TOWARDS A TYPOLOGY OF GENERAL AIMS OF CHRISTIAN ADULT EDUCATION

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Abstract

This article deals with the variety of general aims of Christian adult education in a pluralist society. The authors propose a theoretical framework of possible aims to Christian adult education. This framework consists of two dimensions: a formal dimension consisting of the goals or orientations of Christian adult education, and a material dimension that concerns the content of the (religious) identity formed by the education process. Based on these two dimensions a typology of aims to Christian adult education is presented. This typology proved to be very helpful in describing the mindset of Christian adult educators within the Catholic Church in the Netherlands. The empirical research shows that these educators have a positive attitude with regard to educational orientations of self-direction and transformation. Educational aims focussing on the supra-personal aspect of religious identity are largely rejected. This may give rise to tensions considering the institutional context in which Christian adult educators carry out their work.

Key Words: Christian adult education, pluralism, educational orientations, identity development

1. INTRODUCTION

What are the aims of Christian adult education in a pluralist society? Is the goal to hand down Christian religious teachings as established by the church authorities? Is it to impart to the participants an awareness of their own religiosity by means of experiential clarification? Or is it to provide an introduction to a variety of religions and worldviews? What choices must Christian adult educators make? Are they able to make these choices in the context of the church in which they are active? Is one type of goal more important than the others?

We begin this article by proposing a theoretical framework of possible aims to Christian adult education. This framework consists of two dimensions: a formal dimension consisting of the goals or orientations of Christian adult education, and a material dimension that concerns the content of the religious identity formed by the education process. We begin by examining the differences between conformity, self-direction and transformity as educational orientations (section 2). We then look at three aspects of identity,

namely intra-personal, inter-personal and supra-personal (section 3). On the basis of the formal and material dimensions, we go on to develop a typology of general aims to Christian adult education and to formulate a number of research questions with regard to these aims (section 4). The results of empirical research among Christian adult educators in the Netherlands are presented (section 5), followed by a conclusion and discussion (section 6).

2. GENERAL EDUCATIONAL ORIENTATIONS

How can religious identity be developed by educational processes? To answer this question, we begin by introducing a well-known distinction in educational theory, between 'conformity', 'self-direction' and 'transformation'. The difference between these orientations will be clarified by analysing the distinct normative concepts underlying each one. We will show that behind each of these orientations lie different narrative concepts of the self: a closed, an open and a transformative narrative concept. Identity is conceived of as a narrative through which the self expresses itself.

We begin with the difference between the orientations of conformity and self-direction:

> *The essential difference between the terms, as we use them, is that self-direction focuses on internal standards for behaviour; conformity focuses on externally imposed rules* (Kohn 1969, 35).

When conformity is the goal, the learner or participant is expected to adapt to the standards of her social environment. Authority, in this case, is located *outside* the person. Self-direction, on the other hand, requires the learner to develop internal standards of behaviour (norm internalisation), with the goal of establishing authority *inside* the person. In the latter, independence and responsibility of the individual is the goal of education (Kohn 1969).

Bruner (1996) shows that developing the potential of the individual is undeniably a goal of education, but that this development always takes place within a cultural framework. In Bruner's culturalism, 'reality' is represented by a symbolic system that is shared, manipulated and continuously adapted to changing circumstances by the members of the society. The learner is not merely a 'passive recipient' being initiated into the ways in which a cultural community creates meaning, but also takes an active

part in the process of reconstructing the meaning of elements of a tradition, religious or otherwise. Culture is thus not only learned but also created by the learner. Therefore Bruner sees education as the development of the individual student within a particular context, in order to bring him into contact with the existing culture and participate in changing it. Taking this position of Bruner's as a starting point, we can distinguish a third goal of education besides conformity and self-direction. This we call 'transformity' (Bruner 1996, 66-85).

Behind the three goals or orientations are different narrative concepts (see De Haas 1999). Where conformity is the goal, the narrative has already been written. It consists of a canon pre-scribed by the culture that is to be transmitted to the following generation. The underlying premise of this narrative concept is continuity between the prescribed cultural narrative and the individual's personal life narrative. Discontinuity is seen as a temporary phenomenon to be rectified. The narrative concept behind the orientation of self-direction, on the other hand, is characterized by room for discontinuity. 'Reality' is conceived as plural and as a human and contingent construct. The notions of historicity and pluralisation no longer allow the 'great stories' to be transmitted unchanged. People have to write their own stories (De Haas 1999). In a transformative narrative concept, meanwhile, identity is transmitted through narratives of the culture in which one lives, and takes form through the interpretation of these narratives. The traditional narratives are not simply to be duplicated. Rather, the individual's own life story must be written into the 'cultural' story. This 'inscription' implies a transformation of the pre-existing, traditional story, in that I make my own interpretation of the existing story. Without the existing narrative, no 'inscription' is possible. By means of these narratives one comes to know oneself, but understanding oneself in light of these narratives also implies a transformation of these narratives.

The different narrative concepts can be associated with directions of identity development. This direction depends on whether the criteria for development are inside or outside of the individual:

1. Behind the orientation of conformity lies a closed narrative concept, which is judged according to the criterion of continuity with an existing cultural narrative. Authority lies outside the individual, in the prescribed narrative of the particular tradition. What the content of the identity that is being developed should be is determined in advance. The direction of identity development is from the outside in, meaning that the prescribed narrative must be taken over (appropriated).

2. Underlying the self-direction orientation is an open narrative concept in which there is room for discontinuity. The individual's own life narrative is constantly being constructed anew. In the process of constructing a life narrative, authority lies with the individual. The content of the identity being developed is not pre-determined. The direction of identity development is from the inside out, as it were: the individual brings to expression what is right for him or her.

3. In the orientation of transformity, both the pre-existing narratives of a cultural tradition and the biographies constructed by the individual are essential to identity development. These narratives need to be critically and constructively related to each other. The criteria by which behaviour is judged are understood to be both inside and outside the person.

3. Definitions of religious identity

The previous section looked at different goals or orientations of education in general, which have to do with the direction of identity development, i.e. how is the religious identity of a person formed? What aspects need to be developed by education in order for the person to develop an identity? In answering this question, we will be guided by Nijmegen personality psychologist Hubertus Hermans' analysis of Western thinking about the self (see Hermans 1995; Hermans & Van Kempen 1995). Building on this analysis, we will distinguish three concepts of identity, according to the role the bodily location of the self in space plays in the definition of identity.[1] In an intra-personal definition of identity, bodily location in space is irrelevant; the identity takes form in an internal space only. In an inter-personal definition of identity, space is integrated into the definition of the self. In this space there can be a variety of I-positions, which constantly interact with one another. In a supra-personal definition of identity, identity is transferred to an instance that is located beyond 'bodily located individuals'. Identity is determined by space, as that which is beyond the individual.

