

THE UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

Original citation:

Thanissaro, P.N. (2012) What makes you not a Sikh?: A preliminary mapping of values, *Sikh Formations* 8(2)

Permanent WRAP url:

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/49948>

Copyright and reuse:

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes the work of researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions. Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.


Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

Publisher's statement:

"This is an Author's Original Manuscript of an article submitted for consideration in the *Sikh Formations* © Taylor & Francis] *Sikh Formations* is available online at <http://www.tandfonline.com>"

The version presented here may differ from the published version or, version of record, if you wish to cite this item you are advised to consult the publisher's version. Please see the 'permanent WRAP url' above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: wrap@warwick.ac.uk

warwick**publications**wrap

highlight your research

<http://go.warwick.ac.uk/lib-publications>

What makes you *not* a Sikh?: A preliminary mapping of values

Phra Nicholas Thanissaro

Postgraduate Research Student: University of Warwick, Coventry, UK

Email: p.n.thanissaro@warwick.ac.uk

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank Dr. Mandy Robbins (Glyndŵr University) for supervision of the original research, Denise Chaplin (RE advisor to Southwark), Prof. Harbhajan Singh (NASACRE Executive) for pre-proofing the Sikh attitude statements, Greenwich SACRE for facilitation of schools access, Revd. Canon Prof. Leslie J. Francis (University of Warwick), and the anonymous reviewers for critique and encouragement, Phra Kru Sangharak Veera Virandharo, Kannika Parker, Anuchit Treerattanajutawat, Bhuzaneezah Boonthucksa and Apassara Sangrungreang for administrative assistance and the Teachers Development Agency and Dhammakāya International Society of the United Kingdom which co-sponsored the cost of this research.

Notes on contributor

Phra Nicholas Thanissaro is a postgraduate research student at the University of Warwick's Institute of Education. He has been funded until 2015 by a University of Warwick Chancellor's Scholarship to conduct research on Buddhist adolescent identity and religiosity in the UK. A Buddhist monk affiliated with the Dhammakāya Foundation, he holds a Masters degree from the University of Warwick and a Postgraduate Certificate of Education from Manchester Metropolitan University.

Abstract

This study sets out to establish which Sikh values contrasted with or were shared by non-Sikh adolescents. A survey of attitude toward a variety of Sikh values was fielded in a sample of 364 non-Sikh schoolchildren aged between 13 and 15 in London. Values where attitudes were least positive concerned Sikh duties/code of conduct, festivals, rituals, prayer Gurdwara attendance, listening to scripture recitation, the *amrit* initiation. Sikh values empathized with by non-Sikhs concerned family pride, charity, easy access to ordination and Gurdwaras, maintaining the five Ks, seeing God in all things, abstaining from meat and alcohol and belief in the stories of Guru Nanak. Further significant differences of attitude toward Sikhism were found in comparisons by sex, age and religious affiliation. Findings are applied to teaching Sikhism to pupils of no faith adherence. The study recommends the extension of values mapping to specifically Sikh populations.

Keywords

adolescents, spiritual attitudes, Sikh religiosity, values mapping

Introduction

In recent years, the essentialisms often inherent in comparative religion have been moderated by returning to the subjective testimonies of religious adherents (William Cantwell Smith 1981) or to conceive of religious boundaries not as rigid but as overlapping and to some extent porous. Nowhere is the fuzziness of the boundaries of religious identity more apparent than in the acculturation of minority religions to a mainstream culture – a scenario found with the Sikh community in the UK. This paper is a quantitative study that attempts to map these value boundaries through a process of elimination.

Sikhs are a substantial and well-established minority in the UK numbering 336,000 according to the 2001 census (Nesbitt 2009, 39) – about 0.6% of the total schoolchildren and reaching 2% of schoolchildren for some British local authorities. The phases of migration and settlement of the Sikh community in the UK are already well documented elsewhere (Ballard 1989; 2000; Nesbitt 2005, 90-91; Singh and Tatla 2006). As for Sikhism in UK schools, since 1975, the multicultural principles of Religious Education apparent in the majority of published Agreed Syllabuses for schools in England and Wales was rethought – in an effort to increase pupils' understanding of world faiths included Sikhism (Nesbitt 2000, 257). Sikhism has been examined in Religious Studies at GCSE (Cole 1987) and 'A' level (Buddle 1987) since 1987 and for younger children curriculum books have become available portraying the lives of children growing up in Sikh families in Britain [e.g. Aggarwal (1984) and Lyle (1977)]. Nonetheless, ethnographic research has revealed mismatch between the representation of the religion in the syllabus and experience of the pupils in school (Nesbitt 2004, 80). Discrepancies apparent in curriculum books include such issues as misleading translations of the Sikh name for God, the meaning of *amrit* water (Nesbitt

2009, 46) and over-generalization of the practice of the five Ks and the wearing of the turban (Nesbitt 1998, 107) – thus it would be expected that the measurement of attitudes in tandem with teaching about Sikhism be important in ensuring continual improvement of education about religions in a plural society. Impartial data is essential for unravelling stereotypes – especially for communities such as that of the British Sikhs who have as recently as 1976 had to campaign for aspects of their religious identity (Jones and Fleming 2007, 406). The scientific study of religious identity has most easily lent itself to qualitative (idiotetic) research, especially in Europe (Hood et al. 2009, 26) and a whole phenomenology-empiricism debate has sprung up concerning the limits of each methodology in understanding religion (Batson et al. 1993, 17). Without going into the detail of this debate, suffice it to say that it is operationally attractive, where the opportunity arises, to be able to research religious issues in a quantitative/empirical (nomothetic) way as the outcomes are generally repeatable, generalizable to other contexts and independent of the people conducting the research – an approach to research that has enjoyed more popularity in North America than Europe. Over the last half century, a tradition has grown up to measure attitudes toward religion — which has developed to the point it can act as a generalizable diagnostic tool in areas where religion plays an important role – such as on religious borders, in the question of denominational schools and for unravelling stereotypes. Such research stands at the crossroads of several fields of enquiry – empirical theology, psychology of religion, social psychology and education.

