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Implicit religion, explicit religion and attitude toward substances: an empirical enquiry  
among 13- to 15-year-old adolescents

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**Abstract**

A recent research tradition has employed Bailey's (1997, 1998) notion of implicit religion to explore the ways in which Christian believing in the UK may be persisting in spite of declining levels of church attendance. Working within this framework the first aim of this study is to explore the prevalence of implicit religion, operationalized as attachment to traditional Christian rites of passage, among young people living within the UK. The second aim of this study, following the analytic model proposed by Francis (2013a, 2013b) exploring the psychological functions served by explicit religion and implicit religion, is to test the hypothesis that explicit religiosity (operationalized as church attendance) and implicit religiosity (operationalized as attachment to Christian rites of passage) are both associated with proscriptive attitudes toward substances among young people. Data provided by a sample of 12,252 13- to 15- year-old young people support this hypothesis.

*Keywords:* implicit religion, psychology, substances

### Introduction

The notion of implicit religion proposed by Bailey (1997, 1998) has recently gained considerable interest within the psychology of religion, as evidenced by the collection of empirical studies employing psychological theories or methods published within the special issues of *Implicit Religion* (Schnell, Francis, & Lewis, 2011) and *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* (Lewis, 2013). Bailey's conceptualisation of implicit religion provides a powerful heuristic tool for interrogating the presence of religion within secular societies. For Bailey implicit religion may be characterised (but not limited to) three key qualities:

Implicit religion displays *commitment*; it is something to which individuals feel committed. Implicit religion provides *integrating foci*; it is something that draws together the identity of an individual (or a group) and in doing so furnishes meaning and generates purpose. Implicit religion displays *intensive concerns with extensive effects*; it is something that helps to shape a worldview and carries implications for the way in which life is lived. (Francis *et al.*, 2013, p. 953)

Bailey's account of implicit religion, then, is an intentionally broad and multi-faceted construct which takes seriously the persistence of religious and spiritual worldviews within contemporary British societies, in ways both continuous with and discontinuous from the conventional practice of Christianity (Bailey, 1997, 1998, 2002). Empirical studies concerned with the study of implicit religion have operationalised this concept in a variety of ways, including: the implicit religion of contemporary belief systems and spiritual practices, such as belief in luck (Francis, Robbins, & Williams, 2006; Francis, Williams, & Robbins, 2006, 2008), belief in the paranormal (Williams, Francis, & Robbins, 2011), commitment to New Age beliefs (Kemp, 2001; Francis *et al.*, 2013), and the spirituality of the practice of belly dancing (Kraus, 2009); the implicit religion of secular activities, such as the implicit religion of a British public house (Bailey, 1997), the practice of football (French, 2002), and

contemporary rock music (Till, 2010); and the implicit religion of more conventional religious practices, such as the implicit religion of contemporary pilgrimage and ritual (Schnell & Pali, 2013), and the implicit religion of prayer requests (ap Sion & Edwards, 2013; ap Sion & Nash, 2013). Working within this framework of implicit religion the present study is concerned to build upon the growing body of empirical research exploring the implicit religion of Christianity outside the framework of the Churches. This literature represents two main strands, exploring: the prevalence of implicit religion in the UK, expressed by the belief that ‘You don’t have to go to church to be a Christian’ (Walker, Francis, & Robbins, 2010; Walker, 2013); and the psychological functions served by the belief that you do not need to go to church to be a Christian (Francis, 2013a, 2013b).

### **Prevalence of implicit religion**

The first strand has employed Bailey’s notion of implicit religion to explore the persistence of Christian believing in the UK in spite of declining levels of church attendance. Empirical studies within this field of research draw attention to the variety of perspectives which have attempted to characterise the connection between Christian believing and churchgoing within contemporary Britain. For example, some perspectives have proposed a causal link between loss of faith and reduced levels of church attendance, either in terms of classic secularization theory where loss of faith leads to reduced church attendance (see, for example, Bruce, 2002) or conversely, where reduced church attendance leads to loss of faith (Gill, 1993, 2003). Other perspectives have characterised the contemporary disconnection between Christian believing and churchgoing as ‘believing without belonging’ (Davie, 1994), while Francis and Robbins (2004) maintain that the term ‘belonging without believing’ is a more accurate indicator of this relationship. Empirical studies within this strand of research have employed Bailey’s notion of implicit religion as an effective descriptor of the relationship between contemporary Christian believing and churchgoing. One of the key