A dominant concept of identity in Western thinking is that of a centralized self. The self is conceived as a self-contained centre from which behaviour is guided and controlled. In this concept, characteristics of the self are seen as relatively stable traits that are attributed to the self by an "I" from a defined centre. The notion of a centralized self has been heavily influenced by Descartes' distinction between *res cogitans* and *res extensa*. Thinking, in Descartes' view, is non-spatial in nature. It is separate from the physical

extension or corporality of the body and the space in which the body exists. Descartes isolated the self as a thinking I not only from the body, but also from the outside world and from the other. It is not that Descartes denies the existence of an outer world, or of other people, but self-awareness takes precedence over the outside world and others in the creation of the individual's identity. It is primarily in communication with himself that the individual arrives at an idea of himself. Therefore we call this an intra-personal concept of identity. Herein lies the tendency to consider form or physicality of the self as no part of one's own identity. Form or physi-cality is secondary, self-awareness is primary. Consciousness of the self need not be only cognitive in nature – in the form of (critical) thinking or (symbolic) imagination – but can also be attitudinal, volitive or imper-ative in nature. Characteristic of this concept is a sharp distinction between inside (*ad intra*) and outside (*ad extra*), between I and not-I (Hermans 1995, 8-20, 45; Hermans et al. 1992).

A second concept of identity that we will look at is inter-personal or dialogal identity. The self is spread throughout space, and it is therefore impossible to draw firm boundaries between the self and other. Characteristic of this concept is a decentralisation or extensivation of the self (Hermans 1995, 40):

> *The self is not an entity, closed off from the world and having an existence in itself, but rather is extended toward specific aspects of the environment* (Hermans 1996, 32).

In this decentralisation of the self, the self is seen primarily as embodied and social (Hermans et al. 1992, 23). It is not first a self, which then places itself in relation with other people, but rather the self exists only in and through relationship with the other. The other is not only outside but also inside the self. Self and other are mutually inclusive. The dialogal self is a social self, even when the dialogue is internal. An internal dialogue always presupposes another party to whom we tell our story. The self can be seen as a multitude of I-positions in dialogue with one another (Hermans 1995, 13, 28; Hermans 1996, 41).

> *The I has the possibility to move, as in a space, from one position to the other in accor-dance with changes in situation and time. The I fluctuates among different and even opposed positions. The I has the capacity to imaginatively endow each position with a voice so that dialogical relations between positions can be established.[. . .] resulting in a complex, nar-ratively structured self* (Hermans et al. 1992, 28-29).

Inter-personal identity is an open and dynamic identity. The self is involved in a process of positioning and repositioning, of organizing and reorganizing. Discussion of the self should focus not only on stability, consistency and

coherence, but also on potentially fertile instability, inconsistency and inco-
herence (Hermans 1996). In this view of identity, space plays an important
role in two respects. In the first place inter-personal communication implies
that I and the other are spatially separate. Secondly, it assumes an embodied
self. There is an intrinsic relationship between space and body (H. Hermans
2001), because only an embodied self can situate itself in space.

The third type of identity is the supra-personal one. In this context we
refer to the concept of 'collective voice' as developed by Bakhtin. A col-
lective voice is the interpretation of the world by a social group (Bakhtin
1981). This interpretation takes form primarily in language, but it is sup-
ported by institutions that exert power over individuals and by an ideo-
logical legitimation of this power. When an individual speaks about her
identity, she expresses herself with the help of a 'collective voice' (Hermans
1996). When a person says what her identity is, it is really a collective
voice being interpreted by that person. A person gives voice to the words
of a religious tradition and not so much to her own, private words. The
words of an individual articulate something that is outside of or above the
person. Hence the notion of a supra-personal identity. The individual does
not add anything to this 'collective voice'. This voice holds authority, and
must be taken over in its entirety by the individual. If the emphasis in the
inter-personal view of identity is on relations between I and other, in a
supra-personal view of identity the emphasis is on the other, or on that
which comes from outside. Outsidedness in identity entails space, because
there is no 'outside' without space. In the case of a supra-personal iden-
tity, 'outsidedness' is total (Hermans 2000). The individual cannot change
the collective voice. He can only articulate it. Primacy is attached to that
which is outside the individual; from this the individual takes his identity.

4. CONSTRUCTION OF A TYPOLOGY OF GENERAL AIMS TO CHRISTIAN ADULT EDUCATION

By combining the various goal orientations of identity construction and
the various definitions of identity, we arrive at a general typology of aims
to Christian adult education.[2] The first principle underlying this typology
is that of the three orientations (conformity, self-direction or transformity).
Within each of these, we will identify three forms depending on which
view of identity (intra-personal, inter-personal or supra-personal) is central.
The object here is a rational reconstruction of the aims to Christian adult
education and not a historical description. It is not our intention to provide

a historic or systematic overview of all authors in the area of Christian adult education, and the authors cited in the outline below are presented merely as illustrations of particular aims.

4.1. *Christian adult education from a conformity orientation*

A conformity orientation is characterized by a closed narrative concept. The 'great story' of the Christian tradition is expected to be handed down. When Christian adult education is undertaken from this orientation, the goal is the appropriation of the established Christian tradition by the participants. The direction of religious identity development is fixed, i.e., from the outside in. The content of the religious identity that is formed in this process may, however, vary, and may emphasize intra-personal, inter-personal or supra-personal aspects.

a. *Conformity: intra-personal*
Where the goal of religious education is the appropriation of the Christian tradition, the orientation is one of conformity. Within this orientation, emphasis can be on intra-personal identity, as is the case in kerygmatic catechesis. This form of catechesis is seen, for example, in the kerygmatic theology of Jungmann (1936), in which Jesus Christ is placed at the centre of the Christian faith. The Christ mystery and the proclamation of this mystery are central (Van der Ven 1982, 380-382).

In Christ, the message of the gospel takes on a more personal form, and therefore can be more readily related to the concrete life world of the participants. The idea behind this proclamation of the message is that it is an appeal to the faith of the participants, to which they must give a personal response. The personal faith confession of the catechist plays an important role here. When the catechist reveals how she has been personally touched by the message, her faith is 'transmitted' to the participants. Ultimately, the goal of kergymatic catechesis is personal surrender to Jesus Christ (De Jong 2002; Hemel 1986, 78-94).

An example of kergymatic adult catechesis in the Netherlands is provided by W. Bless. Bless refers, for example, to the New Catechism, in which revelation is not seen as a system of clear and well-defined truths, but as a message (Bless 1971, 95-125). In the process, there is a shift from a rational approach to faith to faith as a mystery:

> *There is a level within us, deeper than reason, more personal than emotion, more human than the unconscious* [. . .] *There Jesus speaks to us when He asks about faith* (Bless 1971, 102-103).

