THE UNIVERSITY OF

WARWICK

University of Warwick institutional repository: http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap

This paper is made available online in accordance with
publisher policies. Please scroll down to view the document
itself. Please refer to the repository record for this item and our
policy information available from the repository home page for
further information.

To see the final version of this paper please visit the publisher's website.
Access to the published version may require a subscription.

Author(s): Mandy Robbins, Leslie J Francis, Emyr Williams
Article Title: Church attendance and self-esteem among adolescents

Year of publication: 2007
Link to published version:
 http://www.bps.org.uk/welsh/psyc_wales.cfm
Publisher statement: None

Church attendance and self-esteem among adolescents

Dr Mandy Robbins
Teaching and Research Fellow, Welsh National Centre for Religious Education, University of Wales, Bangor, UK

The Revd Professor Leslie J Francis
Director of the Welsh National Centre for Religious Education and Professor of Practical Theology, University of Wales, Bangor, UK

and

Emyr Williams
Research Associate, Welsh National Centre for Religious Education, University of Wales, Bangor, UK

address for correspondence

Leslie J. Francis
Welsh National Centre for Religious Education
University of Wales, Bangor
Meirion, Normal Site
Bangor
Gwynedd   LL57 2PZ
Wales, UK

telephone   01248 382566
fax   01248 383954
e-mail   l.j.francis@bangor.ac.uk
website   www.bangor.ac.uk/rs/pt

Church attendance and self-esteem among adolescents

SUMMARY

A total of 279 young people (123 males and 156 females) aged between 12 and 16 years of age attending one school in Wales completed the Coopersmith Self-Esteem Inventory alongside a measure of frequency of church attendance. The data indicate a small positive correlation ($r = .18$) between self-esteem and church attendance.

INTRODUCTION

From their review of empirical studies Jones and Francis (1996) conclude that the relationship between self-esteem and religion seems to vary depending on the measure of self-esteem employed and the measure of religiosity employed. In response to this problem they recommend a series of studies agreeing on the same measure of self-esteem, the Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1981), and agreeing on a focus among school pupils, but employing different measures of religiosity. In their foundation paper, Jones and Francis (1996) employed the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity (Francis, 1989) among two samples of 13- to 14-year olds and 8- to 11-year olds. Among both samples there was a small but significant correlation between a positive attitude toward Christianity and self-esteem: $r = .08$ ($p < .01$) and $r = .18$ ($p < .01$) respectively. In the second study, Francis and Gibbs (1996) employed a measure of frequency of prayer among 8- to 11-year olds and found no significant correlation between prayer and self-esteem ($r = .08$, *ns*). In the third study, Francis (2005) employed a semantic differential scale concerned with positive God images (Francis, Robbins & Gibson, 2006) among 11- to 18-year olds and found a small but significant correlation between a positive God image and self-esteem ($r = .16$, $p < .001$). Building on this research tradition, the present study explores the relationship between the Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory and a fourth measure of religiosity, namely church attendance. In order to control for the potentially contaminating influence of social desirability tendencies the Eysenck Lie Scale will be included in the study (Pearson & Francis, 1989).

METHOD

A questionnaire containing the Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory (Coopersmith, 1981), the Lie Scale from the short-form Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised (Corulla,

1990) and a four-point measure of frequency of church attendance (never, sometimes, monthly, weekly) was completed by 279 young people aged between 12 and 16 years (123 males and 156 females). All pupils attending a sample of classes in one state-maintained secondary school in Wales agreed to participate in the study.

RESULTS

The Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory ($M = 15.3$, $SD = 5.3$) achieved a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .80, and the Eysenck Lie Scale ($M = 3.3$, $SD = 2.2$) of .66. Using the Pearson correlation coefficient the data indicated no significant correlation between self-esteem and age ($r = -.07$, ns), no significant correlation between self-esteem and social desirability as assessed by the Eysenck Lie Scale ($r = -.01$, ns), a significant negative correlation between self-esteem and sex ($r = -.16$, $p < .01$), and a significant positive correlation between self-esteem and church attendance ($r = +.17$, $p < .01$). After controlling for age, sex and Lie Scale scores by means of partial correlations, self-esteem and church attendance continued to demonstrate a significant positive correlation ($r = +.18$, $p < .01$).

CONCLUSION

These data, together with the findings of Jones and Francis (1996) and Francis (2005), demonstrate that higher levels of religiosity assessed in terms of attitude toward Christianity, positive God image, and church attendance predict higher self-esteem scores (measured by the Coopersmith Self-esteem Inventory), although Francis and Gibbs (1996) failed to find a significant correlation between prayer and self-esteem scores (measured by the Coppersmith Self-esteem Inventory). It has to be recognized, however, that none of the indices of religiosity predicted more than 4% of the variance in self-esteem scores. Further research is

needed to examine whether this pattern of relationships remains stable across other populations.

REFERENCES

Coopersmith, S. (1981) *Self-esteem Inventories*. Palo Alto, California: Consulting Psychologists Press.

Corulla, W. J. (1990) A revised version of the psychoticism scale for children. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 11, 65-76.

Francis, L. J. (1989) Measuring attitude towards Christianity during childhood and adolescence. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 10, 695-698.

Francis, L. J. (2005), God images and self-esteem: a study among 11-18 years olds, *Research in the Social Scientific Study of Religion,* 16, 105-121.

Francis, L. J. and Gibbs, D. (1996) Prayer and self-esteem among 8- to 11-year-olds in the United Kingdom. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 136, 791-793.

Francis, L. J., Robbins, M and Gibson, H. B. (2005) A revised semantic differential scale distinguishing between negative and positive God images, *Journal of Beliefs and Values,* 27, 237-240.

Jones, S. H. and Francis, L. J. (1996) Religiosity and self-esteem during childhood and adolescence. In L. J. Francis, W. K. Kay and W. S. Campbell (Eds.), *Research in religious education*. Leominster, UK: Gracewing. Pp. 189-205.

Pearson, P. R. and Francis, L. J. (1989) The dual nature of the Eysenckian lie scale: are religious adolescents more truthful? *Personality and Individual Differences*, 10, 1041-1048.