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Religious orientation, mental health and culture: Conceptual and empirical perspectives

An introduction to this special issue of *Mental Health, Religion and Culture*

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Abstract

This special edition of *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* brings together thirteen original empirical studies that employ theories and measures based on the notion of 'religious orientation'. As originally conceived, Allport's notion of religious orientation distinguished between the two motivational styles of intrinsic religiosity and extrinsic religiosity. Subsequent work distinguished between extrinsic-personal and extrinsic social motivations, and added the third orientation styled as quest religiosity. The first set of seven studies draws on a variety of measures of religious orientation developed since the mid-1960s, including single-item measures. The second set of six studies draws on the New Indices of Religious Orientation proposed by Francis in 2007. Collectively these studies confirm the continuing vitality of the notion of religious orientation for informing empirical research within the psychology of religion and strengthen the foundation for future work in this area.

Keywords: Religious orientation, mental health, culture, extrinsic, intrinsic, quest.

Introduction

The notion of ‘religious orientation’ has its origins in the pioneering work of Gordon Allport and, in particular, the seminal paper by Allport and Ross (1967). It is here that the constructs of ‘intrinsic religiosity’ and ‘extrinsic religiosity’ were clarified and operationalised. Subsequent discussion sometimes chose to distinguish between two aspects of the extrinsic orientation, speaking in terms of extrinsic-personal and extrinsic-social religiosity (see Gorsuch and McPherson, 1989). The early work in the field led both to a growing body of empirical findings confirming differentiated patterns of correlations between these religious orientations and a range of personal and social factors, and to a psychological (and theological) discussion regarding the nature of religious maturity. Largely through the work of Batson and colleagues, the two established orientations (intrinsic and extrinsic) were joined by the third, namely ‘quest religiosity’, seen best as a close cousin rather than as a sibling (Batson & Ventis, 1982). Clarified and operationalised by Batson and Schoenrade (1991a, 1991b), a third pattern of correlates with personal and social variables became documented in the empirical literature, and the psychological (and theological) discussions regarding the nature of religious maturity took on a new dimension.

The importance of (and the controversy over) religious orientation within the empirical psychology of religion was well captured by the title of Kirkpatrick and Hood’s (1990) paper, ‘Intrinsic-extrinsic religious orientation: The boon or bane of contemporary psychology of religion’. As part of an attempt to bring new rigour to this field of enquiry Francis (2007) re-visited the definitions of the three constructs (intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest orientation), provided fresh operationalisation of the constructs giving balanced

weight to the component parts of the definitions (producing the New Indices of Religious Orientation), and clarified the contexts in which measures of religious orientation provided empirical operationalisation of religiosity (as instruments designed to assess different motivations among those self-identifying as religious rather than as distinguishing between the religious and the non-religious).

Although empirical research employing measures of religious orientation continues to be widely published, such research tends to be distributed across a diverse range of journals, only a proportion of which are specifically concerned with the psychology of religion or religious studies. While in many ways a real strength, such dispersion through the literature makes it difficult to form an overview of how the field is developing. Recognition of the growing number of submissions employing the notion of religious orientation to *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* led to the idea of holding back some of the submissions to form the basis of this special issue, and to seek further submissions to develop the range of perspectives. Moreover, a special issue in this area could serve as an opportunity to provide sustained examination of the New Indices of Religious Orientation.

The present collection, comprising of thirteen empirical articles drawn from researchers in Croatia, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, is divided into two halves. The first set of papers employed longer-established measures to operationalise the construct of religious orientation. The second set of papers employed the New Indices of Religious Orientation. In combination, these articles demonstrate the wide range of matters currently being investigated by researchers, as well as differing methodologies being employed within psychology using the conceptual and empirical

framework of religious orientation. A brief synopsis of the thirteen articles included in this special edition of *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* follows.

Part one

The first set of seven papers employ longer-established measures of religious orientation.

Lavrič and Flere (2010) employed the Intrinsic/Extrinsic Revised Scale developed by Gorsuch and McPherson (1989) and the 12-item Quest Scale proposed by Maltby and Day (1998) alongside the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger *et al*, 1970), and measures of attendance at religious services and frequency of prayer among undergraduate university students from four different cultural environments: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Slovenia, and the USA. The data suggested that the relationship between trait anxiety and religiosity substantially varies between these samples; that the relationship between quest religious orientation and trait anxiety was the only one to give stable (positive) unidirectional and significant correlations across the four samples; and that among the religious measures employed, attendance at religious services proved to be potentially the most effective anxiety-buffering mechanism within the samples.

Bartz, Richards, Smith and Fischer (2010) employed the Religious Orientation Scales developed by Allport and Ross (1967) alongside the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 (Butcher & Williams, 2000) and a semi-structured interview (lasting approximately two hours) among 53 religiously devout Mormon college students in 1984, 1987, and 2001 in order to explore the process of religious development and the relationship between religiosity and mental health. The data suggested that these religiously devout individuals have consistently fallen within the normal range on the

clinical scales of the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory and have demonstrated continual reduction in their scores on those scales; that there were no correlations between scores of intrinsic religiosity and psychopathology; that these participants' religious motivations remained stable over the course of adulthood; and that most of the participants eventually manifested a continuous style of religious development.

