – it's the desire for prophets for people that's evil. If you are willing to hurt or step on a person to further your own gain. For just to gain to further your own ego, that is evil. There are of course degrees of evil; like the (...) there is without darkness we wouldn't have anything to measure light by. (interact 229)

Religion and World View

Julia's religious self-identification is distinctive in that she considers herself religious, but not in the traditional sense. She speaks about her beliefs to others in ways to cause them to not explore her beliefs too thoroughly:

When people ask if I'm religious I say "yes," even though I am positive that what I mean isn't what they mean, but it shuts them up, you know. . . . And then they keep talking about their own . . . I don't want to hear about your relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ you know like- Although I am a huge fan of Him, that's probably a cheeky way to put it, but of deeply religious people, and I'm still fascinated by nuns. (interacts 99, 101)

She confesses she does not like the "McDonald's kind of spirituality" (interact 197), even though she has an ironic awareness of how she combines what appeals to her from the different traditions. She intersperses her pagan beliefs with a Christian prayer. She switches between monotheistic and polytheistic language in her expression of her viewpoint:

I mean I practice it like it's so (amazing?), but I believe it is important to have a form. I like the idea of rote prayers; I think that there is power in words that have been used by millions of people for hundreds of years. I think that-that words and things gain power from that. You know, that collective devotion of people, people add to that, when you say the Saint Francis prayer you feel something in your body, and that is because: a) it's a beautiful prayer, b) it's asking for the right things of the gods. You can't just- you can't ask God for crap that you can get yourself. In the Craft, we say, "Where are the hands of Gods? At the end of your own arms." Meaning if you want the gods to do something, you have to meet them more than halfway. (interact 201)

However, her status is best summarized when she finally states, "I am religious, but I don't know what my religion is" (interact 205).

Julia is affiliated with a pagan group, and she identifies herself as a witch. She is not as involved with that community as she was at one time, though:

I think probably 10 years ago I would have very strongly identified as a (...) witch and the only reason why I would have really even talked to you about. . . .But it's less often now, and in fact I- it's one of the last things I tell people, you know I tell- I normally would not, "hey I'm a witch" (laughing). . . . If you saw me, you'll be just be like, oh no, because I'm just like this chunky, middle-aged woman that lives in the suburbs and drives a minivan (laughing), completely you would not. Like I don't have any tattoos or piercings or- I'm kind of square looking. . . . (interact 79)

Julia rather jokingly also defines herself as a Socialist, but she less flippantly identifies herself with being a writing tutor at her college.

Julia's use of symbols and rituals is also a mixture of different religious beliefs and practices.

We all go to this very remote state park it's a group camp. In a state park and it is like 20 miles off the trail. It's fabulous out there is no street light, there is no airplane, there is no cell phone reception nothing, and they always bring a little bit of weed up to that, and I will get naked outside by myself and I do the bath ritual I will have like my one little puff Then you shower outside, and let the sun, you know, dry you off and the wind and you are all by yourself and you are on the blankets which is important to bring and I will meditate and I pray and sometimes it makes me cry. (interact 115)

She admits that she is still a bit Catholic, even though she also says she is a pagan:

In times of crises am still a bit of a Catholic somewhere down inside. Lots of pagan are Catholic, ex-Catholics, maybe is all that chanting and incense, mass and rituals, but maybe it is just because there are so many damn Catholics, but they are. There is a part of me that is still very drawn to want pray the Rosary I have my Mom's rosary, it's a beautiful cut glass one and...but I don't pull out the rosary and make a novena or even just pray the rosary because for the same reason why I don't; because I'm lazy. (interact 123)

Julia’s interest in things Catholic does not limit itself to wanting to pray the rosary. She is still very interested in nuns, even fantasizing about becoming one herself one day. She describes an incident in which she really pushed the Catholic boundary:

I don’t think it’s blasphemy for me to pray the Rosary. I went to a funeral Catholic mass, and I took communion even though that is a sin to them. They think that is very-very bad, there is no witness . . . like alarm that goes off when you walk in church where it says “this person had communion.” But technically by the rule for the Catholic Church, I cannot take communion, but I did, and it was beautiful, and so I was kind of cheeky and blasphemous in that way. (interact 217)

As a pagan, Julia participates in a Gardnerian ritual¹¹ every month at the full moon that is based on universal symbols. She thought that mojo and gris-gris were interesting in the southern state she lived in, but she sees prayer and meditation as being most important.