aspects of Bailey's notion of implicit religion concerns identifying ways in which the Christian religious tradition continues to claim a hold over people's lives in the UK, long after they have ceased to have active participation in the ongoing life of the local church. This feature of implicit religion is represented in Bailey's original study among suburban populations in Britain, where religious commitment was most adequately expressed by the statement, 'Well, you see, I believe in Christianity' (Bailey, 1998, p. 67). Within this context Christianity is representative of broad belief in God, broad belief in Jesus, and broad belief in the Church, but Christianity, in this context does not entail active church attendance. In essence, those who express their religious commitment through this form of implicit religion (broad belief in Christianity without active church attendance) are likely to take the view, 'You don't have to go to church to be a Christian.'

Developing further understanding of this form of implicit religion, Walker, Francis, and Robbins (2010) explored the prevalence of the view, 'You don't have to go to church to be a good Christian' among 1,226 individuals attending harvest festival services within rural Anglican churches. This study tested the connection between this view and four key variables: sex, age, frequency of church attendance, and frequency of private prayer. Findings demonstrated a high level of agreement with the belief that you don't have to go to church to be a good Christian (63%). Across the four key variables, findings demonstrated no significant differences according to sex. However, age emerged as a significant predictor: younger people (under the age of 30) were more likely to accept this view (81%) than people aged over 60 (51%). Higher levels of acceptance were also observed among those who attend church less than six times a year (84%) and among those who never prayed (81%). Reflecting on their findings, Walker, Francis, and Robbins (2010) suggested that the data indicate that belief in Christianity can be supported outside the churches unaccompanied by traditional practices such as church attendance and private prayer.

Replicating this study among 1,081 individuals attending Christmas carol services within two English cathedrals, Walker (2013) found that 69% agreed with the view that you don't have to go to church to be a good Christian. Walker's (2013) study, however, demonstrated a somewhat different pattern of results regarding the four key variables. For example, women were significantly more likely to agree with the view that you don't have to go to church to be a good Christian (74%), than men (65%). Findings demonstrated that agreement with the statement declines as age increases, from over three quarters among under 30s (78%) and 30- to 49-year-olds (77%), to just over half (55%) among those aged 70 or older. No statistically significant differences were reported in terms of agreement with regard to levels of church attendance. However, responses to an item which asked participants whether they had been baptised or confirmed proved to be a highly significant predictor. For example, while the lowest level of agreement came from those who had been baptised and confirmed (63%) the highest level was observed among those who had been baptised but not confirmed (80%). By contrast, among those who had been neither baptised nor confirmed the figure fell to 73%. Reflecting on his findings, Walker (2013) suggested that the data indicated that people who have no historic link with Christianity see a stronger connection between belief and practice than those for whom it is part of their past, the former being more traditionally secular rather than having adopted the implicit religiosity that marks out the latter. This supports the view that implicit religion and secularism are different phenomena associated with different patterns of belief and behaviour.

Taken together, the findings of these studies demonstrate three conclusions concerning the nature of the implicit religion that is expressed by the statement, 'You don't have to go to Church to be a Christian'. First, among individuals living in the UK during the first decade of the twenty-first century levels of commitment to implicit religion (in terms of believing that you do not need to go to church to be a Christian) are high. Second, this form

of implicit religion has a greater presence within individual lives than conventional explicit features of religion such as church attendance. Third, this form of implicit religion is personalised in the sense that individuals committed to implicit religiosity may choose to engage with certain Christian practices (e.g. attendance at Christmas carol services in a Cathedral), but feel that they do not need or are not required to participate in the regular practices of a conventional religious life. Fourth, these findings demonstrate that the contemporary religious landscape within the UK (in terms of the Christian faith) is one which is reflected more by the notion of a personalised implicit form of religion than by a secular worldview.

### **Implicit religion and psychological functioning**

The second strand has built upon the framework established by Walker, Francis, and Robbins (2010) and Walker (2013), concerning the implicit religion of believing that you do not need to go to church to be a Christian, by testing the extent to which this form of implicit religion serves the same psychological functions in people's lives as explicit religion (defined as frequency of church attendance). The impetus behind this research question is that for implicit religion (conceptualised as the belief that you do not need to go to church to be a Christian) to count as 'religious believing' there has to be evidence of some functional equivalence of implicit religion in the lives of such believers to match the functions of explicit religion in the lives of conventional Christian believers (Francis, 2013a).