Working definitions of religiosity are no stranger to quantitative religious research. The effort to model the religious sphere of life has led to the development of over 125 measurement scales for religiosity (Hill and Hood 1999). Since the majority of these measures have been grounded in Christianity alone, it cannot be assumed that they

would apply equally to Sikhism. Some of the scales of attitude to religion seem more readily applicable to non-Christian religions than others. One style of attitude measure which has proved valid and reliable for religiosity in Christianity (Francis 1978), Hinduism (Francis et al. 2008), Islam (Sahin and Francis 2002) and Judaism (Francis and Katz 2007) is that of the Francis Scale of Attitude toward Christianity (FSAC). In brief, it has employed attitude questions on religious values using a five-point Likert scale and generally includes reverse-coded questions to control for mechanical ticking by respondents. Correlations of results from the religiosity scales have generally shown that more positive religious attitudes are more commonly found in females, younger respondents and those with more religious behaviour and involvement (Kay and Francis 1996, 191). The practicality of the instrument has been in its assumption of unidimensionality of religiosity rather focussing on other dimensions of religious life such as frequency of worship. Thus, although Christianity is an internally diverse religion, FSAC has managed to overcome any problems of intra-religious diversity allowing, for example, experimental control for religiosity in comparison of values between the Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland (Greer and Francis 1992).

If Sikh religiosity were to be measured, it is not clear, on issues of validity, whether the internal diversity problems could be overcome with the same ease as for other religions, given that there is disagreement, even amongst Sikhs themselves, about what constitutes true Sikh identity (see Nesbitt 1999). Theoretically, it would be attractive to model Sikh identity and attitude – since it underlies many unexplored topics lying at the interface between Sikh young people and the tradition in which they are nurtured. A conceivable problem, however, might be the huge amount of internal diversity in Sikhism which has been described in the context of UK schools (Lall 1999)

and is especially evident where Sikh observance overlaps with that of Hindus (Nesbitt 2009, 47). For other religions, the heterogeneous nature of religiosity seems to have been passed over without great trouble in quantitative surveys – perhaps because religious adherence has clear creeds to define allegiance – for example, it could be said that a person was Christian if they adhered to Christian creed. It is possible that these potential difficulties have prevented systematic attention being paid to development of quantitative measures of Sikh religiosity. Nonetheless, quantitative measurement of Sikh religiosity has already been employed in several academic disciplines. Smith and Kay designed (2000, 189) a sixteen-question, FSAC-equivalent scale for Sikhism in their research on how classroom factors affected Religious Education (Kay and Smith 2002) but did not establish validity for it against degree of Sikh observance. Similar work on a FSAC-equivalent scale for Sikh religiosity has established an even more reliable scale (Thanissaro 2011, 801). A scale of ‘Sikh-ness’ has also been described qualitatively in ethnographic studies (Nesbitt 1999, 319). Comparisons between the attitudes of young Sikhs and adolescents of other or no religious affiliation have been made by Alan Smith (2002; 2006), Francis (2001) and Francis and Robbins (2005, 186-193).

A key term to define when justifying the use of quantitative data in measuring Sikh religiosity is ‘validity’ which means the extent to which an instrument measures or correlates with the theorized scientific construct it purports to measure (Pennington 2003, 37) – in this study, the relevant construct is Sikh religiosity, or religiosity *unique* to Sikhs. Validity can be divided into several components – four of which are of direct relevance here. *Construct* validity is concerned with examining how the operational form of the construct works in the light of theory. *Face* validity is what an instrument superficially appears to measure – often what ‘seems valid’ to the investigator – but

should be tested against the views of a panel of experts or a representative sample of the respondents or target audience. This aspect of validity is often a good starting point for research, but in social science, on its own, it is not a secure predictor of validity. *Content* validity is the extent to which a measure represents *all* facets of a social construct. *Discriminant* validity [or in some places ‘divergent’ validity (Cooper 2002, 60)] is the degree to which an operation that is not similar to other operations it theoretically should *not* be similar to. Since the deductive processes of science, even social science, tend to be most powerful through research to falsify rather than to confirm theories (Popper 1963) trying to find out what is unique to Sikhs by eliminating the values shared by non-Sikhs would be considered an essential part of the due diligence in ascertaining construct validity.

Against this background, the brief of the present study was to explore attitude toward Sikhism in a sample of UK adolescents, together with comparisons in terms of sex, age and religious affiliation to explore new understandings of Sikh religiosity, to support policy that is enactable, especially ascertaining whether mismatch is having an effect on adolescent attitudes to Sikhism and to suggest possible ways to close any gaps. The article does not set out to propose a new scale of attitude to Sikhism as this has already been published elsewhere (Thanissaro 2011).