We see that in this instance, the education process is aimed at develop-
ing an intra-personal identity, and that it does so from a conformity
orientation. The intention is not to encourage the self to write its unique
religious narrative. The Christian narrative is transmitted from above as
the 'great story'. The individual is expected to adopt or appropriate that
narrative as his own. Christ offers a model of being human, and partici-
pants come to know themselves as religious selves in relation to that
model. Religious identity consists in this personal relationship with Christ
as Redeemer and Saviour. Hence we speak of an intra-personal form of
identity. The outward form (for example devotional praxis) is secondary;
the personal relationship with Jesus as the Christ is primary.

b. *Conformity: inter-personal*
Education that pursues conformity as its goal orientation can also be con-
cerned primarily with inter-personal religious identity. This is the case,
for example, with hermeneutic adult education. In hermeneutic catechesis,
an effort is made to make the Christian tradition and the Bible relevant
to today (Hemel 1986, 78-94). Because of the distance between the world
of the Bible and that of today, the meaning of biblical texts can be unlocked
only by indirect means. This means seeking the contemporary meaning
of the Bible text, which is found by looking at the life context of the par-
ticipants. Biblical texts can help people better understand themselves and
the world in a religious sense, for example by suggesting the right ques-
tions to ask about their present-day situation. In this way, hermeneutic
interpretation, which aims to unlock the contemporary meaning of a Bible
text, can close the gap between Christian tradition and present-day expe-
rience (Van der Ven 1982, 386-390). People's particular questions, such
as those about the meaning of life, can be answered on the basis of the
tradition. It is important to be aware, however that these answers are
specific to a particular time and thus need to be reviewed in terms of the
past as well as the present. In hermeneutic catechesis, the meaning of the
pre-determined Christian narrative is unlocked by interpreting tradition in
the language of today's experience[3] (Konijn 1973, 19-25, 46f).

   Hermeneutic catechesis focuses on inter-personal identity because this
bridging is not an individual activity, but a social process of interpreting
the meaning of the Christian tradition as it applies to today's individuals
and today's situation. The goal orientation is one of conformity. In the
process of transmission, the authority of the Christian tradition is accepted,
and the content of the Christian narrative is not questioned.

c. *Conformity: supra-personal*

Within the conformity orientation, it is also possible to focus mainly on the dimension of supra-personal identity. This kind of approach can be found in neo-scholastic catechesis. The neo-scholastic approach rests on proclamation of the Truth, as guaranteed by the church's doctrinal authority. Acceptance of these Catholic religious truths and the authority of the church as the guardian thereof is one way for humans to achieve salvation and redemption. Deharbe's so-called question-and-answer catechism from 1847, for example, asks what we must do to be saved. The answers are prescribed and must be learned by rote (Van der Ven 1982, 369-382). The aim of the neo-scholastic model is to form a Christian identity based on the appropriation of a system of institutionally anchored ideas and beliefs. A systematic and comprehensive instruction in the tenets of faith is therefore essential (Hemel 1986, 78-94).

The individual's life story is constructed in accordance with prescribed truths. Christian doctrine is presented as an all-encompassing, eternal and unchangeable narrative, as *the* narrative. The Christian identity is formed by reproducing this narrative. Because the 'collective voice' must be taken over by the individual, we speak of a supra-personal identity. Here we see once again the closed narrative concept of a conformity goal orientation. In keeping with this orientation, identity formation is seen as a process that occurs from the outside in: the person accepts the faith teachings of the church, and becomes a "sounding board" of this prescribed Truth.

4.2. *Christian adult education from a self-direction orientation*

A second goal orientation of Christian adult education is self-direction. This orientation can be placed within the framework of an open narrative concept, in which each individual writes her own religious narrative. Authority here lies with the individual, who decides what she will accept or not. The content of the religious identity to be formed is not determined in advance. What a Christian identity is, is determined entirely by people themselves. Experiences of ultimate meaning in human life serve as the starting point for the writing of the individual's own religious narrative. Education processes oriented toward self-direction may emphasize several different forms of identity.

a. *Self-direction: intra-personal*

An example of emphasis on intra-personal identity within a self-direction orientation is mystagogical catechesis. The central aim of mystagogical

catechesis is identity formation, with the ultimate focus on "*the symbols that make up the identity of a human being at the deepest level*" (Van den Berk 1998, 120). In the mystagogical approach, the deeper religious layers of our experience are approached through symbols and language. The literal meaning of texts is not as interesting as their allegorical meaning. The allegorical meaning expresses the spiritual reality of the text as it concerns a particular person. The Mystery writ large (God) is the mystery writ small in human beings. According to Van den Berk, mystagogy is the initiation into the deepest level of the self and into the Godhead.

In a self-direction-oriented approach focussing on intra-personal identity, the mystagogue is seen as a midwife who helps us give birth to that which is most important. He guides people to learn to understand the mystery of their own lives, with the ultimate aim that each person become his own mystagogue. Van den Berk draws heavily on the transcendental-anthropological theology of Rahner.[4] According to Rahner, human beings are by nature oriented toward transcendence, which permeates their experience in the world. Therefore salvation does not need to be transmitted from outside, but rather individuals must be helped to become aware of the salvation that is already present in them. Theology must begin and end with the human person, and the moment of learning arises when the person experiences for himself the meaning of the material being presented. It is above all through the human mental capacity for imagination that we have access to faith content (Van den Berk 1998; 1999, 50-63).

Christian faith contents are considered symbols of what people experience within themselves, and as such become part of our individual narratives. The corollary of this anthropological focus is rejection of criteria outside of the individual. Identity development is characterized by a self-direction orientation, in which authority lies within the individual. The religious identity that is to be developed is defined intra-personally. The goal of mystagogical adult education is to develop sensitivity to the religious images hidden within each person, and to encourage participants to search for the religious reality and the mystery within.

b. *Self-direction: inter-personal*

Within the self-direction orientation, identity formation can also be seen as a primarily inter-personal process. In this category we can place the approach known as existential catechesis. An existential approach to Christian adult education consists in encouraging the forming of religious identity by means of inter-personal clarification of experience. The meaning of existential questions and experiences is discovered in interaction

with other people. The other becomes a source of religious identity. This does not mean, however, that one simply takes over this identity from the other. Rather, the interaction with others awakens ideas that lie deeply hidden in oneself. The goal orientation of the educational process is self-direction; the existential experience comes from the participant. The criterion for this experience is whether it is right for that person.

