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Religion, Attitudes, and Social Behavior

Michael J. Donahue

Azusa, California

Michael A. Nielsen

Georgia Southern University

*Forthcoming in In R. E. Paloutzian and C. Park (Eds). **The Handbook of the Psychology of Religion**, New York: Guilford*

For many, this topic is central to the social scientific study of religion. Never mind where religion came from, how it develops, or even how to measure it; does it “work”? Are religious people “better” than others? This chapter considers findings concerning the relation between religiousness and a variety of interpersonal attitudes and behaviors: prejudice, altruism and prosocial behavior, honesty, sexuality, family relations, crime and delinquency, and politics and peace.

The Psychology of ... What?

But first a word about definitions. What is “religion”? While generally some variant of

“the perceived relation between an individual and a powerful supernatural agent or agents” would seem to suffice, clever discussions can be constructed about exceptions to such a rule. For example, many point to Buddhism as an example of a world religion that does not have a God. “However, this argument is based on a specious account of [it]; ... [Many contend that Buddhists] ... don’t worship the Buddha, yet [they] treat him as a supernatural agent, especially in rituals” (Slone, 2004, p. 5; see also his Chapter 6). Others inquire whether conceptual systems that supposedly serve the same functions as religion for a given individual should be considered a sort of “implicit” religion. (e.g., devotion to Apple computers, Lam, 2001). But as Lupton (1986) notes, such an over-broad definition results in unacceptably fuzzy categories, and so the interested researcher would be better served by accepting that many people have no religious orientation, rather than diluting the definition of religion to the point of uselessness.

In general, most measures of religiousness are quite highly intercorrelated (e.g., Bassett et al., 1991). In addition, only a small subset of measures is used with any frequency: church attendance; single item measures of religious commitment or salience; intrinsic and extrinsic religiousness, etc. Thus most researchers use precisely the sort of definition of what it means to be “religious” as might be obtained from the “person-in-the -street” (but see also the discussion of the concepts of “religion” and “spirituality,” Pargament and Zinnbauer, this volume).

Religion as Social

Why consider religion as a social phenomenon? James (1902/1985) defines religion as “the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine” (p. 31). But religion can also be defined as an inherently social phenomenon. For example, in Islam, the *ahadeeth* (collections of the teachings of Mohammed on various specific topics, not unlike Jesus’ sermons in the Christian “synoptic” gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke) are filled with assurances from the Messenger of God that good works will ensure entrance into paradise: "Charity is prescribed

for each descendant of Adam every day the sun rises. ... listening to the deaf, leading the blind,... supporting the feeble with the strength of one's arms--all of these are charity prescribed for you." (*Fiqh-us-Sunnah*, Vol. 3, #98).

In the Christian tradition, and most notably in the synoptic gospels, the social nature of the teachings is quite striking. In addition to the so-called "Golden Rule" (Matthew 7:12) and the "second greatest commandment," love of neighbor as of self (Matthew 22:39), the "Lord's Prayer" calls down upon the believers the condition that God forgive them only to the degree that they forgive others (Matthew 6:12). Jesus promises his presence when "*two or three* have gathered" (Matthew 18:20; emphasis added); it might be argued that there is no such thing as "one Christian." Perhaps even more to the point, when Jesus speaks of how one is to be "saved," the *failure to do good* to others is itself a sufficiently grievance offense to result in eternal damnation (Lazarus and the rich man, Luke 16:19-21; the parable of the sheep and the goats, Matthew 25: 31-46).

Thus, the inherently social nature of religion, and its relation to social psychology seems clear. Indeed prominent theories in personality-social psychology have been employed in the analysis of religious behavior: dissonance theory (Brock, 1962); attribution (Bulman & Wortman, 1977); theories of altruism (Batson, Eidelman, Higley, & Russell, 2001). Therefore attention to religion as a context for social interaction would seem, if nothing else, representative of the research in the area.

Different Ways of Being Religious: Intrinsic, Extrinsic, Quest

In light of the social nature of religion, it is perhaps not surprising that the most commonly used scales of religiousness, at least to study its relation to social phenomena, were designed by social psychologists. Since much of the research to be cited in what follows employs these measures, a brief introduction would seem in order.

Intrinsic and extrinsic.

Gordon W. Allport found in his study of the roots of discrimination, *The Nature of Prejudice* (1954/1979) “The role of religion is paradoxical. It makes prejudice and it unmakes prejudice” (p. 444). This led him to hypothesize that there were two contrasting types of religious motivations. After a period of conceptual development using a variety of terminologies (see Donahue, 1985, for a review), he ultimately settled on the terms intrinsic (*I*) and extrinsic (*E*) religiousness. These two motivations were summed up as: “the extrinsically motivated person uses his religion whereas the intrinsically motivated lives his religion” (Allport & Ross, 1967, p.434). A typical item from the *I* scale is: “My whole approach to life is based upon my religion” and from the *E* scale “What religion offers me most is comfort in times of trouble and sorrow” (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989).