A first study reported by Francis (2013a) tested the hypothesis that implicit religion serves a similar function to that served by explicit religion in respect of the construct purpose in life. Empirical research concerned with the connection between religiosity and purpose in life has routinely demonstrated that explicit religiosity (defined as frequency of church attendance) is associated with an enhanced sense of purpose in life (Francis & Burton, 1994; Francis & Evans, 1996; Francis, 2000; Robbins & Francis, 2005; Francis & Robbins, 2006,



2009). On this basis, Francis argued that, if implicit religiosity serves the same function as explicit religiosity, implicit religiosity should also be associated with a greater sense of purpose in life. In this study, conducted among 25,825 13- to 15-year-old students, purpose in life was operationalised by the item, 'I feel that my life has a sense of purpose', explicit religion was operationalised by frequency of church attendance, and implicit religion was operationalised by the item 'I believe that I can be a Christian without going to church'. A regression model was employed to control for the influence of potentially contaminating factors before examining the predictive power of explicit religiosity and implicit religiosity on purpose in life. These factors included: age, sex, the personality dimensions of extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism and the lie scale within Eysenck's dimensional model (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1991), self-assigned religious affiliation, and belief in God. These extra religious factors were included as control variables as they may be considered to underpin the related operational forms of both explicit religiosity and implicit religiosity. Using this model, two separate regression analyses were computed, the first of which entered church attendance (explicit religion) as the final term and the second of which entered the belief that you do not need to attend church to be a Christian (implicit religiosity) as the final term. Results demonstrated that both explicit religiosity and implicit religiosity were associated with an enhanced sense of purpose in life among young people. These findings support the general hypothesis that implicit religion and explicit religion may serve similar psychological functions.

A second study reported by Francis (2013b) employed the same analytical framework to examine the relative impact of explicit religion (frequency of church attendance) and implicit religion (believing that you do not need to go to church to be a Christian) on suicidal ideation among 25,726 13- to 15-year-old students. Empirical research concerned with the connection between religiosity and suicidal ideation has generally demonstrated that explicit

religiosity (defined as church attendance) is associated with lower levels of suicidal thoughts (Lester & Francis, 1993; Hovey, 1999; Marion & Range, 2003; Hills & Francis, 2005; Kay & Francis, 2006; Robbins & Francis, 2009). On this basis, Francis argued that, if implicit religiosity serves the same function as explicit religiosity, implicit religiosity should also be associated with lower levels of suicidal ideation. This study employed the same measures and statistical model as the foundation study, and operationalised suicidal ideation with the single-item, 'I have sometimes considered taking my own life'. In this study, however, explicit religion and implicit religion functioned in different ways: explicit religiosity was associated with lower levels of suicidal ideation while implicit religiosity was unrelated to suicidal ideation among young people.

Reflecting on the findings of these two studies, Francis (2013b) concluded that there are some ways in which the implicit religion captured by the sentiment, 'You do not need to go to church to be a Christian' serves the same psychological function as explicit religion captured as church attendance, but there are also ways in which this is not the case. On the one hand, implicit religion may work in the lives of individuals in the same way as explicit religion to generate positive psychological outcomes, such as positive affect and a sense of meaning and purpose. On the other hand, implicit religion may not work in the lives of individuals in the same way as explicit religion to offer protection from negative psychological outcomes such as negative affect and the sense of despair and meaninglessness. However, as Francis (2013b) highlights, this conclusion is vulnerable due to the limited evidence base on which it has been developed, and further replications and extensions of this research model are required to test the adequacy of the theory and its general stability within the broader interface between the study of implicit religion and the scientific psychology of religion. In recognition of this call, the present study is designed to extend the analytic model

proposed by Francis (2013a, 2013b) in respect of a third outcome variable, namely attitude toward substances, and employ a different, but related, operationalisation of implicit religion.