Method

Sample

Research was undertaken upon a convenience sample of 364 non-Sikhs – 232 boys and 132 girls – aged between 13 and 15 years attending London schools. Ethnically the sample consisted of 150 whites (41%), 103 blacks (29%), 58 Asians (14%), 41 of mixed

race (11%) and 7 Chinese (2%). The religious composition of the sample was 149 Christians (41%), 120 of no religion (33%), 45 Moslems (12%), 17 Hindus (5%), 15 Buddhists (4%), 3 Jews (1%) and 13 of other religions (4%) – both religious and ethnic categories being self-assigned. Of the pupils in the sample, 43% had studied Sikhism in their Religious Education lessons of the past year.

Procedure & Analysis

A multi-purpose survey (detail of the survey can be found in Thanissaro 2010a, 184-191) was deployed as part of a wider research project. The survey contained biographical questions adapted from Francis's (2001) adolescent values inventory and 32 Likert five-point scale (*strongly agree – agree – not certain – disagree – disagree strongly*) attitude statements¹ focussing on Sikh values adapted from previous qualitative (Nesbitt 2000) and quantitative (Diane Linnet Smith and Kay 2000, 189) adolescent attitudes research in the UK. Two reverse-coded statements were included in the attitude to Sikhism section, namely, "Sikh scriptures are out of date" and "That Sikh men wear turbans is strange" as a strategy to guard against inclusion of results from participants who had mechanically ticked the same column throughout regardless of their true attitudes. In the design stage, the questionnaire was piloted satisfactorily on a small group of non-Sikh participants of the target age range to estimate time for completion and to make sure wording was unambiguous, avoiding Sikh jargon as far as possible.

Three schools volunteered their participation in response to a circular letter from their local Standing Advisory Council on Religious Education. Surveys were delivered to participating schools in the quantities they required and administered to pupils by Year 9 and 10 teachers under examination conditions in their regular Religious

¹ See Appendix 1

Education classes in the period January and February 2010. In keeping with constraints of ethical approval non-consenting pupils had the option of destroying their questionnaires after completion instead of submitting them and completed surveys were kept anonymous to protect participants from having their views traced back to them. The resulting dataset was analyzed by means of the SPSS statistical package (SPSS Inc. 1988) using the frequency and cross-tabulation routines.

Results

Overview of Attitudes to Sikhism

Tables 1 and 2 provide an overview respectively of the highest and lowest levels of agreement with Sikh statements amongst the non-Sikh sample. Although the survey used a five-point continuum, for clarity of presentation, the ‘agree strongly’ and ‘agree’ responses were recoded into a single category styled ‘agree’ and the ‘disagree strongly’ and ‘disagree’ responses have been similarly recoded into a single category styled ‘disagree’. In the ranking of Tables 1 and 2, reverse-coded statements were not included to avoid possible confusion involving double negatives.

Table 1. Agreement with Sikh attitude statements (highest ten)

	%	%	%
	Agree	Not Certain	Disagree
If you are a Sikh it is important to be proud of being born in a Sikh family	28	60	12
I admire the way Sikhs give one tenth of their income to charity	25	65	10
I respect the idea in Sikhism that anyone can be a priest because everyone is equal	24	64	12
The Sikh custom of opening temples to everyone is good	24	64	13
If you are a Sikh it is important to wear the dagger, shorts, bracelet and comb	21	60	18
If you are a Sikh it is important never to cut one’s hair or shave one’s face	21	60	20
I like the Sikh idea of seeing God everywhere in the world	20	64	16
If you are Sikh it is important never to drink alcohol for religious reasons	19	67	14
If you are a Sikh it is important for religious reasons never to eat meat	16	70	15
I can see how Sikhs like to believe the stories about Guru Nanak	15	70	15

As shown in Table 1, the top ten Sikh value statements agreed with by non-Sikhs concerned family pride (28%), charity (25%), easy access to ordination (24%) and Gurdwaras (24%), wearing the dagger, shorts, bracelet and comb (21%) and not cutting the hair (21%), seeing God everywhere (20%), abstaining from meat (16%) and alcohol (19%) and belief in the stories of Guru Nanak (15%).

Table 2. Agreement with Sikh attitude statements (lowest ten)

	%	%	%
	Agree	Not Certain	Disagree
I find the duties of the Sikh brotherhood easy to understand	8	75	17
Sikh festivals are inspiring to me	8	67	26
The way Sikh festivals are linked to the cycle of nature is helpful	7	76	17
It is easy to understand Sikh rituals	7	73	20
I like the Sikh way of praying by repeating the name of God	7	73	20
Going to the Gurdwara is an important part of life	7	71	22
I find listening to Sikh scriptures such as the Guru Granth Sahib inspiring	7	69	24
The Sikh festival of Diwali is very meaningful to me	6	65	29
It is important for Sikhs to take the <i>amrit</i> initiation	5	82	13
Knowing the Sikh code of conduct helps me lead a better life	5	67	29

Table 2 shows the ten value statements which elicited the least agreement amongst non-Sikhs and which potentially represent the values that make a person Sikh. These concerned Sikh duties (8%)/code of conduct (5%), being inspired by Sikh festivals (8%) – their linkage to the cycle of nature (7%) – the meaningfulness of Diwali (6%), rituals (7%), prayer by repeating the name of God (7%) Gurdwara attendance (7%), listening to scripture reading (15%), the *amrit* initiation (5%).

