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INTERGROUP CONFLICT AND SOCIAL IDENTITY IN GALATIANS: AN EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS

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This paper extended Kok's (2014) use of social identity complexity theory as a heuristic tool in New Testament studies by applying socio-rhetorical exegetical analysis methods in conjunction with the social identity complexity theory. In particular, socio-rhetorical analysis provided insight into the identity and conflict situation represented in Galatians 2-3. Intertexture-reference, purity codes, and religious community provided socio-cultural analysis background and articulated the intergroup conflict supporting an application of social identity complexity theory to understand Christian identity in the church at Galatia.

I. INTRODUCTION

The intersection of social identity and group conflict in exegetical studies presents a research stream in need of additional exploration. Rothman and Alberstein (2013) argued that individuals experience identity as individual, group, or intergroup. Primary group affiliations or identities, when threatened, present potential sources of conflict (Foil, Pratt, & O'Connor, 2009). Social identity complexity theory provides a mechanism by which researchers may study identity formation and its role in conflict from both an individual and collective perspective (Kock, 2014).

Kok (2014) argued for the use of social identity complexity theory as a heuristic tool in New Testament studies. In particular, Kok posited that thick descriptions of early Christian identity provide ways to see how Christ-followers navigated cultural and ethnic lines. Kok further encouraged the use of social identity complexity theory in conjunction with exegetical studies to increase the understanding of social identity issues in the

early church. However, Kok's (2014) example focused solely on primary historical cultural analysis. The following exegetical study extends Kok's methodology by incorporating the use of socio-rhetorical analysis methods as the base from which social complexity identity theory may be applied.

The Apostle Paul wrote the book of Galatians to address the conflict and tension between the Jewish and Gentile Christians (Lo, 2010), which ultimately rested in a conflict over identity (Liubinskis, 2012). More specifically, the study sought to answer the question, in what ways did individual and group social identities create and sustain intergroup conflict between Jewish and Galatian Christians in the Galatian church?

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The following literature review outlines, defines, and articulates what constitutes a group. As well, a discussion of social identity and social identity complexity theory provides background concerning the theory under investigation. A brief overview of the Galatian context provides the basis for the socio-rhetorical analysis of the Galatians text.

Groups

Schein (1994) defined a psychological group as "any number of people who (1) interact with one another, (2) are psychologically aware of one another, and (3) perceive themselves to be a group" (p. 145). Arrow, McGrath, and Berdahl (2000) defined a group as a "complex, adaptive, dynamic, coordinated, and bounded set of patterned relations among members, tasks, and tools" (p. 34). As such, groups experience "local", "global", and "contextual dynamics", which provide rules by which a group interacts with each other and the outside world (Arrow, McGrath, & Berdahl, 2000). These complex interactions create and sustain collective identities, further defining group boundaries and connections between group members (Jones, 2011).

Groups move toward collective identity by working together, communicating shared beliefs and values, and moving toward "value convergence", which together creates an identity that represents more than the sum of individual parts (Meeussen, Delvaux, & Phalet, 2014, p. 236). Furthermore, Chen and Xin Li (2009) contended that groups mean something to their members, helping group members to create and sustain a personal identity stemming from a bolstered self-esteem and a sense of belonging. Groups represent dynamic collections of people whose personal identity connects with the larger group identity.

Social Identity

Social identity refers to an individual's sense of self as derived from perceptions of their membership within a group (Chen & Xi Li, 2009). Abrams, Hogg, Hinkle, and Otten (2005) postulated that personal identity runs on a continuum from "unique and individual" to "shared and social" (p. 100). The shared characteristics of group members and the resulting actions and behaviors create a shared identity within the individual (Abrams, et al., 2005).

The group's existence stems solely from the shared sense of identity felt by individuals, which then defines and shapes group coherence and guides intergroup behavior (Abrams, et al., 2005). Abrams, et al. (2005) identified some key assumptions of social identity theory including groups providing common identity, members seeking to have positive social identity, goals and norms influenced by internal and external contexts, coherence influenced more by shared identity than goals, and action stemming from group position rather than individual (pp. 103-104).