Jones, Furnham and Deile (2010) employed the Intrinsic Religious Orientation and Extrinsic Religious Orientation measures proposed by Feagin (1964) alongside the Protestant Work Ethic measure proposed by Mirels and Garrett (1971) among 121 students at a small American University and 260 students at an English university in order to examine the association between intrinsic religiosity and the Protestant work ethic. The data suggested that intrinsic religiosity and the Protestant work ethic are significantly correlated, and that this correlation remains significant even after partialling out their common correlation with the tendency to describe oneself as politically conservative.

Tiliopoulos (2010) employed the Religious Life Inventory developed by Batson and Schoenrade (1991a, 1991b) and the Intrinsic/Extrinsic Revised Scale developed by Gorusch and McPherson (1989) alongside the Aspects of Identity Questionnaire described by Cheek and Tropp (1997) among 161 British Christian adults, in order to examine the association between religiosity and identity. The data suggested that: personal identity showed a positive association with quest religiosity, and that social identity showed both a positive association with extrinsic-personal religiosity and a negative association with intrinsic religiosity.

Williamson, Hood, Ahmed, Sadiq, and Hill (2010) employed three items from the Extrinsic/Intrinsic Revised Scale developed by Gorsuch and McPherson (1989) as single-item measures of the intrinsic/extrinsic-personal and extrinsic-social religious orientations alongside the Intratextual Fundamentalism Scale. Described by Williamson and Hood (2005), the Religious Fundamentalism Scale developed by Altemeyer and Hunsberger (2004), and the Short Right-Wing Authoritarianism Scale developed by Altemeyer and Hunsberger (2005) among 119 Christian undergraduates from a small state university in the south of the USA, and among 220 Muslim students from a university in Peshawar, Pakistan. The range of instruments was then expanded to include the 12-item Quest Scale developed by Batson and Schoenrade (1991a, 1991b) among a further 236 general psychology students from the same university in the USA. The data suggest that: among the American Christian students, fundamentalism (as measured by the Intratextual Fundamentalism Scale) shows a significant positive association with intrinsic religiosity, a significant positive association with extrinsic-personal religiosity, and no significant association with extrinsic-social religiosity; among the Pakistan Muslim students, there was not significant association between fundamentalism (measured by the same instrument) and religious orientation.

Maltby, Lewis, Freeman, Day, Cruise, and Breslin (2010) employed the 12-item Age-Universal I-E Scale developed by Gorsuch and Venable (1983) alongside the 14-item brief Religious Coping Measure developed by Pargament (1997), the Measure of Prayer Activity developed by Poloma and Pendleton (1991) and the SF-36 Health Survey: Version 2 described by Ware, Kosinski, and Dewey (2000) and Ware, Kosinski, and Keller (1994) among 177 British adults sampled from Anglican churches in the UK,

in order to explore the association between religion and health within the context of a cognitive-behavioural framework. The data suggested: that physical health was positively associated with intrinsic religiosity, negatively associated with extrinsic-personal religiosity and independent of extrinsic-social religiosity; that mental health was positively associated with intrinsic religiosity, and independent of both extrinsic-personal religiosity and extrinsic-social religiosity; that positive religious coping was positively associated with both intrinsic religiosity and extrinsic-personal religiosity, but independent of extrinsic-social religiosity; and that negative religious coping was negatively associated with intrinsic religiosity, but independent of both extrinsic-personal religiosity and extrinsic-social religiosity.

Nielsen and Cragun (2010) employed the single-item questions prepared to access intrinsic religiosity, extrinsic-personal religiosity and extrinsic-social religiosity by Gorusch and McPherson (1989) alongside the Religious Doubt measure proposed by Altemeyer (1988), and a set of nine questions regarding sexuality, polygamy, and whether Mormons are considered Christian among 2,330 Protestants, Catholics, Mormons, Fundamentalist (polygamous) Mormons, and religious 'nones'. The bivariate correlations demonstrated: that intrinsic religiosity was associated with more negative views on polygamy among Protestants, Catholics and Mormons, but was unrelated to views on polygamy among Fundamentalist Mormons and religious 'nones'; that extrinsic-personal religiosity was associated with more negative views on polygamy among Protestants and Mormons, but was unrelated to views on polygamy among Catholics, Fundamentalist Mormons and religious 'nones'; and that extrinsic-social religiosity was unrelated to views on polygamy among all five groups.

Part 2

The second set of six papers employ the New Indices of Religious Orientation.

Francis, Jewell, and Robbins (2010) employed the New Indices of Religious Orientation developed by Francis (2007) alongside the Purpose in Life Scale developed by Robbins and Francis (2000) and the Short-form Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire developed by Eysenck, Eysenck, and Barrett (1985) among 407 members aged sixty and over of the Leeds Methodist district in England in order to explore the link between religious orientation and purpose in life. The data suggested that: after controlling for individual differences in personality, intrinsic religiosity was associated with a better sense of purpose in life; and that both quest religiosity and extrinsic religiosity were unrelated to individual differences in a sense of purpose in life.