Comparisons

Sex Differences

Table 3. Comparison between male and female pupils

	Male % Agree	Female % Agree	χ^2	p<
I like the Sikh idea of seeing God everywhere in the world	16	27	6.73	.01
The Sikh custom of opening temples to everyone is good	20	30	5.12	.05
Knowing the Sikh code of conduct helps me lead a better life	7	1	7.12	.01
I admire the way Sikhs give one tenth of their income to charity	21	32	5.14	.05
I think the Sikh scriptures are out of date*	12	5	4.43	.05

Note: Only significant Chi-squared test scores included. N= 232 males and 132 females.

**Reverse-coded statement*

Generally speaking, the psychology of religion has found that female respondents have a more positive attitude toward religion on scales of attitude to religion (Hood et al. 2009, 152). The finding for adolescent attitude to Sikhism by contrast, was that in 27 of 32 items, there was no significant difference between males and females. Items where a significant difference between males and females was found according to a Pearson Chi-squared test (two-tailed) are shown in Table 3 above. Female pupils had a more positive attitude to Sikhism for four attitude questions – liking the way Sikhs see God everywhere, the custom of opening their temples to all, charity and being less likely to consider Sikh scriptures out of date. On only one question had the male pupils a more positive attitude toward Sikhism than female pupils – in the matter of agreeing that to know the Sikh code of conduct helped them to lead a better life – perhaps concerning an increased tendency found in the females of a similar sample to apply teachings to their own practice (Thanissaro 2012a, 202).

Age Differences

Table 4. Comparison between Year 9 and Year 10 pupils

	Y9 % agree	Y10 % agree	χ^2	p<
I like the Sikh way of praying by repeating the name of God	10	3	5.91	.05
I find the duties of the Sikh brotherhood easy to understand	11	4	4.33	.05
If you are Sikh it is important never to drink alcohol for religious reasons	23	12	6.13	.05

Note: Only significant Chi-squared test scores included. N= 227 from Year Nine and 137 from Year Ten.

The normal assumptions for validity of the FSAC predicts that attitude toward religion should become less positive with age. For questions concerning attitude to Sikhism, the age difference between Year 9 and Year 10 pupils was shown to make no difference in 29 of the 32 items. As shown in Table 4 above, there were three values statements where there was a significant difference in responses between Year Nine and Year Ten pupils, namely concerning Sikh prayer, duties of the Sikh brotherhood and abstaining from alcohol – a trend that would correspond with the normal assumptions for validity in measure of attitude toward religion.

Differences by religious affiliation

Table 5. Comparison by religious affiliation

	<i>no religion % agree</i>	<i>Dharmic % agree</i>	<i>Abrahamic % agree</i>	χ^2	p<
I find listening to Sikh scriptures such as the Guru Granth Sahib inspiring	7	19	6	7.24	.05
Sikh festivals are inspiring to me	9	22	5	10.85	.01
Going to the Gurdwara is an important part of life	7	22	6	9.90	.01
Sikhism is relevant to the modern world	13	19	6	7.70	.05
I like the Sikh idea of seeing God everywhere in the world	14	38	21	8.75	.05
The Sikh festival of Diwali is very meaningful to me	4	25	4	24.27	.001
Knowing the Sikh code of conduct helps me lead a better life	6	12	2	6.90	.05
I can see how Sikhs like to believe the stories about Guru Nanak	18	28	10	9.16	.05
It is easy to understand Sikh rituals	8	19	5	7.67	.05
I find it easy to understand Sikhism	12	25	10	6.26	.05
It is important for Sikhs to wear the shorts [<i>kachh</i>] at all times	13	16	5	9.51	.01
It is important for Sikhs to wear the dagger [<i>kirpan</i>] at all times	13	19	5	9.99	.01
I think the Sikh scriptures are out of date*	15	7	0	9.94	.01
Reincarnation gives me hope	19	34	11	13.26	.01

Note: Only significant Chi-squared test scores included. N= 120 of no religion, 32 from Dharmic traditions and 197 from Abrahamic traditions.

*Reverse-coded statement.

Analysis of attitude results by religious affiliation, where limited numbers allowed only a three-way division into ‘no religion’, ‘Dharmic’ (Buddhist and Hindu) and ‘Abrahamic’ (Christian, Jewish and Moslem) significant polarizations of opinion were observed in 14 (i.e. almost half) of the 32 questions asked – indicating a relative tendency for Sikh values to polarize opinion compared to Buddhism (Thanissaro 2010a, 90). Two trends perceptible for comparison by religious affiliation were value statements where Dharmic religions empathized more than the non-religious or Abrahamic religions and value statements where Abrahamic religions tend to agree less than the non-religious and Dharmic religions.

As shown in Table 5, value statements where the Dharmic religions tended to empathize more than the Abrahamic religions or the non-religious concerned being

inspired by Sikh scriptures recitation, rituals and festivals (especially Diwali), Gurdwara attendance, the relevance of Sikhism to the modern world, seeing God in all things, applying the Sikh code of conduct to everyday life, Sikh stories and the ease of understanding Sikhism. Value statements where the Abrahamic religions tended to empathize less than the Dharmic religions or the non-religious concerned the wearing of the shorts [*kachh*] and the dagger [*kirpan*] and reincarnation – however, those of Abrahamic religions were less likely to think Sikh scriptures out of date. There were no cases of those of ‘no religion’ having value statements they empathized with more than those who were religious as has previously been found in this sample for Buddhist value statements (Thanissaro 2012b).