### **Religion and substances**

Within the social sciences, empirical research concerned with exploring the factors which promote or protect against substance use, substance-related problems and attitudes toward substances represents an important area of interest. One tradition has drawn attention to the continuing significance of religion as a predictor of individual differences in the use of and attitudes toward substances. In general religion is shown to provide a protective force against the use of substances and inhibits the development of positive attitudes toward substances. For example, empirical studies exploring the relationship between explicit religiosity and substance use tend to demonstrate that higher levels of church attendance are associated with lower levels of alcohol consumption, drunkenness and alcohol-related problems among young people and adults (Cosper, Okraku, & Neumann, 1987; Lubben, Chi, & Kitano, 1988; Clarke, Beeghley, & Cochran, 1990; Cochran, Beeghley & Bock, 1992; Toussaint, 2009; Brechting, Brown, Salsman, Sauer, & Holeman, 2010; Rasic, Kisely, & Langille, 2011; Fawcett, Francis, Linkletter, & Robbins, 2012), as well as lower levels of drug use (including cannabis, heroin, tranquilizers, LSD, cocaine and heroin) among young people and adults (Sloane & Potvin, 1986; Francis & Mullen, 1993; Mullen & Francis, 1995; Cook, Goddard, & Westall, 1997; Regnerus & Elder, 2003; Chu, 2007; Steinman, Ferketich, & Sahr, 2008; Mellor & Freeborn, 2011). However, this general finding has been questioned by some empirical studies which report no relationship between church attendance and drinking behaviour (Margulies, Kessler, & Kandel, 1977; Francis, 1994), drug-taking attitudes (Pettersson, 1991) and drug-use (Corwyn & Benda, 2000; Corwyn, 2002).

The inconsistency of these findings highlight two key issues which need to be taken into account before testing the association between attitude towards substances and explicit

religiosity or implicit religiosity. The first issue concerns the assessment of attitude toward substances, and the second issue concerns the role of personality in shaping individual differences in attitude toward substances and in religiosity.

First, most empirical studies concerned with the relationship between religiosity and individual differences in substance-related issues have concentrated on the surface behavioural aspects of substance use and abuse, rather than on the underlying attitudinal predispositions. Given the long-established relationship between positive attitude toward substance use and actual substance use (Martino & Truss, 1973; Champion & Bell, 1980; Kandel, 1980; Barber & Grichting, 1987; Eiser, Eiser, Gammage, & Morgan, 1989; Laflin, Moore-Hirschl, Weis, & Hayes, 1994) research utilising attitudinal measures, assessing sensitive topics such as substance-related issues, may be more reliable and attract more truthful responses than self-reported behaviours. This is evidenced by the clear and consistent patterns of relationship reported by empirical studies exploring the connection between explicit religion and negative attitudes toward substances (utilising the same or similar measures). For example, in a study conducted among 11,173 13- to 15-year-old students Francis (1997) found that higher levels of church attendance are associated with more proscriptive attitudes toward substances, assessed by a six-item 5-point Likert-type scale of agreement, measuring negative responses toward six key substances (alcohol, tobacco, cannabis, butane gas, glue, and heroin). Replicating this study among 25,888 students aged between 13 and 15 and utilising the same measures, Francis (2002) also reported that negative attitudes toward substances are associated with increased frequency of church attendance. A negative relationship between church attendance and proscriptive attitudes toward substances has also been reported by Francis (1992), Francis and Mullen (1993), Francis and Kay (1995), Mullen and Francis (1995), Francis (2001), Francis, Fearn, and Lewis (2005), and Fawcett, Francis, Linkletter, and Robbins (2012).

Second, research concerned with the linkages between attitudes toward substances and religiosity needs to take into account the potentially contaminating effect of individual differences in personality. A model of personality that has proved to be particularly fertile in these related fields of study is the three dimensional model proposed by Hans Eysenck and his associates and operationalized in a series of self-completion instruments for application both among adults, including the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975) and the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised (Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barrett, 1985), and among young people, including the Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975) and the Junior Eysenck Questionnaire Revised (Corulla, 1990).

Eysenck's dimensional model of personality proposes that individual differences in personality can be most economically and adequately summarised in terms of three orthogonal higher order factors. The first factor is expressed on the continuum from introversion, through ambiversion, to extraversion. Those who score high on the extraversion scale can be characterised as sociable, lively, active, carefree, dominant and assertive. The second factor is expressed on the continuum from emotional stability, through emotional lability, to neurotic disorder. Those who score high on the neuroticism scale can be characterised as anxious, depressed, tense, emotional, irrational and often have low self-esteem. The third factor is expressed on the continuum from tendermindedness, through toughmindedness, to psychotic disorder. Those who score high on the psychoticism scale can be characterised as cold, aggressive, toughminded, antisocial and impersonal. In order to guard against dissimulation, the Eysenckian family of personality measures also generally includes what has been defined (somewhat unfortunately) as a 'lie scale'. Those who score high on this scale can often be characterised as displaying high levels of social conformity, rather than intentional or unintentional dissimulation.