Social identity theory indicates that group identity creates "intergroup bias" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 325). Ahmed (2007) argued that human predispositions to think more highly of groups they belong to, leads to discrimination. Moreover, Chen and Xin Li (2009) contended that social identity theory further explains the psychology behind intergroup discrimination through categorization, identification, and comparison (p. 431). Categorization represents the process whereby people categorize others and self (Chin and Xin Li, 2009). Identification represents the process whereby people divide into in-groups and out-groups (Chin and Xin Li, 2009). Finally, comparison allows people and groups to compare with other groups creating bias and favoritism, leading to discrimination (Chin and Xin Li, 2009). Given the definition of groups as complex adaptive systems (Arrow, McGrath, & Berdahl, 2000), these mechanisms of discrimination must also be complex and overlapping.

Social Identity Complexity Theory

While social identity theory provides a mechanism by which to begin to understand collective identities, it does not deal with multiple group memberships or changing identities (Kok, 2014). In contrast, social identity complexity theory addresses multiple group members and multiple simultaneous identities (Kok, 2014; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). Moreover, social identity complexity theory recognizes that individuals must navigate a complex reality of overlapping group identities and changing contexts (Kok, 2014).

Social identity complexity theory posits four distinct models of identity representation (Kok, 2014; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). The first model, intersection, allows for a compound, simplistic identity at the intersection of two groups (Kok, 2014; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). For example, gender and profession represent an intersecting, compound, simplistic identity. The second model, dominance, entails individuals adopting a single dominant identity making all other identities subordinate (Kok, 2014; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). For example, a person may highlight profession over all other identities. The remaining identities become descriptive aspects of the dominant professional identity (Kok, 2014; Roccas & Brewer, 2002).

Compartmentalization provides an avenue for the individual to possess multiple identities and activate those identities based on context (Kok, 2014; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). For example, in one situation gender prevails over profession, in another profession over gender. Finally, merger, represents the ability to share identity with anyone who shares similar personal social memberships (Kok, 2014; Roccas & Brewer, 2002). A person would simultaneously hold all available identities and draw upon each of them as needed. This form of social identity complexity results in an "inclusive and diverse social identity" (Kok, 2014, p. 4). Roccas and Brewer (2002) posited that a

complex social identity requires individuals to recognize and embrace the divergent nature of simultaneous in-group identities.

Conflict within Groups

Putnam and Poole (1987) defined conflict as an “interaction of interdependent people who perceive opposition to goals, aims, and values, and who see the other party as potentially interfering with the realization of these goals” (p. 552). The study of group conflict centers on context, or the larger group and situation, and relationships, or the interdependence of individuals and subgroups (Putnam & Poole, 1987). Intergroup relations include complex sets of interactions that change frequently dependent upon situational factors, including status issues, which may create conception of power within the group (Finley, 2010; Lovaglia, Mannix, Samuelson, Sell, & Wilson, 2005). Putnam and Poole (1987) argued that intergroup conflict management requires structural interventions, or realignment of structures and resources, and process interventions, or redirection and reframing of perceptions through boundary movement or superordinate group goals.

Intergroup conflict results from social motives, including social identity (Wiesel & Zultan, 2016). Rothman and Alberstein (2013) argued that individuals experience identity as individual, group, or intergroup. Individual identity exists in light of personal existence, group identity indicates being because of collective identity, and intergroup identity reflects linkages between self and group (Rothman & Albertstein, 2014, p. 1-2). Group identity tends to be collectivist and relationship-oriented, requiring the individual to lose part of self to the group and to prioritize parts of life based on group membership (Rothman & Albertstein, 2013). In contrast, intergroup identity continually negotiates the most pro-social aspects of a number of groups to receive the greatest advantages of all groups simultaneously (Rothman & Albertstein, 2013).