Discussion

The present article has been a study in discriminative validity for Sikh values. The study admittedly depends on the assumption that it is reasonable to extrapolate between ‘attitude toward Sikhism’ and ‘Sikh attitude’. There remains a possibility however, that the distinction between having a positive attitude to Sikhism (as a non-Sikh) and having Sikh attitudes (as a Sikh) may be larger than anticipated – in consequence of which the article title retains the word ‘preliminary’. Nonetheless, the study has produced noteworthy outcomes on two fronts – possible new understanding of Sikh religiosity and support for policy and practice enactable in contexts where non-Sikhs need to be informed about Sikhs in order to give a positive attitude.

New understanding of Sikh religiosity

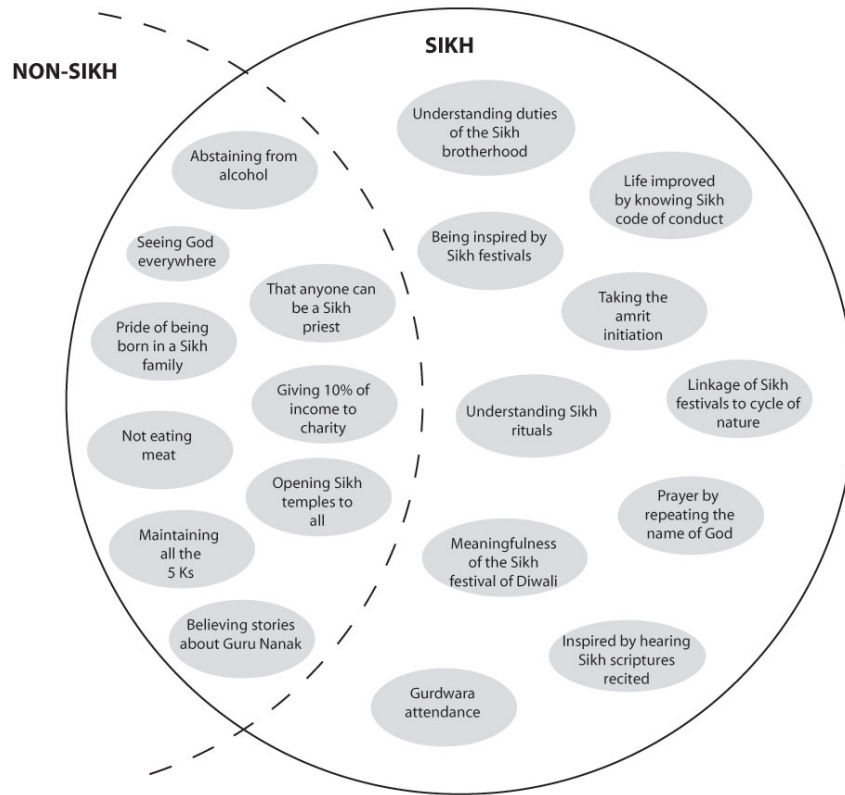


Figure 1. Degree of sharing of Sikh values with non-Sikhs.

Figure 1 is a graphic comparison of ‘Sikh’ values that are potentially exclusive to Sikhs and those that overlap with non-Sikhs, combining the results from Tables 1 and 2. The figure maps the values boundaries of self-identified religious affiliation. Aspects of Sikhism that at face value might seem representative of the religion, upon experimentation turned out *not* to be exclusive to Sikhism (in terms of concept validity) and therefore would be unreliable as identifiers of Sikh religiosity for future research. Values such as thinking Sikhs should maintain the Five Ks – which face validity might lead one to assume were features of Sikh religiosity – were actually shared by adolescents of a non-Sikh sample. It would appear that *few* values (e.g. those

concerning the *amrit* initiation) that we might associate with Sikhs are exclusive to Sikhism – but if a person were to lack these few items from their ‘values footprint’ it would correspond with ‘what makes one *not* a Sikh’.