In one recent review, Francis and Hermans (2009) demonstrated that previous studies have generally linked high levels of explicit religiosity with lower psychoticism scores (tendermindedness) and with higher lie-scale scores (greater social conformity). Previous empirical studies also demonstrate that increased levels of alcohol consumption (Allsopp, 1986), and drug-use (Patton, Barnes, & Murray, 1993) are associated with those who record higher scores on the psychoticism scale, and that proscriptive attitudes toward substances are most clearly associated with low psychoticism scores followed by low extraversion scores, and high lie-scale scores (Francis, 1996a, 1997, 2002; Francis & Robbins, 2009).

Against this background, the present study will explore the extent to which implicit religion serves the same psychological functions as explicit religion with regard to young people's attitudes toward substances. Following Francis' (2013a, 2013b) working hypotheses regarding the symmetry of the effects of implicit religion and explicit religion, if implicit religiosity serves the same function as explicit religiosity, then implicit religiosity should similarly be associated with proscriptive attitudes toward substances. However, as Walker (2013) highlights, while it is clear that studies exploring the notion of believing that 'you do not need to go to church to be a Christian' have done much to nuance understanding of the implicit religion of individuals living in the UK, there is a need to identify other concepts which can be used to operationalize a measure for implicit religion, in order for the phenomenon of implicit religion to be studied more deeply. In light of this, the present study operationalizes a new measure, representative of individuals whose commitment to implicit religion is expressed by attachment to Christian rites of passage, such as the quest for infant baptism, the desire to get married in a church, or the hope of a church funeral after death. This is a form of implicit religion which may or may not be accompanied by belief in God, or by belief in Jesus, or by active participation in religious practice, but which may nonetheless carry significant meaning for those committed to it. This provides a further platform from

which, in the light of declining levels of church attendance, it is possible to examine the ways in which Christianity may be persisting in the lives of individuals within the UK. Within this operationalization of implicit religion, for instance, the church continues to play a central role within the lives of individuals living in contemporary Britain. This is in recognition of the fact that at the heart of the implicit religion of those committed to Christian rites of passage is the church in which they are held.

### **Research aims**

The first aim of this study is to explore the prevalence of implicit religion (defined by attachment to Christian rites of passage) among young people living in the UK. The second aim of this study is to explore the relative impact of explicit religiosity (defined as frequency of church attendance) and implicit religiosity (defined as attachment to Christian rites of passage) on young people's attitudes toward substances. Following Francis' (2013a) analytical model, these associations will be tested within a regression model that allows for potentially contaminating factors to be taken into account, including sex, age, personality (extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism and the lie scale), and self-assigned religious affiliation.

### **Method**

#### **Sample**

The Teenage Religion and Values Survey, a replication of the Religion and Values Today Survey described in detail by Francis (2001), was completed by 12,252 students attending eighty-seven secondary schools across England and Wales. Of the total respondents, 50% were male and 50% were female; 52% were in year-nine and 48% were in year-ten. Of those educated within the state-maintained sector, 46% were in non-denominational schools, 5% in Roman Catholic schools, 30% in Anglican schools, and 6%

were in joint Anglican and Roman Catholic schools. Of the total sample of students, 13% were being educated outside the state-maintained sector.

### **Procedure**

Participating schools were asked to follow a standard procedure. The questionnaires were administered in normal class groups to all year-nine and year-ten students throughout the school. Students were asked not to write their name on the booklet and to complete the inventory under examination-like conditions. Although students were given the choice not to participate, very few decided not to take part in the survey. They were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. They were informed that their responses would not be read by anyone in the school, and that the questionnaires would be despatched to the University of Wales for analysis.

### **Measures**

In addition to basic information about sex and school year, the present analysis draws on the following measures included in the questionnaires.

*Explicit religiosity* was operationalized by the item, 'Do you go to church or other place of worship?' rated on a five-point scale, ranging from 'never', through 'once or twice a year', 'sometimes', and 'at least once a month', to 'nearly every week'.

*Implicit religiosity* was operationalized by a three-item scale comprising the items, 'I want a church funeral after my death', 'I want my children to be baptised, christened, or dedicated in church', and 'I want to get married in a church', rated on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 'agree strongly', through 'agree', 'not certain', and 'disagree' to 'disagree strongly'.

*Religious affiliation* was measured by the item, 'Do you belong to a church or other religious group?' followed by a check list of Christian denominations and other faith groups. The first category in the list was 'none' and the last category was 'other (please specify)'.