To bridge the gap between the Christian tradition and contemporary experience, existential catechesis begins not with the Christian tradition and the Bible, but with experience. This can also be called an inductive approach. This approach follows a particular interpretation of the theology of Tillich. Tillich calls religion the 'ultimate concern', being seized by that which is unconditionally important. In content terms this means being seized by the ultimate meaning that lies in the presence of Jesus as the Christ. In religious pedagogy, 'ultimate concern' becomes a fundamental anthropological category. The religious dimension is part and parcel of human existence, as the search for and openness to meaning and transcendence. The assumption is that looking deeply at one's own existential experience will lead to insight into the religious dimension of existence. Catechesis must therefore look at existential themes such as freedom, responsibility, suffering, fear, hope, death, etc. in order to clarify the nature of existence (Van der Ven 1982, 394-397).

> *This clarification takes place through the stories, symbols and texts in which salvation history finds expression, relating them to the fundamental human questions about the meaning of existence* (Van der Ven 1982, 376).

An example of existential catechesis in the Netherlands can be found in the 'Hoger Katechetisch Instituut' publication 'Grondlijnen voor een vernieuwde schoolkatechese' (Outline of a new school catechesis) from 1964 (De Jong 2002; Zondag en De Jong 1998). It proposes that only through this kind of experiential clarification can the meaning of the narratives of Christian tradition be understood. Conversely these narratives also shed light on human existence (Van der Ven 1982, 374-376). In the process of identity development, the inner and the outer worlds are in dialogal relationship to one another, which is characteristic of an interpersonal identity concept.

c. *Self-direction: supra-personal*
Within a self-direction orientation, the focus can also be on supra-personal identity. As far as the institutional form of religion in modern society is concerned, worldview education is an example of such an approach. The

aim of this type of education is to foster autonomy, responsibility, critical rationality and dialogue. Worldview education starts from the premise that as a result of the processes of rationalisation, differentiation and segmentation associated with modernisation,[5] the integrative function of institutions promoting a cohesive worldview has come under pressure. The role of religion in today's society has shrunk to near irrelevance, but people still seek transcendence and struggle their whole lives against experiences of meaninglessness. World views are the institutional result of people's desire to give meaning to disorienting experiences. However, as a result of the modernisation process, there is no longer a consistent integration of world views at the societal level. This affects not only Christianity as a specific view of life, but the way that reality is dealt with in general. Individuals no longer look at life questions from the perspective of the shared customs, symbols and stories of a consistent world view, and it becomes increasingly difficult to develop a personal worldview identity (Geurts 1997, 32-79).

The process described illustrates the shift from a closed to an open narrative concept and the complications that can accompany it. While oriented toward the goal of self-direction, the worldview approach to the formation of religious identity focuses chiefly on 'collective voices' and the importance of religious institutions. The 'five pillars' of Islam are an example. Emphasis is placed not on personal interpretation of the believer, but on the institutional manifestation of the five pillars (rules, roles, organisations), i.e. the supra-personal aspects. Religion is considered in terms of its institutional forms. In the context of modernisation, religious institutions have largely lost their societal function. The goal of worldview education is the critical confrontation with the vacuum that religion in its institutional manifestations has left behind.[6]

4.3. *Christian adult education from a transformity orientation*

Transformity-oriented Christian adult education involves appropriation of elements from outside the individual as well as criteria inside the individual. The first general rule of learning, as formulated by Vygotsky, is that everything that a person learns comes first from outside. Learning is not purely an intra-mental process, but first and foremost a social (inter-mental) process of acquiring ideas, behaviours or abilities that are communicated by others. This is a transformative process, inasmuch as that which is acquired is also transformed by the individual. In the process of acquisition, meaning is transformed into personal meaning. In narrative terms,

the individual becomes the author of her own life story. For the construction of a religious identity this means that a person comes to known herself as a religious self via the roundabout way of the texts and narratives of a religious tradition. Every believer writes her own religious narrative, and reveals new meanings in doing so. The religious or worldview identity is formed intra-, inter- and supra-personally through interaction between this individual religious biography, the religious narratives of others, and the religious texts and faith narratives of the religious tradition (Hermans 2001, 283-314).

a. *Transformity: intra-personal*

Christian adult education oriented toward transformity can be concerned primarily with intra-personal identity. An example is critical catechesis. A goal of a critical catechetic approach is to promote both conformity and self-direction, by teaching participants to think for themselves with the help of theological insights. Participants need to be motivated to 'compassion, solidarity and justice from the inside out' (Van der Ven 1982, 379), by means of an externally provided conceptual framework derived from critical theology. The process entails an interaction between the individual's ability to construct a religious narrative and the original narrative (cleaned of false ideology) of the Christian tradition. The religious identity is realized at the intra-personal level, in that the participants learn to experience themselves as emancipated believers.

A critical approach to Christian adult education seeks the emancipation of participants. While the development of critical thinking can encourage individuals to tackle societal problems, that aim is secondary in the critical approach. When participants learn to think critically about the religious dimension of reality, they can free themselves from alienating ideologies (De Jong 1998; Zondag en De Jong 1998). As part of this process, the Christian faith itself is critically examined. Religious statements are tested for their validity by each person with the tool of reason. Ideological content is critically examined and rejected where appropriate, *inter alia* through dialogue with other religions, so that what remains is the "authentic meaning and prophetic inspiration and orientation of the Bible and tradition" (Van der Ven 1982, 378, 401-425).

Religious identity takes form where the individual, through a process of critical reflection, experiences himself as a believer on the basis of God's emancipating action. In this sense the identity is intra-personal. The direction of identity development is one of transformation. The process of critical reflection draws on ideas from modern theology, but the individual

is not expected to conform to these ideas. The outcome of the reflection is not prescribed. It remains the individual's *own* reflection on reality.

b. *Transformity: inter-personal*

A transformation orientation can also be approached from the perspective of an inter-personal concept of identity. This is the case, for example, in a participatory approach to Christian adult education. Participatory adult education is based on Bruner's thesis that knowing and learning take place through participation in social-cultural practices. As in worldview education, the declining influence of institutions like churches on individuals is discussed. In our time, the human narrative has become an open narrative, in which people construct their own identities through trial and error. Now that the great story seems to have been lost, religious practices are an important substitute. It is here that religious tradition and people's present-day experiences can still be related to each other. Religion is viewed as a religious practice embedded in a community of practice. Only through participation in religious practices such as the reading of Bible texts or participation in religious-inspired social events do people gain insight into the meaning of religion. And only through participation in these religious practices can the religious self develop in an inter-personal way.