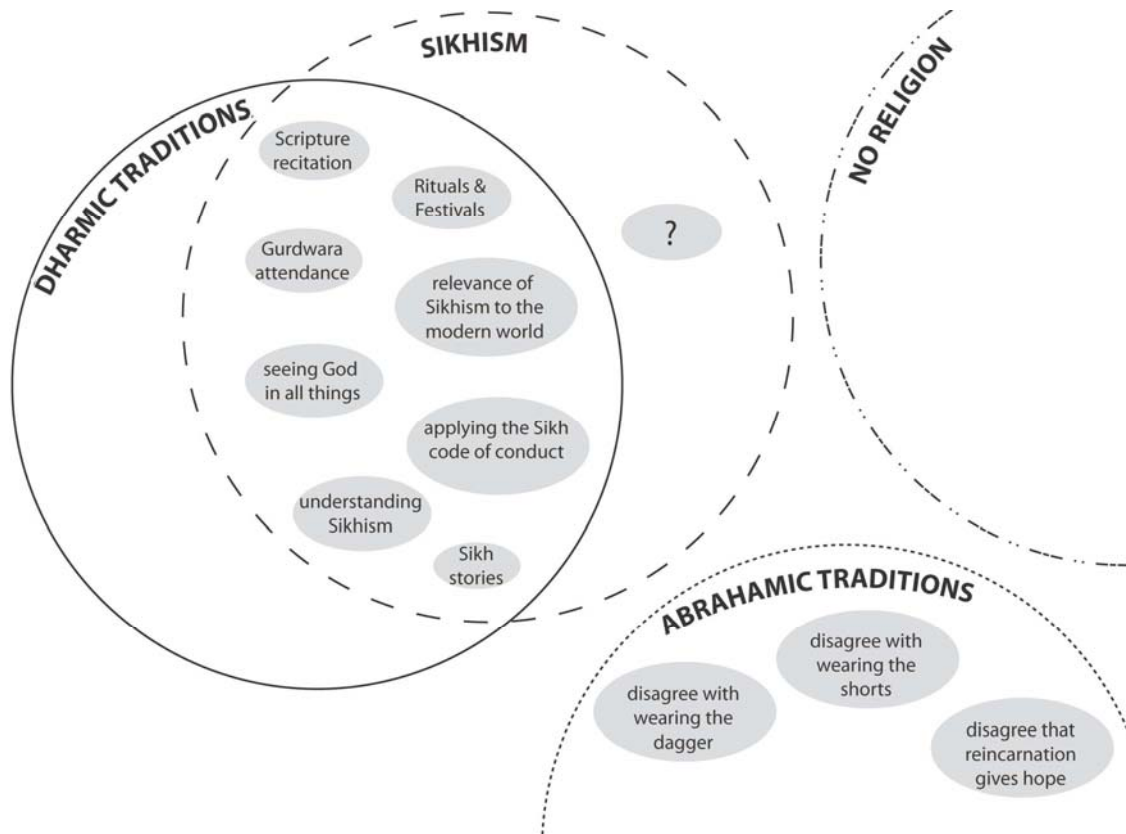


Figure 2. Sikh values overlapping with non-Sikhs of self-assigned groups.

Figure 2 analyses the ‘Sikh’ values overlapping with non-Sikhs in terms of self-assigned religious group. The figure shows how conceptually difficult it is to identify exclusively Sikh values. It would seem instead that religious identity including that of Sikh has fuzzy boundaries which may indicate Sikh identity being many-layered. At the very minimum, the layers of ‘tradition’, ‘group’ and ‘individual’ identified by Jackson (1997, 65) would seem relevant here – a perspective that would take the understanding of Sikh values beyond the essentialisms of comparative religion. This conceptualization also provides empirical evidence that Sikhism is a member of the Dharmic religions that

agrees with the usual historical or comparative justification for putting it in this category. Removing the values shared by the Dharmic religions of Figure 2 from the Sikh values of Figure 1 leaves only the *amrit* initiation, prayer by repeating the name of God and the duties of the Sikh brotherhood – which might be an indication of a starting place for the elucidation of exclusively Sikh values in future research. Alternatively, it may be that the Sikh identity exists as a particular combination of values – a possibility testable if a large enough sample of Sikh participants could be quantitatively surveyed by multifactorial analysis.

Although, age seems to have a smaller impact on enthusiasm for Sikh values than would be expected in relation to values from other religions – it may be that the apathy for Sikhism amongst adolescents does not increase much with age, because it has already set in from an earlier age than is the case for other religions like Buddhism where a direct comparison was possible (Thanissaro 2011, 800).

Support for policy that is enactable

The impression of non-Sikh attitudes to Sikhism revealed by this study is one of schools failing to ameliorate negative attitudes to Sikh values. A source of information incidental to the quantitative data collected in the questionnaire was the comments pupils volunteered in the feedback section – or added as ‘graffiti’ elsewhere in the survey. One of the added comments expressed indignation about having to comment on Sikh values – for example, the feedback of a Black African 14-year-old girl who added, “I don’t admire Sikhs – I have a religion” as if she *didn’t* consider Sikhism a valid religion, was reminiscent of the antagonism and anger identified by Everington (2005, 243) as needing attention in Religious Education and Citizenship teaching. From the quantitative data it was found that there was fairly strong disagreement with values such as the meaningfulness of Sikh festivals in general (26%) [Diwali in particular (29%)]

and the value of the Sikh code of conduct (29%) which might indicate areas for more positive attention in Religious Education lessons.

Further comments that indicated an adolescent mindset that minority ethnic communities had nothing to do with them, reminiscent of attitudes observed by Barnard (2000) and Everington (2005, 249), ranged from ignorance on the part of a 14-year-old ethnically-mixed girl who wrote, “I didn’t even know there was such a thing as Sikhism,” to apathy on the part of a 15-year-old Black African girl who commented, “Sikhism – to be honest I don’t care...(*the researcher*) should add a ‘don’t care’ box (...*for us to tick instead*).” Similar comments came from a 14-year-old Asian Bangladeshi boy who wrote, “There’s no-one in the class that are (*sic*) Sikh – so what’s the point, man?” and a 14-year-old White boy who commented, “I don’t care about Sikh’s (*sic*) religion – it is someone else’s thing.” The present author is inclined to agree with Kay and Smith’s (2002) underlying assumption that a child should come away from Religious Education with not only a factual understanding of a religion, but also a positive impression of it. It would be worrying if an Religious Education pupil studied a religion and was left with only apathy towards it – an apathy that Thanissaro has contrasted with its near-equivalent of ‘neutrality’ (2010b, 71) – and is a substantial reason to advocate measure of attitudes hand-in-hand with the study of religions rather than merely noting examination results – since although examination results are soon forgotten, attitudes about religion may stay with a school-leaver for life.

Since Ballard has noted a particular lack of acculturation on behalf of British Sikhs, maintaining that there is no indication that British Sikhs are losing their distinctiveness (2000, 143), it could be that this lack of flexibility has precipitated lack of sympathy on

behalf of non-Sikh adolescents in the UK² – in which case, the religion might warrant specially positive image-building on the part of Religious Education teachers – especially when Sikhs are known to be generally less happy at school compared to other South Asian pupils, worrying more about their studies and generally lacking confidence in the prevailing authorities more than pupils of other religious groups (Smith 2002, 314, 316).