*Attitude toward substances* was measured by a 9-item scale assessing an individual's negative response toward eight key substances, including: heroin, solvents, cocaine, cigarettes, alcohol, ecstasy, speed, and cannabis. Examples of the individual items comprising the scale include: 'It is wrong to use heroin', 'It is wrong to use cocaine', and 'It is wrong to become drunk'. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 'agree strongly', through 'agree', 'not certain', and 'disagree' to 'disagree strongly'.

*Personality* was assessed by the abbreviated form of the Revised Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (JEPQR-A: Francis, 1996b). This is a 24-item instrument which proposes four six-item measures of extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, and a lie scale. Each item is assessed on a dichotomous scale: yes or no.

### **Analysis**

The present analysis was conducted on a subset of the total database, shaped by responses to the item in the survey concerned with religious affiliation. This item was employed to exclude from analysis all students who identified with a non-Christian world faith, and to combine all the Christian denominations to form the single category 'Christian'. The analysis, therefore, was capable of comparing the two categories, students with 'no religious affiliation' and students with 'Christian affiliation'. The analysis was, consequently, conducted on the subset of 11,516 students. This subset included 5,706 males and 5,810 females; 6,091 year-nine students and 5,425 year-ten students; 4,555 students of no religious affiliation and 6,961 students of Christian religious affiliation. The data were analysed by SPSS statistical package using the frequency, reliability, correlation, and multiple-regression functions. Step-wise multiple-regression was employed to create two independent models, both of which controlled for individual differences in sex, age, personality, and religious affiliation before testing for the influence of explicit religiosity (model 1) and implicit religiosity (model 2) on negative attitude toward substances.

## Results

Table 1 examines the level of explicit religiosity demonstrated by the participants in the survey in terms of frequency of church attendance. Almost half of the students (45%) never attended church, while 21% attended church at least once a month. Table 2 examines

- insert tables 1 and 2 about here -

the level of implicit religiosity (in terms of attachment to Christian rites of passage) reported by the students included within the sample, according to a frequency of the three items. These data demonstrate that 57% of students agree that they would like a church funeral after their death, 42% of students agree that they would like their children to be baptised, dedicated, or christened in a church, and 60% of students agree that they would like to be married in a church.

Table 3 presents the scale properties of the 9-item scale of attitude toward substances,

- insert table 3 here -

the 3-item scale of implicit religion, and the four scales of the abbreviated form of the Revised Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire in terms of the alpha coefficients (Cronbach, 1951) and the means and standard deviations. These data demonstrate that the measures of attitude toward substances, implicit religion, extraversion and neuroticism function with satisfactory internal consistency reliability reaching alpha coefficients above the .65 threshold recommended by DeVellis (2003). While the psychoticism scale displays an alpha coefficient of .60, this is high, given the historic difficulties typically encountered by the psychoticism scales in general (Francis, Philipchalk, & Brown, 1991). The lie scale displays the lowest alpha coefficient of .54, which also is in line with previous research findings (Francis, 1996).

Table 4 presents the correlation matrix for all the variables included in the study. Four

- insert table 4 here -

features of these data merit comment. First, the usual positive correlations were found between sex and with the measures of conventional religiosity, including Christian affiliation and explicit religiosity (church attendance). The indicator of implicit religion functioned in relation with sex in the same way as the indicator of explicit religion. In all cases females recorded higher religiosity scores than males. Second, the usual correlations were reported between sex and the four Eysenckian measures, with females recording higher scores than males on the extraversion scale, the neuroticism scale and the lie scale, and with males recording higher scores than females on the psychoticism scale. Third, the personality variables demonstrated a range of statistically significant correlations with the religious variables and with the index of attitude toward substances, confirming the need to take personality variables into account when examining the association between religiosity and substances attitudes. Fourth, the indicators of explicit religiosity and implicit religiosity demonstrated a significant positive correlation with proscriptive attitudes toward substances. In this instance the indicator of implicit religion functioned in relation with negative attitudes toward substances in the same way as the indicator of explicit religion.

Table 5 presents the two regression models in which negative attitude toward

- insert table 5 about here -

substances is the dependent variable and in which the predictor variables have been entered in this fixed order: sex, age, personality (extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, and lie scale). In both models Christian affiliation has been entered first after the personality variables. Then in model one, the indicator of explicit religiosity (church attendance) has been entered as the final predictor variable; in model two the indicator of implicit religiosity (attachment to Christian rites of passage) has been entered as the final predictor variable. In both models the additional variance accounted for by the final predictor variables in the dependent variable was statistically significant. Moreover, the proportion of variance explained by the indicator

of implicit religion ( $r^2$  change = .023 [ $F = 331.33, p < .001$ ]) is larger than that explained by the indicator of explicit religion ( $r^2$  change = .007 [ $F = 96.99, p < .001$ ]).