Francis (2010) employed the New Indices of Religious Orientation developed by Francis (2007) alongside frequency of church attendance and the short-form Revised Eysenck Personality Questionnaire developed by Eysenck, Eysenck, and Barrett (1985) among 517 first-year students at a university-sector college in Wales in order to explore the links between personality and religious orientation. The data suggested that in the sample as a whole, intrinsic religious orientation was associated with low psychoticism scores, but independent of extraversion scores and neuroticism scores; that extrinsic religious orientation was associated with low psychoticism scores and high neuroticism scores, but independent of extraversion scores; and that quest religious orientation was associated with high neuroticism scores and low extraversion scores, but independent of psychoticism scores. The pattern of relationships changed, however, when separate analyses were conducted among weekly churchgoers and among individuals who never

attended church. These data suggest that the pattern of relationship between personality and religion may vary both according to the form of religiosity assessed and according to the samples being studied.

Ross and Francis (2010) employed the New Indices of Religious Orientation developed by Francis (2007) alongside the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Form G (Myers, & McCaulley, 1985) as a measure of Jungian psychological type theory (Jung, 1971) among 481 weekly churchgoing Christians who had participated in courses operated in England and Wales concerned with personality and spirituality in order to explore the link between psychological type and religious orientation. The data suggested that quest religious orientation scores were higher among intuitives than among sensors, but were unrelated to introversion and extraversion, thinking and feeling, or judging and perceiving; that intrinsic religious orientation scores were higher among extraverts than introverts, higher among sensors than intuitives, and higher among feelers than thinkers, but unrelated to judging and perceiving; and that extrinsic religious orientation scores were unrelated to any of the four components of psychological type.

Francis Robbins and Murray (2010) employed the New Indices of Religious Orientation developed by Francis (2007) alongside the Francis Psychological Type Scales (Francis, 2005) as a measure of Jungian psychological type theory (Jung, 1971) among 65 adults attending an Anglican church in the south of England, in order to test the hypothesis that motivation for church attendance (religious orientation) is related to personality (psychological type). The data demonstrated that this congregation displayed clear preferences for judging (72%) over perceiving (28%) and for sensing (62%) over intuition (39%), slight preference for extraversion (54%) over introversion (46%) and a

fairly close balance between feeling (51%) and thinking (49%), and included attenders who reflected all three religious orientations: intrinsic, extrinsic and quest. Moreover, extraverts recorded significantly higher scores than introverts on the measure of extrinsic religiosity, while introverts recorded significantly higher scores than extraverts on the measure of intrinsic religiosity, demonstrating a link between psychological type and motivation for church attendance.

Williams (2010) examined the psychometric properties of the New Indices of Religious Orientation developed by Francis (2007) among 432 worshippers in five Anglican cathedrals in England and Wales. The data demonstrated that all the indices achieved satisfactory alpha coefficients for both the full scale (extrinsic, 0.79; intrinsic, 0.76; and quest 0.75) and the short form (extrinsic, 0.70, intrinsic, 0.79; and quest, 0.70). The construct validity of the New Indices of Religious Orientation was supported by examination against self-reported frequency of personal prayer.

Kamble, Lewis and Cruise (2010) examined the internal reliability and temporal stability of both the long and the short forms of the New Indices of Religious Orientation developed by Francis (2007) over a 15-day period among a sample of 100 Indian university students. Internal reliabilities for the long form of the measure at times 1 and 2 were acceptable for all subscales with the exception of the intrinsic subscale at time 2. Reliability estimates for the extrinsic and intrinsic subscales of the short form of the measure at both time 1 and time 2 were also less than satisfactory, though the alpha coefficient for the quest subscale was satisfactory. Data demonstrated that stability across the two administrations for both long- and short-form versions of the three dimensions of religious orientation were moderately high to high (ranging from $r = 0.63$ to $r = 0.76$).

Moreover, intra-class correlation coefficients were similar to those derived from the Pearson correlation coefficients, thus confirming that there were no systematic errors between the time 1 and the time 2 datasets. However, there were significant differences in mean scores between time 1 and time 2 for both long- and short-form versions of the intrinsic and quest religious orientation subscales.

Conclusion

This special issue of *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* has illustrated some of the diversity and richness of current empirical research concerned with the theory and measurement of religious orientation, employing both a range of the longer-established measures of religious orientation and the recently introduced New Indices of Religious Orientation. In the process of drawing together these specific papers, we have become even more aware of the vitality within this research tradition and the range of colleagues working in the field, well beyond those represented in the present collection. We would welcome knowing about other initiatives that could be considered for a second special issue devoted to extending interest in this theme.

In closing, we wish to acknowledge the authors who provided stimulating articles and efficient revisions, and our reviewers for their judicious and insightful evaluations of the manuscripts submitted. We are grateful to the regular co-editors of the *Mental Health, Religion and Culture* for their continued enthusiasm and support for the project, as well as their careful editorial work during the production of this special issue. We hope you enjoy reading this collection.

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