Rothman (as cited in Foil, Pratt, & O’Connor, 2009) argued that “when people’s essential identities; as expressed and maintained by their primary group affiliations, are threatened or frustrated, intransigent conflict almost inevitability follows” (p. 33). Identity conflicts tend to be long lasting and can increase as groups grow larger, becoming more diverse and global, often representing generational conflict among groups (Foil, Pratt, & O’Connor, 2009). These conflicts begin with invalidation of one group by another, which disrupts how individuals make sense of the world (Foil, Pratt, & O’Connor, 2009). Foil, Pratt, and O’Connor (2009) argued that if identity creates the conflict it must help to solve the conflict and identified four steps to resolving intractable conflict including, promoting mindfulness, promoting positive in-group distinctiveness, simultaneously promoting intergroup differentiation and unity, and promoting integrative goals and structures (p. 38). However, Foil, Pratt, and O’Connor cautioned that long-standing dissidence between group members may cause group members to view common goals as “heresy” (p. 39). Moreover, individuals filter new information through existing values and beliefs, which may result in continued negative views of others (Foil, Pratt, & O’Connor, 2009). As well, focusing solely on similarities may threaten subgroup distinctiveness leading to increased bias and greater divides (Foil, Pratt, & O’Connor, 2009). If group members can be led to maintain both the superordinate identity and the subgroup identity, there is greater acceptance of opposing subgroups reducing

intergroup bias, increasing problem solving, and creating perceptions of commonality (Foil, Pratt, & O'Connor, 2009).

Foil, Pratt, and O'Connor (2009) argued that social identity complexity theory provides a mechanism to understand how individuals can hold dual identities, reflects a degree of overlap between those identities, and anticipates the complexity and difficulty in "holding dual identities" (p. 38). Moreover, validated subgroup identities provide a solid foundation from which a dual identity can emerge (Foil, Pratt, & O'Connor, 2009). Finally, strong dual identities throughout a group support group relations through shared goals and structures (Foil, Pratt, & O'Connor, 2009).

The Galatian Church in Context

The Apostle Paul wrote the book of Galatians to the conflicted church at Galatia. The church at Galatia experienced severe tensions between the Jewish Christians and the Gentile Christians, including expressions of a dominant-subordinate nature (Lo, 2010). Liubinskas (2012) argued that the conflict in Galatia between the Jewish and Gentile Christians ultimately rested in a question of identity. While the Christian church unified the two opposing groups under the identity of Christianity, the subgroups of Jews and Gentiles created an in-group and an out-group within the superordinate identity of Christianity (Liubinskas, 2012). The issues stemmed primarily from the strong ethnic cultures of both groups and focused on Gentile Christian adherence to tradition Jewish law (de Silva, 2004; Liubinskas, 2012).

Esler (1994) argued for an understanding of the conflict in Galatia through a social-scientific approach. As such, scholars must review Galatians in terms of honor and shame, dyadic personalities, kin relationships, and limited good (Esler, 1994; Malina, 2001). Culturally, early Mediterraneans oriented themselves from a collectivist viewpoint receiving value and identity from the groups to which they belonged (Esler, 1994). Esler (1994) argued that this collectivism led to classification by stereotypes, creating strong division based on kin (Esler, 1994; Malina, 2001). This divisiveness created strong competition between groups (Esler, 1994). Within the church at Galatia, these cultural aspects played into the conflict between the Jewish and Gentile Christians (Esler, 1994).

The division between Jewish and Gentile Christians in Galatia focused on the practice of circumcision (Galatians 2). However, Esler (1994) argued that the division stemmed from pressure toward and persecution of the Jewish Christians by either Jewish members of the community or Jewish officials at the local synagogue, in turn leading to persecution of Gentile Christians by the Jewish Christians. Esler contended that inherent in this conflict and persecution lies the need for recognition of the interdependence between Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians. This interdependence stems from both Jewish and Gentile Christian identity in Christ.

III. RESEARCH QUESTION

The literature review provided background on social identity theory and social identity complexity theory as it relates to groups, the influence of social identity on

intergroup conflict, and a review of intergroup relations in the Galatian church. The review provided support for the following research question,

RQ1: In what ways did individual and group social identities create and sustain intergroup conflict between Jewish and Galatian Christians in the Galatian church?

IV. SOCIO-RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

Following the methodology outlined by Robbins (1996a), I applied socio-rhetorical analysis to the Galatians 2-3 text, which provided the data to which the models of social identity complexity theory were applied. Socio-rhetorical criticism is an attempt to accurately locate the "internal" mind of the text within the context of the "external" world (Robbins, 1996b, p. 19). Through approaching the text in a variety of ways, the researcher creates permeable boundaries in which the actors, or the author, text, and interpreter, within the criticism navigate to place the text accurately on the plane created by the rhetorical and mimetic axes (Robbins, 1996a). As the interpreter looks at different textures (Robbins, 1996a), the approach allows a systems perspective, enabling the interpreter to see how the parts of the criticism interact with each other, or the "texture" of the text (Robbins, 1996a). I used a number of textures in this analysis, including cultural intertexture-reference, purity codes, and religious community.