### **Conclusion**

This study builds on the recent empirical research tradition which has employed Bailey's (1997, 1998) notion of implicit religion to explore the ways in which Christian believing in the UK may be persisting alongside declining levels of church attendance. The first aim of this study was to examine the prevalence of implicit religion, operationalized as attachment to Christian rites of passage, among a sample of 12,252 13- to 15-year-old young people living in the UK. The second aim of this study was to replicate the analytical model proposed by Francis (2013a, 2013b) to explore the relative impact of explicit religiosity (defined as frequency of church attendance) and implicit religiosity (defined as attachment to Christian rites of passage) on young people's attitudes toward substances. Two conclusions emerge from the findings of this study.

The first conclusion concerns the prevalence of implicit religion among young people living within the UK in the twenty-first century. These data demonstrate a high level of commitment to implicit religion (in terms of attachment to Christian rites of passage). Moreover, this form of implicit religion has a greater presence within the lives of young people than conventional explicit Christian practice (in terms of church attendance). These findings are consistent with empirical studies which report high levels of implicit religion among individuals living in the UK, in terms of believing that you do not need to go to church to be a Christian, and which demonstrate that commitment to implicit religion may be superseding commitment to conventional explicit religious attendance (Walker, Francis, & Robbins, 2010; Walker, 2013). The advantage of Bailey's construct of implicit religion is that it values and respects popular reformulations of Christian identity outside the confines of orthodox doctrinal beliefs and conventional observance of practices. Bailey does not dismiss

those whose religious commitment is most adequately expressed by the statement ‘Well, you see, I believe in Christianity’ as secular or merely cultural Christians: he understands such a formulation as an expression of their implicit religion. Here, Bailey’s concept of implicit religion is capable of taking seriously the implicit religion of the young people included within the present study. This expression of implicit religion is characterised by the desire to pursue rites of passage central to the Christian faith, even in presence of low levels of frequent church attendance.

This finding also clarifies the place and role of the church among young people living within contemporary Britain. While it is clear that levels of commitment to conventional Christian explicit practices are low (in terms of frequent church attendance), the church continues to serve a central role in the lives of young people through their commitment to and expression of implicit religion. The church is, after all, the place where all christenings, and a number of weddings and funerals, happen. It is clear that in their commitment to implicit religion, these young people continue to attribute meaning to the act of attending church within the context of participation in Christian rites of passage. This may be what is reflected by the significant proportions of young people within this study who report that they attend church once or twice a year. This finding also provides further support for the view that conventional religion in the UK (in terms of the Christian tradition) is giving way not to a secular worldview but to a personalised form of implicit religion that embraces a broad belief in Christianity.

The second conclusion concerns the psychological functions served by implicit religion and explicit religion, with regard to young people’s attitudes toward substances. Developing Walker, Francis, and Robbins (2010) and Walker’s (2013) studies concerning the prevalence of implicit religion in the UK (expressed by the statement ‘You don’t have to go to church to be a good Christian’), Francis (2013a) argued that for the belief that you do not

have to go to church to be a Christian to count as ‘religious’ believing there has to be evidence of some fundamental equivalence of this conceptualisation and operationalization of implicit religion in the lives of such believers to match the functions of explicit religion in the lives of conventional Christian believers. Two foundation studies set out to test the working hypothesis that these two ‘religious’ variables would hold a similar relationship with a relevant outcome variable. In the first study the outcome variable chosen was purpose in life and in the second study the outcome variable chosen was suicidal ideation. In the study concerning purpose in life both explicit religiosity and implicit religiosity predicted a significantly higher level of purpose in life. In the second study concerning suicidal ideation explicit religiosity predicted a significantly lower level of suicidal ideation, but implicit religiosity was not significantly related to suicidal ideation.