The aim of the participatory approach to Christian adult education is formation of the religious self by giving meaning to the religious practices – which still are founded in the religious tradition – in which one takes part. The identity formed in this way is not an individual identity, but a dialogal identity. Participation is an integral element of identity formation. An inter-personal identity can be formed only by learning to participate, because the self is anchored in religious practices that are essentially social in nature. But participation alone is not enough, because that would simply lead to conformity. When the educational process is oriented toward transformity, it is essential that participants also learn to reflect on the practices in which they participate. Both the pre-scribed narrative and the narrative constructed by the individual carry authority in the development of a religious identity. Identity formation is seen neither as something that arises from within the participants, nor as something that is created purely as an effect of external factors (Hermans 2001; 2002).

c. *Transformity: supra-personal*

Within a goal orientation of transformity, emphasis may also be on supra-personal identity. An example of this would be multi-religious education. Multi-religious education reflects the contemporary pluralistic context, in

that the content is expanded from the Christian religion to the various religions that are actually present in a society and the search for meaning in general.

In cognitive terms, the aim of a multi-religious educational approach is to acquire knowledge of and insight into the various religions. Affectively the goal is to develop respect for other religions, and volitively it is to become familiar with different religions (Hermans 2001, 361-363; cf. Sterkens 2001, 55-57). Precisely in a time when not just the Christian religion, but worldviews in general have lost plausibility, people are in need of guidance and orientation. It is important that people learn what it means to question the meaning of existence. Pluralism implies that there are a number of possible answers to this question. In order to enable participants to find their own answers and to choose from the worldviews on offer, they need to be made familiar with the many different worldview choices. By informing people about the various possible approaches, the educator enables participants to make their own choices on the worldview market. The task of the educator is that of a guide (De Jong 1998; 2002; Zondag en De Jong 1998).

Here too we see that the combination of acceptance and appropriation to be characteristic of a transformative orientation. The individual is offered information about different religious and worldview traditions, to enable her to make her own choices. The construction of religious identity takes place primarily through supra-personal identification with the institutional manifestations of religion. The self comes to know itself as a religious self in relation to institutional manifestations such as religious celebrations, ritual forms and religious role models. These institutional manifestations give form to the collective voice of a religious tradition.

4.4. *Research questions*

We have described nine approaches to Christian adult education, and the aims they seek to fulfil. We will now formulate four research questions in relation to these approaches.

1. What aims do Christian adult educators differentiate?
2. To what extent do they agree with each of these aims?
3. Does there exist in the consciousness of Christian adult educators a correlation between these aims
   a. with regard to the different underlying goal orientations?
   b. with regard to the different definitions of identity?
4. Who are the social supporters of these aims?

On the basis of our theoretical framework, our expectations with regard to these research questions are as follows:

First, we expect that the nine general aims to Christian adult education will be present in the awareness of Christian adult educators.

Second, we expect that in a time of pluralism and de-institutionalisation, Christian adult educators will agree most strongly with the goal orientations of self-direction and transformity and least strongly with the goal orientation of conformity. Similarly, we expect less agreement with the aims aimed at forming supra-personal identity because of the same phenomenon of de-institutionalisation.

Third, we believe that agreement with one of the conformity-oriented approaches will tend to correlate with agreement with other aims having the same orientation, and that the same will hold true of the self-direction and transformity orientations. At the same time we anticipate that the aims that focus on the same dimensions of identity will correlate less markedly among themselves, because the dimensions of identity are not mutually exclusive categories.

Finally, we think that agreement with the different aims will be differentiated along the lines of rule-governance and ecclesiological views. We expect that agreement with a particular approach to Christian adult education will be reflected in the degree to which the educators allow themselves to be guided by rules in the context of their educational work (rule-governance), as well as in their views about church organisation. The expectation is that Christian adult educators who agree with conformity-oriented aims will also be more likely to be guided by external authority in their work than educators who agree with self-direction and transformity-oriented aims. On the basis of our theoretical discussion we also would expect a hierarchical church view to correlate with a conformity orientation, and a democratic church view to correlate with a self-direction orientation.

5. EMPIRICAL DATA

In this section we describe the results of an empirical study among Christian adult educators within the Roman Catholic Church in the Netherlands.

5.1. *Research design and instruments*

The study was in the form of a survey of the entire study population, namely the total population of Christian adult educators working in the Catholic context in the Netherlands, consisting of:

– catechists of adults working in parishes
– pastors having Christian adult education as one of their tasks
– educators working in centres of religious formation
– teachers at pastoral schools[7]
– experienced volunteers with theological education

The population is estimated at around 500 people.[8] We received 151 completed questionnaires, for a response rate of roughly 30%.

Our research questions concerned the typology of the general aims to Christian adult education presented in the theoretical portion, which can be represented as follows:

	Intra-personal	Inter-personal	Supra-personal
Conformity	Kerygmatic	Hermeneutic	Neo-scholastic
Self-direction	Mystagogical	Existential	Worldview
Transformity	Critical	Participatory	Multi-religious

In order to make agreement with the aims measurable, we used indicators that denote what differentiates one approach from another. Indicators for aims within the conformity orientation are based on external authority, those within the self-direction orientation are based on internal authority, and those within the transformity orientation are based on a combination of the two. The orientations are expressed by verbs. In the case of the conformity-oriented aims, the verb expresses the movement from outside to inside, i.e. appropriate, interpret, and adopt. Then, we emphasized the intra-, inter- or supra-personal dimensions of religious identity.

Figure 1. *Indicators of general aims of Christian adult education*

	Orientation	Identity
Conformity		
Kerygmatic	appropriate	experience of personal surrender to Christ
Hermeneutic	learn to interpret	meaning of Bible and tradition for life
Neo-scholastic	adopt	church dogma
Self-direction		
Mystagogical	develop	sensitivity to internal religious symbols
Existential	become aware	experience of faith
Worldview	realize	loss of function of religious institutions
Transformation		
Critical	form	personal vision based on critical theological insights
Participatory	develop	personal identity through collectively giving meaning to religious practices
Multi-religious	learn about	plurality of religions and worldviews

Based on these indicators we operationalized each aim with the aid of two items. An item designed to measure a kergymatic aim, for example, is: "*Participants acquire a personal faith in Christ*". An example of an item for the multi-religious aim is: "*Participants are introduced to the multiplicity of religions and worldviews*". For a complete list of all items we refer to the factor analysis as presented in Table 1.

The other two instruments measured the background characteristics of rule-governance and ecclesiological views. Rule-governance was measured by questions about whether and to what extent Christian adult educators are guided by the following in the event of differences of opinion about the education:

a. Directives of the church authorities in their diocese
b. Policies of their institution/deanery/parish
c. Consultation with colleagues

Aims within the conformity and self-direction orientations are based on external and internal standards of behaviour respectively. For the rule-governance instrument we made use of a continuum from internal to external authority. Reference to internal authority would be when the educator does not report being guided by any of these standards, while external authority would be when the educator reports being guided by all the directives.