The difficulty has also been noted for the wording of many of the value statements used in this study, that it is hard to find any alternative to explicitly Sikh terms (Thanissaro 2011). For teachers aiming to communicate Sikhism in Religious Education in a more positive light, it would appear from the attitude questions fielded in this research that the aspects of Sikhism considered most positive by non-Sikh adolescents such as pride about being born in a Sikh family (28% agreement); Sikhs giving a tenth of their income to charity (25% agreement); opening up the Sikh priesthood to all-comers (24% agreement), and; opening up Sikh temples to all (24% agreement).

Suggestions for further research

Given the opportunity to repeat this research, it would be instructive to perform a multivariate analysis on a larger sample, to ascertain how many factor dimensions would be necessary to model Sikh religiosity accurately and to find out whether ‘Sikhness’ lies in a certain combination of values. Some limitations should be mentioned concerning the study described here – namely that on the basis of this study alone, it cannot be assumed that children of non-adolescent age will show the same attitudes to Sikhism. Further research would be encouraged to repeat the methodology of the present study taking a wider age-range as its sample, and increasing the percentage of

² With some reservations Sikhism, has for example, been shown to be significantly less popular with adolescents than Buddhism (Thanissaro 2011, 800).

Sikh respondents so that conclusions can be drawn not only about attitude toward Sikhism by those of other religions, but about Sikh religiosity too.

Appendix 1: 32 Sikh Attitude Statements in decreasing order of popularity

1. If you are a Sikh it is important to be proud of being born in a Sikh family
2. I admire the way Sikhs give one tenth of their income to charity
3. I respect the idea in Sikhism that anyone can be a priest because everyone is equal
4. The Sikh custom of opening temples to everyone is good
5. If you are a Sikh it is important to wear the dagger, shorts, bracelet and comb
6. If you are a Sikh it is important never to cut one's hair or shave one's face
7. I like the Sikh idea of seeing God everywhere in the world
8. If you are Sikh it is important never to drink alcohol for religious reasons
9. If you are a Sikh it is important for religious reasons never to eat meat
10. I can see how Sikhs like to believe the stories about Guru Nanak
11. Reincarnation gives me hope
12. I am fascinated to hear Sikh stories
13. It is important for Sikhs *not* to cut their hair [*kesh*] or beard
14. It is important for Sikhs to wear the comb [*kangha*] at all times
15. It is important for Sikhs to wear the steel bracelet [*kara*] at all times
16. I find it easy to understand Sikhism
17. That Sikh men wear turbans is strange*
18. If you are a Sikh it is important to take the *amrit* initiation ceremony
19. I think the Sikh scriptures are out of date*
20. Sikhism is relevant to the modern world
21. It is important for Sikhs to wear the dagger [*kirpan*] at all times
22. It is important for Sikhs to wear the shorts [*kachh*] at all times
23. I find the duties of the Sikh brotherhood easy to understand
24. Sikh festivals are inspiring to me
25. The way Sikh festivals are linked to the cycle of nature is helpful
26. It is easy to understand Sikh rituals
27. I like the Sikh way of praying by repeating the name of God
28. Going to the Gurdwara is an important part of life
29. I find listening to Sikh scriptures such as the Guru Granth Sahib inspiring
30. The Sikh festival of Diwali is very meaningful to me
31. It is important for Sikhs to take the *amrit* initiation
32. Knowing the Sikh code of conduct helps me lead a better life

* Indicates reverse coded statements

References

- Aggarwal, Manju. 1984. *I am a Sikh*. London: Franklin Watts.
- Ballard, Roger. 1989. Differentiation and Disjunction among the Sikhs in Britain. In *The Sikh Diaspora: Migration and the Experience beyond Punjab*. ed. N. G. Barrier and V. A. Dusenbery, 200-234. Columbia, MA: South Asia Books.
- Ballard, Roger. 2000. The Growth and Changing Character of the Sikh Presence in Britain. In *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States*. ed. H. G. Coward, R. B. Williams and J. Hinnells, 127-144. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Barnard, S. 2000. *An investigation into the reasons behind the poor attitudes to RE of white, secular majority, Year 10 boys*. Unpublished MA field study: University of Warwick.
- Batson, C.D., P.A. Schoenrade and W.L. Ventis. 1993. *Religion and the Individual: a social-psychological perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Buddle, V. 1987. Sikhism at "A" level, *Sikh Bulletin* 4:32-33.
- Cole, W. Owen. 1987. Sikhism at GCSE, *Sikh Bulletin* 4:29-31.
- Cooper, Colin. 2002. *Individual Differences*. London: Hodder Education.
- Everington, Judith. 2005. Adolescent attitudes to 'the other': citizenship and religious education in England. In *Religion, Education and Adolescence: International Empirical Perspectives*. ed. L. J. Francis, M. Robbins and J. Astley, 235-259. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Francis, Leslie J. 1978. Attitude and longitude: a study in measurement, *Character Potential: a record of research* 8, no.3:119-130.
- Francis, Leslie J. 2001. Religion and values: a quantitative perspective. In *The Fourth R for the Third Millennium: Education in Religion and Values for the Global Future*. ed. L. J. Francis, J. Astley and M. Robbins, 47-78. Dublin: Lindisfarne.
- Francis, Leslie J. and Y.J. Katz. 2007. Measuring attitude toward Judaism: the internal consistency reliability of the Katz-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Judaism, *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 10, no.4:309-324.
- Francis, Leslie J. and Mandy Robbins. 2005. *Urban Hope and Spiritual Health: The Adolescent Voice*. Peterborough: Epworth.
- Francis, Leslie J., Yashoda Romil Santosh, Mandy Robbins and Savita Vij. 2008. Assessing attitude toward Hinduism: The Santosh-Francis Scale, *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* 11, no. 6:609-621.
- Greer, J.E. and Leslie J. Francis. 1992. Measuring rejection of Christianity among 14-16-year-old adolescents in Catholic and Protestant schools in Northern Ireland, *Personality and Individual Differences* 13, no. 12:1345-1348.
- Hill, P.C. and R.W. Hood. 1999. *Measures of religiosity*. Birmingham, AL: Religious Education Press.
- Hood, Ralph W., Peter C. Hill and Bernard Spilka. 2009. *The Psychology of Religion: An Empirical Approach*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Jackson, Robert. 1997. *Religious Education: An Interpretive Approach*. London: Hodder and Stoughton.
- Jones, Carwyn and Scott Fleming. 2007. 'I'd rather wear a turban than a rose': a case of the ethics of chanting, *Race Ethnicity and Education* 10, no. 4:401-414.
- Kay, William K. and Leslie J. Francis. 1996. *Drift from the Churches: attitude toward Christianity during childhood and adolescence*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