Julia’s ideas of the afterlife are again a mixture of traditions. What is most important to her is that she believes life does go on:

What I hope happens is that we can continue with our- we can continue maybe the work of our life if we have a higher calling in our life, but we can continue that work without the hindrance of the body, but the souls or the spirit or the mind potential remains. And you can add to this collective pool of energy and idea and inspiration and thought if you made it through your life without like say you only got half way there. Maybe you get to do some of that for a while, and then you get to come back do it again. It is kind of what I hope happens. (interact 189)

General Interpretation of Julia’s “Spiritual” Journey

Taking it all together, we conclude that Julia’s case demonstrates a partial deconversion from the Catholic faith to the pagan belief system.

¹¹This is a form of Wicca that comes from the practice of Gerald Gardner, an English Witch who founded contemporary witchcraft as a religion. It includes an emphasis on the Goddess and claims that modern witchcraft lies in an unbroken heritage of organized paganism (Guiley, 2008).

However, she keeps pieces of her former religious ideas. Her trajectory could be described as a heretical exit, according to the schema of Streib et al. (2009). She was exposed to pagan practices in above-mentioned southern state, and her atheist ex-husband piqued her interest in alternative practices when he bought her tarot cards (interact 35). Since pagan practices are not looked upon favorably in the South, in general, Julia did not begin truly embracing that belief system until she moved to the northern state she now lives in, which is called “Paganistan,” a term coined by an anthropologist in that pagan community (interact 37). One gets the sense that she has not switched to paganism, but rather combines pagan and Catholic practices, joining rituals of both communities as she feels the need to do so. While from a strict Christian perspective her engagement with paganism might be seen as fall from faith, she herself does not seem to see it that way, although she seems to be aware of how devout Catholics might see it. She does talk about commonalities between the two ways of being religious, and she talks about how many Catholics become pagan. After conducting a study of contemporary witchcraft in England, Luhrmann (1989) states: “My findings suggest that the people who turn to modern magic are searching for powerful emotional and imaginative religious experience, but not for a religion per se” (p. 337). This may well describe what is going on in Julia’s case, who appreciates, as common elements of Catholic and pagan practices, “chanting, incense, mass, ritual.” For Julia, the journey is what is important, rather than the organized belief system. That is perhaps why she is religious without knowing what her religion is.

Conclusion

Quilt religiosity might build on the concept of accumulative hereticism. From a developmental perspective, it might be seen as covering, by definition, also a range of stages of faith (Fowler) or religious styles (Streib), ranging from very early or basic to more sophisticated. We see such

a range in both case studies, spanning from two to four in Julia's, from two to five in Marion's case. For further evaluation of faith development, we look at the most frequent stage assignment, which is three for Julia. Fowler et al. (2004) discussed "simple moral relativism" for moral development and "simple and uncritical pluralism" for the aspect of world coherence (pp. 42 and 54). Here, this may refer to Julia's way of adding different practices in her life, e.g. being Catholic (going to mass) with the Catholics and meditating with the witches. That she states to be religious without knowing what her religion is indicates the implicit character of stage three. However, there are indications of individuated-reflective faith, and Julia's reservation to present herself as identified with the pagan tradition may point to some kind of moratorium or space she needs to reflect on her individual way of being religious.

Marion, whose responses in the FDI were most frequently rated as stage five, seems to be more aware of what she has kept and what she has grown beyond when she revisits the traditions with which she has lived. As the narrative featuring the old fool demonstrates, she cultivates a sense of irony and an awareness of the mundane. This reflects multiple perspective taking and a humble approach to her own way of crafting her spiritual practice.

This chapter shows that both women are not only combining, but interweaving, elements of different traditions linked to different times and places in their lives when they create their personal ways of relating to the transcendent. Thus, while working on their own spiritual "quilts" they work on their own "spiritual" identities by adding to the traditions they draw on.

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