The present study set out to replicate the analytic model proposed by Francis (2013a) in respect of a third outcome variable, namely attitude toward substances. However, while the two foundation studies operationalized implicit religion through the belief position, ‘I believe I can be a Christian without going to church’, the present study developed a new measure, designed to operationalize the implicit religion of those committed to Christian rites of passage such as the quest for infant baptism, the desire to be married in a church, and the wish for a church funeral after death. In exploring the relationship between attitude toward substances, implicit religion and explicit religion, care was taken to control for the potentially contaminating influences of sex, age, religious affiliation and individual differences in personality. Data from this study support the working hypothesis proposed by Francis that (within the operationalizations employed) implicit religion and explicit religion serve similar functions, where both religious variables make a significant contribution to the development of proscriptive attitudes toward substances among young people. This would tend to suggest that implicit religion (operationalized as attachment to Christian rites of passage) may work

in the lives of individuals in the same way as explicit religion to generate moral awareness and a sense of prohibition toward experiences that have the potential to hinder human flourishing. This is consistent with the findings of previous empirical studies which demonstrate that religiosity (variously defined) provides a protective force against the use of and attitudes toward substances among young people (Regnerus & Elder, 2003; Chu, 2007; Steinman, Ferketich, & Sahr, 2008; Toussaint, 2009; Brechting, Brown, Salsman, Sauer, & Holeman, 2010; Rasic, Kisely, & Langille, 2011; Mellor & Freeborn, 2011; Fawcett, Francis, Linkletter, & Robbins, 2012).

However, due to the limited evidence on which the present study has been based these conclusions remain vulnerable. Replication studies are required to extend this analysis among similar and larger samples of young people, as well as among samples of adults, to explore further the implicit religion of those committed to Christian rites of passage, and to test the adequacy of the theory regarding the psychological functions served by explicit religion and implicit religion (assessed both by the belief position you do not need to go to church to be a Christian and by attachment to Christian rites of passage). The findings of the present study demonstrate that this operationalization of implicit religion, expressed as attachment to Christian rites of passage, constitutes a real feature of religious believing within the lives of young people, capable of predicting attitudes and behaviours. The high reliability of the new instrument, designed to reflect the form of implicit religion reported within the present study, recommends this measure for future use.

**Words: 6,458**

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Table 1

*Do you go to church or other place of worship*

	%
Nearly every week	10.0
At least once a month	10.8
Sometimes	5.6
Once or twice a year	28.8
Never	44.8



Table 2

*Item frequencies*

	AS %	A %	NC %	D %	DS %
I want a church funeral after my death	26	31	29	7	7
I want my children to be baptised, christened, or dedicated in church	18	24	31	12	15
I want to get married in church	31	29	28	6	6

## Note

AS = agree strongly; A = agree; NC = not certain; D = disagree; DS = disagree strongly

Table 3

*Scale reliability*

	<i>N</i> items	$\alpha$	M	SD
Attitude toward substances	9	.81	31.90	7.24
Implicit religion	3	.72	10.61	3.03
Extraversion	6	.71	4.93	1.45
Neuroticism	6	.70	2.84	1.85
Psychoticism	6	.60	.98	1.22
Lie scale	6	.54	2.24	1.41

Table 4

*Correlation matrix*

	Substances	Implicit	Explicit	Affil	L	P	N	E	Age
Sex	.04***	.13***	.02**	.04***	.07***	-.24***	.30***	.10***	.02*
Age	-.09***	-.04***	-.02**	-.01	-.06***	.04***	.01	-.01	
Extraversion	-.20***	.06***	-.06***	.01	-.20***	.13***	-.20***		
Neuroticism	.04***	.10***	.06***	.04***	.02**	-.10***			
Psychoticism	-.35***	-.13***	-.11***	-.10***	-.35***				
Lie scale	.30***	.10***	.06***	.06***					
Affiliation	.16***	.50***	.46***						
Explicit	.18***	.39***							
Implicit	.23***								

\* p < .05; \*\* p < .01; \*\*\* p < .001.

Table 5

*Regression models*

	<u>Explicit religiosity</u>			<u>Implicit religiosity</u>		
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> <	<i>Beta</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> <
Sex	-.03	-3.3	.001	-.04	-4.8	.001
Age	-.07	-8.4	.001	-.06	-8.0	.001
Extraversion	-.26	-28.1	.001	-.26	-28.0	.001
Neuroticism	-.00	-.21	NS	-.01	-1.2	NS
Psychoticism	-.12	-13.8	.001	-.14	-16.0	.001
Lie scale	.16	17.8	.001	.15	17.3	.001
Christian affiliation	.10	9.1	.001	.05	4.8	.001
Explicit religiosity	.09	9.8	.001	-	-	-
Implicit religiosity	-	-	-	.17	18.2	.001