- Kay, William K. and D. Linnet Smith. 2002. Classroom Factors and Attitude towards Six World Religions, *British Journal of Religious Education* 24, no. 2:111-122.
- Lall, S. 1999. *'I Know who God is': A Study of Sikh Children's Spirituality within Various Expressions of Sikhism*. Oxford: Farmington Institute for Christian Studies.
- Lyle, S. 1977. *Pavan is a Sikh*. London: Adam & Charles Black.
- Nesbitt, Eleanor. 1998. Bridging the Gap between Young People's Experience of Their Religious Traditions at Home and School: The Contribution of Ethnographic Research, *British Journal of Religious Education* 20, no. 2:102-114.
- Nesbitt, Eleanor. 1999. Sikhs and Proper Sikhs: The Representation of Sikhism in Curriculum Books and Young British Sikhs' Perceptions of their Identity. In *Sikh Identity: Continuity and Change*. ed. P. Singh and N. G. Barrier, 315-334. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Nesbitt, Eleanor. 2000. *The Religious Lives of Sikh Children: A Coventry Based Study*. Leeds: Department of Theology & Religious Studies, University of Leeds.
- Nesbitt, Eleanor. 2004. *Intercultural Education: Ethnographic and Religious Approaches*. Brighton: Sussex Academic Press.
- Nesbitt, Eleanor. 2005. *Sikhism: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nesbitt, Eleanor. 2009. Research Report: Studying the Religious Socialization of Sikh and 'Mixed-Faith' Youth in Britain: Contexts and Issues, *Journal of Religion in Europe* 2, no. 1:37-57.
- Pennington, Donald. 2003. *Essential Personality*. London: Arnold.
- Popper, Karl Raimund. 1963. *Conjectures and Refutations: the growth of scientific knowledge*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Sahin, A. and L. J. Francis. 2002. Assessing attitude toward Islam among Muslim adolescents: the psychometric properties of the Sahin-Francis scale, *Muslim Education Quarterly* 19, no. 4:35-47.
- Singh, Gurhpal and Darshan Singh Tatla. 2006. *Sikhism in Britain: The Making of a Community*. London: Zed.
- Smith, Alan G.C. 2002. *The Nature and Significance of Religion among Adolescents in the Metropolitan Borough of Walsall*. University of Wales, Bangor: unpublished PhD dissertation.
- Smith, Alan G.C. 2006. *Growing up in Multifaith Britain: explorations in youth, ethnicity and religion*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Smith, Diane Linnet and William K. Kay. 2000. Religious Terms and Attitudes in the Classroom (Part 2), *British Journal of Religious Education* 22, no. 3:181-191.
- Smith, William Cantwell. 1981. *Towards a World Theology: Faith and the Comparative History of Religion*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- SPSS Inc. 1988. *SPSS User's Guide, 2nd Edition*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Thanissaro, Phra Nicholas. 2010a. *Religious Education and Attitudes to Buddhism & Sikhism*. Unpublished MA Dissertation: University of Warwick.
- Thanissaro, Phra Nicholas. 2010b. Teaching Buddhism in Britain's schools: redefining the insider role, *Contemporary Buddhism* 11, no. 1:69-84.
- Thanissaro, Phra Nicholas. 2011. Measuring attitude towards Buddhism and Sikhism: Internal consistency reliability for two new instruments, *Mental Health, Religion & Culture* 14, no. 8:797-803.
- Thanissaro, Phra Nicholas. 2012a. Measuring attitude towards RE: factoring pupil experience and home faith background into assessment, *British Journal of Religious Education* 34, no. 2:195-212.

Thanissaro, Phra Nicholas. 2012b. What makes you *not* a Buddhist: a preliminary mapping of values, *Contemporary Buddhism* 13, no.2 pages ????. [for page numbers see [doi:10.1080/14639947.2012.716709](https://doi.org/10.1080/14639947.2012.716709)]