Social and Cultural Textures

Social and cultural textures address the "location" of the language within the social or cultural world in which it resides (Robbins, 1996a, p. 71). "Specific social topics, common social and cultural topics, and final cultural categories" reveal the social and cultural textures of a text (Robbins, 1996a, p. 71). Robbins (1996a) argued that analysis of social and cultural textures allows the researcher to reveal how the text may move a reader to adopt "social and cultural locations and orientations" (p. 72).

Purity Codes: Galatians 2. Robbins (1996a) argued that purity encompasses a "cultural map" delineating the "inside from the outside", derived from the judgment of what is clean and unclean (p. 85). At the time of Christ, the order of cleanliness went as follows: priests, Levites, full-blooded Israelites, illegal children of priests, bastards, eunuchs born that way, and Gentiles (Robbins, 1996a, p. 85). Purity codes dominated interactions between groups of people and delineated social lines with exactness, particularly within the Jewish community (Robbins, 1996a). Paul's argument in Galatians 2, centered on identity as related to the purity codes associated with circumcision and food.

Malina (2000) argued that the ancient world understood much of life through the lenses of the sacred and profane. Sacred referred to "that which is set apart for some person...what is mine as opposed to what is yours or theirs..." (Malina, 2000, p. 163). The profane included "that which is not set apart...that which might be everybody's and nobody's..." (Malina, 2000, p. 163). The concepts of the sacred and profane also described how ancient peoples viewed human relationships (Malina, 2000), creating order within a social entity and defining boundaries (deSilva, 2004). Moreover, these rules encompassed socially learned and shared boundaries that help people make

sense of their world and their identities (Malina, 2000, p. 164). When people encounter “anomalies” or situations that do not fit within the socially accepted boundaries and patterns of behavior, uncertainty and ambiguity emerge (Malina, 2000) and, as a result, conflict.

Israel used purity codes to provide meaning to their social identity and to protect that identity (deSilva, 2004). As such, Jewish identity was found within the purity codes (Benson, 1857). However, Paul’s argument in Galatians 2 contrasted the purity codes and the gospel implying that purity codes such as circumcision and food purity no longer represent valid boundaries. In Galatians 2:3 Paul stated, “But not even Titus who was with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised” (NASB). In this text, Paul brought to light the story of Titus, a known uncircumcised Greek, highlighting the fact that the apostles themselves acknowledged that Titus did not need to be circumcised (Benson, 1857). In Galatians 2:4 Paul said, “But it was because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty, which we have in Jesus Christ, in order to bring us into bondage” (NASB). In this verse, Paul further articulated “false brethren” as those who profess to be Christians but still observe the law and want to bring others back under the law (Benson, 1857). Moving on, Paul further argued in Galatians 2:7, “seeing that I have been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised”; God entrusted him with the duty of bringing the Gospel, not the law, to the Gentiles” (NASB; Benson, 1857).

Interestingly, Paul in Galatians 2:11-14 countered arguments by raising suspicion surrounding Peter’s conduct relating to eating with the Gentiles. Where once Peter ate with the Gentiles in full acknowledgement of the gospel, he later engaged in hypocritical behavior as Paul described in Galatians 2:12. Paul stated that Peter “began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision” (NASB). Malina (2000) indicated that when anomalies in purity laws were experienced, elites and opinion leaders often provide interpretation for the ambiguity. Here Paul, argued that Peter in fact created more ambiguity and went against Christian identity by going back to the law rather than forward with the Gospel.

Finally, in Galatians 2:15-21, Paul addressed justification by faith not works by stating, “...nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified” (Galatians 2:16, NASB; Allen, 1957). By addressing this distinction, Paul further stretched the traditional understanding of the law, including purity laws. In doing so, Paul also stretched the identity boundaries of the Galatian people. The boundaries traditionally upheld and understood through the purity codes no longer held true. A major part of how the Galatians understood and navigated their social identity was turned inside out, causing confusion and conflict (deSilva, 2004; Liubinskias, 2012; Lo, 2010).