Among ecclesiological views we distinguish between a hierarchical and a democratic concept of the church (cf. Schillebeeckx 1989). As regards the internal relations of the church, a hierarchical view holds that church leadership transmits the Christian message to people in our time; a democratic view holds that all members of the religious community are equals in one 'people of God'. As far as the church's external relations with society are concerned, a hierarchical church view proceeds from the truth as transmitted to the church by the Holy Spirit. According to this view, this truth cannot and should not be adapted to the modern world or contemporary needs, and therefore the church should distance itself from society and its secular values. A democratic church view, on the other hand, is characterised by openness to the surrounding culture (Schillebeeckx 1989, 221-239). This concept of church organisation (ecclesiology) was measured with an instrument derived from Jeurissen (1993). He divides attitudes towards church organisation into attitudes towards the church's internal and external relations. The organisation of internal relations translates into democratic decision-making in the church. The organisation of

external relations translates into the church's openness to society and is divided into attitudes towards the social inclusiveness in terms of open membership (structural openness) and cultural adaptation (cultural openness) of the church[9] (Jeurissen 1993, 154-156, 179). An example of an item for democratic decision-making is: "*It is not good for every believer to be able to interfere with all decisions in the church*". An example of an item on structural openness is: "*Everyone should be able to become a member of the church*", and an item on cultural openness is: "*The church should keep abreast of new ideas in our modern world as much as possible*".

5.2. *Results*

To answer the **first** research question about the general educational aims differentiated by Christian adult educators, we performed a forced factor analysis with nine factors based on our theoretical model. The result of this analysis is shown in Table 1. From this factor analysis we can conclude that the nine aims to Christian adult education are present in the awareness of Christian adult educators. Two correlations are moderately strong, namely the mystagogical approach (r .46) and participatory approach (r .43). The other correlations are strong to very strong.

Table 1. *Oblimin-rotated factor matrix, commonalities (h^2), percentage of explained variance and correlations (Pearsons R) regarding general aims to Christian adult education*

item	h^2	f1	f2	f3	f4	f5	f6	f7	f8	f9
Participants become aware of their own experience and faith convictions	.67	**.79**								
Participants become aware of the faith that is in them	.56	**.62**								
Participants become familiar with the faith truths of the church	.87		**.92**							
Participants are introduced to the truth taught by the church	.75		**.71**							
Participants learn to see that religion hardly plays a role in society any longer	.72			**.85**						
Participants realize that religion no longer has much influence on individuals and society	.72			**.85**						

Table 1 (*cont.*)

item	h²	f1	f2	f3	f4	f5	f6	f7	f8	f9
Participants form their own view of societal issues from a critical theological perspective	1.0				**-1.02**					
Participants learn to think about problems in society on the basis of critical theological insights	.50				**-.60**					
Participants are introduced to the multiplicity of religions and worldviews	.73					**.87**				
Participants become acquainted with different religious beliefs and traditions	.83					**.86**				
Participants live their lives from a personal commitment to Christ	.75						**.83**			
Participants acquire a personal faith in Christ	.68						**.81**			
Participants understand their life from an understanding of deep human symbols	.64							**.74**		
Participants develop a sensitivity for religious images that lie hidden in every person	.61	.31						**.48**		
Participants develop their own religious identity by together giving meaning to religious activities	.75								**-.82**	
Participants develop their religious identity by discovering the meaning of religious activities as a group	.35				-.26				**-.38**	
Participants look at their lives in terms of the message offered by the Bible and by tradition	.74									**-.68**
Participants learn about the ways in which the Bible and tradition are relevant today	.49	.29		-.20						**-.35**
Pearsons R		.58	.76	.71	.65	.75	.71	.46	.43	.50
% explained variance:	68.7%									

Legend:
F1 = existential clarification
F2 = neo-scholastic
F3 = worldview
F4 = critical
F5 = multi-religious
F6 = kerygmatic
F7 = mystagogical
F8 = participatory
F9 = hermeneutic

The extent to which Christian adult educators agree with each of these aims (**second research question**) is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2. *Means and standard deviation of the general aims to Christian adult education**

	Intra-personal			Inter-personal			Supra-personal		
		mean	*s.d.*		*mean*	*s.d.*		*mean*	*s.d*
Conformity	Kerygmatic	**3.5**	1.02	Hermeneutic	**4.1**	.74	Neo-scholastic	**2.8**	1.07
Self-direction	Mystagogical	**4.1**	.70	Existential	**4.4**	.63	Worldview	**2.2**	.93
Transformity	Critical	**3.7**	.77	Participatory	**4.1**	.66	Multi-religious	**3.3**	.89

* scale from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree)

In general, it can be said that there is agreement with almost all of these approaches. Only the worldview aim is rejected, and the neo-scholastic and multi-religious aims are in the range of doubt (between 2.60 and 3.40), with the neo-scholastic aim tending toward rejection (mean = 2.8) and the multi-religious aim tending toward agreement (mean = 3.3). The highest level of agreement was with the existential aim (mean = 4.4).

When we look at the different orientations, we find that within the conformity orientation a hermeneutic aim involving the transmission of the meaning of the Bible and Christian tradition scores highest and the neo-scholastic aim of introducing the teachings of the church scores lowest. Agreement with the kerygmatic model of entering into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ is between the two. This pattern is repeated with the other two orientations, in that the supra-personal approaches have the lowest agreement (worldview and multi-religious) and the inter-personal approaches the highest (existential and participatory).

The **third research question** concerns the relationship between the various aims according to educators. The results are shown in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3. *Significant (p < 0.001) and relevant (r > .30) correlations between general aims to Christian adult education by orientation*
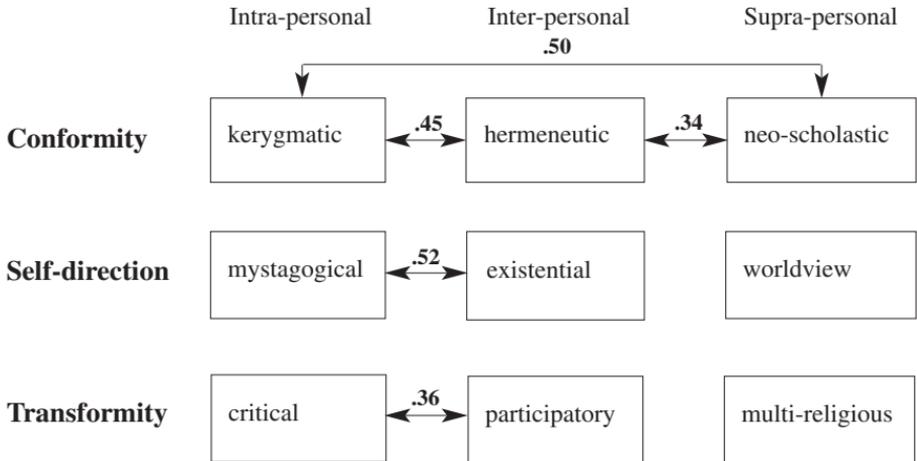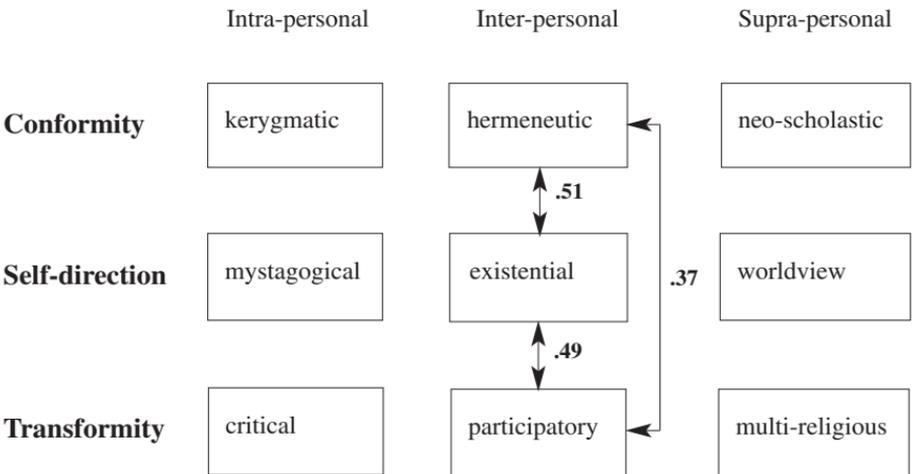
	Intra-personal	Inter-personal	Supra-personal
		.50	
Conformity	kerygmatic	.45 hermeneutic	.34 neo-scholastic
Self-direction	mystagogical	.52 existential	worldview
Transformity	critical	.36 participatory	multi-religious

Table 4. *Significant (p < 0.001) and relevant (r > .30) correlations between general aims to Christian adult education by dimensions of religious identity*

	Intra-personal	Inter-personal	Supra-personal
Conformity	kerygmatic	hermeneutic	neo-scholastic
		.51	
Self-direction	mystagogical	existential	.37 worldview
		.49	
Transformity	critical	participatory	multi-religious

First of all we look at the correlations between the orientations (Table 3). We see strong correlations among the three conformity-oriented approach aims. This means that the more Christian adult educators agree with a kerygmatic aim (intra-personal), the more strongly they also agree with the hermeneutic (inter-personal) and neo-scholastic (supra-personal) aims. For the other two orientations, only the intra-personal and inter-personal aims correlate with each other. The more one is comfortable with a mys-

tagogic aim, the more one is also in agreement with an existential model (self-direction orientation), and the more one is comfortable with a critical aim the more one will agree with a participatory aim (transformity orientation). The supra-personal aims within these orientations do not correlate with the other aims. We will look at this result more closely in the discussion.

When we look at the relationship between the dimensions of identity in the general aims of Christian adult education (Table 4), we see that there is a correlation only between the aims that focus on inter-personal identity. Agreement with *one of* the aims focussing on the inter-personal self, for example a hermeneutic aim, also implies agreement with the other inter-personal approaches, such as the existential and the participatory aims. The aims concerned with intra-personal and supra-personal aspects of identity do not mutually correlate.

The **fourth research question** has to do with the social location of the Christian adult educators who agree with the various general aims. We limited ourselves to two background characteristics that are relevant to us. The first is the extent to which the educators allow themselves to be guided by rules that apply within the teaching environment (rule-governance). The educators were asked to what extent, in case of differences of opinion, they would comply with directives from the church authorities in their diocese, policies of their institution such as a deanery or parish, or the opinions of their colleagues. There appears to be a significant association between the degree of rule-governance and agreement with conformity-oriented educational aims.

Table 5. *Associations (eta's) and significant differences in acceptance of conformity-oriented aims to Christian adult education by levels of rule-governance among Christian adult educators*

	eta	None of these (n = 30)	Colleagues' opinions only (n = 33)	Colleagues and institutional policies (n = 61)	Colleagues and institutional policies and church authorities (n = 19)
		mean	*mean*	*mean*	*mean*
kerygmatic	.54	3.4	2.8	3.5	4.7
hermeneutic	.31	4.2	3.8	4.2	4.5
neo-scholastic	.52	2.6	2.3	2.8	4.2

Christian adult educators who are guided by all of these sources in their educational activities, in other words by the directives of church author-

ities, the policies of their institution and the opinions of colleagues, tend to agree most strongly with conformity-oriented aims. Those who are guided only by their discussions with colleagues are least likely to agree with these approaches.

Table 6. *Significant* and relevant (r > .20) correlations between general aims to Christian adult education and ecclesiological views of Christian adult educators*

	Centralised decision making	Structural openness	Cultural openness
Conformity			
Kerygmatic	.23*		
Hermeneutic			
Neo-scholastic	.39**	-.25*	-.28*
Self-direction			
Mystagogical	-.31**		.23*
Existential	-.29**		
Worldview			
Transformity			
Critical			
Participatory	-.26*		
Multi-religious		.27*	

* p < 0.01; ** p < 0.001

A second relevant background characteristic consists of the ecclesiological views of the Christian adult educators. Three aims appear to have no correlation with ecclesiological views, namely the hermeneutic, worldview and critical aims. Among the conformity-oriented aims, agreement with a kergymatic and neo-scholastic aim also implies agreement with the idea that decisions in the church should be made by only a few people. Those who agree with a neo-scholastic aim also tend to reject the idea that the leadership of the church should be open to all and that the church must adapt to changes in society. The opposite is true of the self-direction-oriented aims. The more educators agree with the existential and mystagogical approaches, the less likely they are to agree with the view that the church should be hierarchically controlled. Agreement with a mystagogical aim also correlates with support for cultural openness in the church. The transformity-oriented aims show little correlation with the various ecclesiological views. Agreement with a participatory aim implies disagreement with the view that decision-making in the church should be made by a few people, and agreement with a multi-religious aim implies agreement with the idea that leadership in the church should be open to all.