Intertexture

Intertexture analysis provides the researcher with the means to illuminate the text’s interaction with the “world outside the text” (Robbins, 1996a, p. 40). In some cases, a text may imitate another text but use different people (Robbins, 1996a). In

others, a text may restructure tradition or invert tradition in order to create new traditions (Robbins, 1996a).

Cultural Intertexture-Reference: Galatians 3:6-14. Robbins (1996a) articulated reference as a “word or phrase that points to a personage or tradition known to people on the basis of tradition” (p. 58). The text provides a way for the reader to interact with traditions that are “cultural possessions” of those belonging to that culture (Robbins, 1996a, p. 58). References point to a “personage, concept or tradition,” but do not “recite...recontextualize, reconfigure, elaborate, or amplify a text” (Robbins, 1996a, p. 59).

In Galatians 3:6-14, Paul used cultural intertexture-reference by referencing the story of Abraham’s faith to further his argument for a new identity in Christ (Barclay, 1954; Punt, 2013; Taylor, 2012). To begin, in Galatians 3:2, Paul asked the audience from where the Spirit comes, faith or works, “This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?” (NASB). For the reference to work, Paul needed his audience to understand the “functional superiority” of faith (Liubinskas, 2012, p. 33). From this point, Paul argued that Abraham’s favor with God came through faith and not adherence to the law in Galatians 3:7, “Therefore, be sure that it is those who are of faith who are sons of Abraham” (NASB; Barclay, 1954; Taylor, 2012). As such, the covenant promised to Abraham comes through faith rather than the law (Barclay, 1954). This line of argument was revolutionary since Jewish followers of Christ put emphasis on division through ethnic lines, particularly related to their descent from Abraham (Punt, 2013; Liubinskas, 2012). This descent from Abraham served to give the Jewish people a particular identity and status (Liubinskas, 2012). Paul took the cultural intertexture reference and flipped it to create an “alternative symbolic universe” where faith identity usurps ethnic identity (Liubinskas, 2012, p. 32). By doing so, the Gentile Christians received the same identity as the Jewish Christians solely through their faith. Again, another major way in which Jewish Christians understood their social identity was put in question, causing confusion and conflict.

Sacred Texture

Robbins (1996a) identified sacred texture as that which expresses the relationship between “humanity and the divine” (p. 120). Robbins identified eight sacred textures including deity, holy person, spirit being, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, religious community, and ethics. A review of religious community textures in Galatians 3 provided continued evidence for identity transformation.

Religious Community: Galatians 3: 15-29. Religious community represents illuminating how people together participate in things that “nurture and fulfill commitment to divine ways” (Robbins, 1996a, p. 127). Religious community includes issues concerning relationships to God, relationships with each other, and commitment to people outside of the community (Robbins, 1996a). Paul discussed religious community in terms of a contrast between the law and faith and the community’s unity in Christ.

Taylor (2012) argued that the law served as Israel’s “custodian” until the coming of faith (p. 294). In particular, the law provided a set of rules that outlined what constituted sin and as a result drove believers to grace (Barclay, 1954). The law

provided Jewish nations with a “badge” by which they created a boundary between themselves and outsiders (Allan, 1957). Liubinskas (2012) equated the law with a pedagogue, or someone in the ancient world who helped to shape identity within household by providing discipline and encouraging proper and good conduct (p. 33). In Galatians 3:19, Paul stated, “Why the Law then? It was added because of transgressions, having been ordained through angels by the agency of a mediator, until the seed would come to whom the promise had been made” (NASB). In this verse, Paul argued that since the law did not come directly from God, but through angels and Moses, the law remained functionally inferior to the Spirit or faith (Barclay, 1954; Liubinskas, 2012).

Finally, in Galatians 3:26-27, “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ,” (NASB), Paul completed his argument by indicating that through baptism, individuals outside of the direct lineage of Abraham could cross over the boundary and status division to inherit the covenant of Abraham (Liubinskas, 2012). In essence, “believers united with common experiences of the Spirit...transforms their status in relation to God and to each other” (Liubinskas, 2012, p. 36). Paul’s argument turned traditional identity markers around, creating identity crisis and conflict. However, throughout Galatians 2-3, Paul directly addressed the conflicts with arguments geared towards adopting the social complex identity which Paul held himself in the merger model (Kok, 2014).

V. Application of Social Identity Complexity Theory

The socio-rhetorical analysis provided the data from which social identity complexity theory was applied heuristically to the Galatians 2-3 text. By providing a multi-level review of the various tapestries located within the pericope, I identified social identity conflicts as the source of intergroup conflict. The socio-rhetorical analysis also provided support for locating the Jewish Christians in the dominance model of the social identity complexity theory. Finally, the analysis also provided evidence that Paul argued for the movement of the Galatian people from the dominance model to the merger model. Overall, this application showed that the systematic application of socio-rhetorical methods in combination with social identity complexity theory provided a more complete heuristic methodology than social identity complexity theory on its own.

Social Identity Complexity Theory in Galatia

The socio-rhetorical analysis provided evidence that Paul’s argument in addressing the conflict in Galatia stemmed from addressing the law, referencing the Abrahamic covenant, and arguing for religious community through baptism. All three of these tapestries pointed to conflict stemming from threatened identities and identity transformation. In reviewing the four models of social identity complexity theory, the audience to which Paul spoke exhibits characteristics of the dominance model (Roccas & Brewer, 2002). As previously stated, ethnic identity dominated ancient people’s worldviews, both Jewish and Gentile (deSilva, 2004; Kock, 2012). While these ethnic identities differed between Jews and Gentiles, both groups would have been aware of

the boundaries and laws by which these identities were formed and sustained (deSilva, 2004).

From the dominant model position, both Jews and Gentiles possessed a single dominant ethnic identity (Kok, 2014; deSilva, 2004). This single dominant ethnic identity created boundary and identity issues between two traditional opposing ethnic groups. In Galatians, Paul's arguments directly addressed the expression of the dominant model with both Jews and Greeks by turning the predominant social norms related to purity codes, issues of familial descent and covenant, and changing boundaries of religious community upside down. In essence, Paul argued for the adoption of a more complex social identity as defined by the merger model of social identity complexity theory.

Social identity reflects both individual and group sense of self and guides intergroup behavior. By addressing these specific modes of behavior and judgments, Paul directly addressed the conflict in Galatia. As noted by Liubinskas (2012) this conflict was "ultimately a question of identity" (p. 28).

Group Conflict in Galatia in Terms of Social Identity

Conflict often results from a threatened primary group affiliation (Foil, Pratt, & O'Connor, 2009). In turn, group identity stems from "value convergence" resulting in a shared identity (Meeusen, Delvaux, & Phalet, 2004, p. 236). The primary social identities in Galatia remained ethnic (Chen & Xin Li, 2009). As such, the conflict in Galatia represented a question of identity, or in this case a changing identity (Liubinskas, 2012).

Hunter (1960) argued that Paul addressed the fundamental question of what it means to be a Christian. He did so by attempting to redefine the identities of both Jewish and Gentile Jesus followers to be that of being a Christian, rather than their ethnic heritage. Paul attempted to move the Galatian church members from a dominant model of social identity complexity where ethnic identity prevailed over Christian identity to a place where Christian identity held a primary place in identity over ethnic identity. Lo (2011) contended that Paul argued for a preservation of ethnic divisions, but not for preservation of value judgments in relation to those identities. In essence, Jews could still follow purity laws, but not expect the same from Gentiles. This argument encouraged the merger model of social identity complexity theory.

VI. CONCLUSION

This research paper illustrated a combined research methodology using socio-rhetorical exegetical methods to assess and apply social identity complexity theory to a biblical context. The models of social identity complexity theory applied to the socio-rhetorical analysis findings supported the idea that social identity was at the heart of the conflict at Galatia and helped to further illuminate and identify conflict nuances.

The research extended Kok's (2014) use of social identity complexity theory as a heuristic tool in New Testament studies by including socio-rhetorical exegetical methods. The socio-rhetorical analysis provided depth and breadth, identified key textures that supported social identity complexity model identification, and provided a strong supporting foundation for a discussion of conflict within the church at Galatia.

Further studies integrating socio-rhetorical analysis with social identity complexity theory as a heuristic tool would provide additional support of this extension.

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