6. Conclusion and discussion

How do we evaluate these findings in the light of our theoretical discussion? All of the aims identified on the basis of our conceptual model were found in the responses of Christian adult educators in our study. It appears that the theoretical differentiation into general aims based on two dimensions does reflect the awareness of Christian adult educators. Our expectation was the educators would agree most strongly with aims within the self-direction and transformity orientations, and least strongly with the con-formity-oriented aims. However, the level of agreement with each of the aims appears to differ not so much by formal orientation, but more according to the type of religious identity being promoted. Thus Christian adult educators agree most strongly with the aims in which identity is seen primarily as intra-personal and inter-personal. There is rejection or doubt about those aims that seek to promote a supra-personal identity.

Our next expectation was that the correlation between various aims would differentiate along the dimensions of the orientations and types of religious identity. We found that the agreement with general aims did tend to correlate along the formal dimension of goal orientation. However, cor-relation along the lines of the various concepts of identity was found only along the inter-personal dimension. On the basis of these data we believe that the principles behind our typology of general aims of Christian adult education are largely correct. The distinction between the orientations of conformity, self-direction and transformity appears to be primary, while the distinction between the different types of identity is secondary.

As far as the background characteristics are concerned, we had anticipated that a conformity orientation would correlate with a high degree of rule-governance, and a self-direction orientation with a low degree of rule-governance. The Christian adult educators who reported being guided by the rules of church authorities did in fact seem to agree with conformity-oriented approach aims in which identity is formed through external author-ity. On the basis of our theoretical discussion we would further expect a hierarchical church view to correlate with conformity-oriented approaches and a democratic church view to correlate with self-direction-oriented approaches. Our findings confirm this as far as support for centralized decision-making is concerned. In the case of the neo-scholastic and mys-tagogical aims this pattern applies to ecclesiological views in general.

The most notable finding is that aims concerned with supra-personal identity received the least agreement and also showed the weakest correlation with the other aims. In each orientation category, a correlation was found

between the aims concerned with intra-personal and inter-personal identity. Agreement with aims concerned mainly with supra-personal identity correlates with agreement for aims focussing on intra-personal and inter-personal identity only within the conformity orientation. This finding can be satisfactorily interpreted on the basis of our theoretical model. In conformity orientations, the direction of identity development is from outside the individual to inside. Supra-personal identity is about that which is beyond the individual. The 'collective voice' is associated with authority, and the individual must conform to it. According to an institutional theory of religion, religious institutions can be considered religious practices that have acquired authority within a certain community (Drisbey 1994, 220-224). Thus institutions are by definition linked with the concept of authority:

> *The concept of an institution is essentially linked with the concept of authority. When human communities agree in the use of a ritual, give it an institutional description and imbue it with culturally emergent properties, there arises a sense in which a certain procedure becomes the way the thing ought to be done* (Disbrey 1994, 145).

Within religion, tradition is seen as the source of authority. Institutionalisation and de-institutionalisation have to do with the tension between renewal and continuity of the tradition. Religious practices are embedded in religious regimes, defined as "an ensemble of relationships of dependency between institutions that is more or less formalised and ideologically legitimised by religious specialists" (Bax 1985, 25). On the basis of a religious regime it is determined which religious practices should take place and how they should be performed. This power constellation is then ideologically legitimated. It is ultimately the authority of a tradition that determines what is a religious practice and what is the meaning of a religious practice. Institutionalisation of religious practices always implies formalisation of rules and procedures, whereby they become less flexible and more difficult to change (Bruner 1996, 157-158; cf. Hermans 2001, 211-215, 259-260). Perhaps Christian adult educators reject aims that emphasise supra-personal identity for fear that as soon as the authority of a religious practice lies in its institutionalisation, there remains little chance of change.

Although in a pluralistic society religious institutions have lost much of their societal relevance and with it their control over people, Christian adult educators still work within the institutional context of the church. In this working environment they pursue aims that concern the intra-personal and inter-personal aspects of identity and not the supra-personal, collective aspect. How they cope with this tension is a matter of interest to those concerned with religious education.

In this light it is an interesting finding that rule-governance and ecclesiology as a problem of church leadership relate to different general aims of Christian adult education. It is significant that agreement with a neo-scholastic aim, which focuses on supra-personal identity within a conformity orientation, correlates most strongly with acceptance of hierarchical decision-making structures and rejection of democratic tendencies of openness to the surrounding culture. For this group of Christian adult educators, the striving for conformity is perhaps a way of resolving or avoiding the aforementioned tension. For the other Christian adult educators, tension can be expected between the goals of self-direction and transformation for which they strive and the institutional context of the church in which they are active.

NOTES

1. Hermans et al. do not make the three-way distinction that we make in this article. They limit themselves to the two concepts of the Cartesian self (what we call 'intra-personal identity') and the dialogal self (what we call 'inter-personal identity'). Hermans gives the collective form of identity a place in the dialogal self with the help of Bakhtin's concept of 'collective voice'. We have opted to make this 'collective voice' a distinct type of identity. The reason for this is that in religion in particular, this 'voice' takes on an independent existence as an authority that can scarcely be personally appropriated (see Hermans 2003, 234-235). In this context Bakhtin refers to the dominance of 'outsidedness' (Hermans 2000, 149).

2. These general aims are formulated at a high level of abstraction. They are not yet at the level of educational goals that can be differentiated according to concrete content and according to cognitive, affective and volitive aspects.

3. S. Konijn (1973) refers to the New Catechism to emphasize that in a changed context, the church must proclaim its message in the language of our time.

4. Van den Bosch (2001) points out that in this area Rahner's theology is so strongly coloured by Jungian psychology that the Divine almost seems to be subsumed by human imagination. Here both the transcendental character of God and the role of reflection in faith threaten to be lost.

5. These concepts are discussed more fully by Habermas from a sociology of knowledge perspective. For a comprehensive description of these modernisation processes we refer to Geurts 1997, 35-40.

6. In terms of a worldview approach, this vacuum then creates space for the individual construction of identity (bricolage). We will not go into that here, because within the framework of our typology we look at the different approaches to Christian adult education only insofar as they serve as a model for one of the types within our typology. The worldview approach is discussed only insofar as it is a model of the supra-personal dimension of a self-direction orientation.

7. A pastoral school is as a rule a two-year training course for volunteers in parishes, offered by the deanery.

8. In May 2003 we sent questionnaires to the 618 persons who were identified by the church administration as being involved in Catholic adult education. However, it became apparent that people who did not belong to our target group had been included in this address file. We tried to clean the file by sending a letter asking the recipients to inform us if they did not belong to the target group. We received 78 responses to that request, so the initial number of 618 must

be reduced at least to 540. In reality, however, the actual number in the target could be even smaller, since it is likely that not everyone who did not belong to the target group identified themselves in response to our request.

    9. With reference to Yinger, Jeurissen argues that these are two aspects of one underlying dimension of openness: the more the church tries to include members of a society, the more it will also accommodate the prevailing values of that society.

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