Although originally postulated as the ends of a single, bipolar continuum, it was soon discovered that *I* and *E* were better considered as two separate, independent variables. The ensuing years saw fairly widespread use of the scales. By the end of 1982, nearly 70 articles had been published in English employing the scales (Donahue, 1985, p. 400) as well as more than 50 doctoral dissertations. A search of English-language research citations and doctoral dissertations reveals that in the 10 years between 1986 and 1995, some 200 journal articles and 160 dissertations appeared involving the scales. And the rate has continued unabated. The period from 1996 to 2003 produced another 200 journal articles and 140 dissertations.

The scales have not been without their critics. Dittes (1971) criticized Allport's venturing into the “prophetic” by attempting to determine the nature of “true” religion. In the same year, Hunt and King published a factor analysis claiming that *I* was multidimensional, and that a single *E* factor could best be measured using only 6 of the 11 items in the scale. In contrast, Kirkpatrick (1989) concluded just the opposite: that *I* had a unitary structure, while *E* might

involve as many as three dimensions.

Kirkpatrick and Hood (1990) published an article calling for more theoretically sophisticated research than had characterized the studies that had used *I and E* up to that time. Connolly (1999), presenting a review of Hunt and King's (1971) and Kirkpatrick and Hood's (1990) critiques, concluded that there was little point to continued use of the scales, and that "more able psychologists of religion" would probably stop using them and "involvement in *I-E* research may well become a banner identifying second-rate psychologists of religion" (p.183). Or not. Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, and Gorsuch (2003) cite research involving *I* and/or *E* on 69 of the 543 pages of their text.

Quest.

"Quest" (*Q*) religiousness was proposed by C. Daniel Batson to address a dimension of "growth" and "seeking" which he felt had been in Allport's original conceptualization of *I*, but which was not embodied in the *I* scale (see Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993, for an overview). He developed a scale which was intended to focus on a "growth" or "seekership" quality in religious development. The scale includes items such as "It might be said that I value my religious doubts and uncertainties."

Critics of *Q* have questioned whether it could be a measure of religion at all, since it fails to correlate with other, more established measures, and there was no clear evidence that religious groups scored higher on *Q* than than less religious groups (Donahue, 1985) but Batson et al. (1993) cited evidence to the contrary. Hood and Morris (1985) took *Q* to task on the grounds that a measure that was negatively correlated with measures of doctrinal orthodoxy could not be a measure of religiousness, but Batson and Ventis (1985) begged to differ.

In view of the ongoing controversy, many researchers in the psychology of religion have opted to use all three scales, *I*, *E*, and *Q*, to examine the relation between religiousness and

behavior. That body of research, along with a variety of other measures of religiousness, will be examined in what follows.

Social Attitudes

Prejudice

Allport and Ross (1967) correlated *I* and *E* with several measures of prejudice: negative attitudes toward Blacks, Jews, other non-Europeans, and mentally disturbed individuals. He also included a scale of what he referred to as “a ‘jungle’ philosophy of life” reflecting the belief that “it’s a dog-eat-dog world.” *E* was generally correlated with such measures; *I* was not. Donahue (1985) reported that later studies found essentially the same pattern of relations in later studies.

But why is *I* uncorrelated with prejudice? Why doesn’t religion inhibit prejudice, as Allport’s conceptual approach predicted it would? One possible reason for a lack of negative correlation is that the relation is not linear, or “straight-line.” A consistent curvilinear relation between the two (prejudice is highest for those with moderate *I* scores, and lowest for those scoring high or low on *I*), would produce a nonsignificant correlation. The “positive correlation” represented by the “rising” side of the inverted-U shape would cancel out the “negative” correlation in the second half of the curve. In fact, Allport and Ross (1967) presented this possibility, and cited seven studies with a variety of religiousness measures which obtained that finding. Gorsuch and Aleshire (1974) examined 25 religion-prejudice studies in which the curvilinearity hypothesis could be addressed, and concluded that “20 were consistent with the expectation that the marginal church member manifested more prejudice than either the nonactive or the most active members. Spilka et al. (2003) criticized this finding, however, on the grounds that many studies did not include “nonreligious” individuals.

Most recent studies have continued to find no correlations between *I* and prejudice (Bailey, 2000; Cannon 2001; Lundblad, 2002). Beck and Miller (2000) found that those who

scored high on *I* were less likely to make snap judgments about other's religious or moral orientation (*E* scores were not reported). Herek (1987) found *intrinsic* no less prejudiced against gays and lesbians than *extrinsic*, but Fulton, Gorsuch, and Maynard (1999) found that prejudice against gay men and lesbians was correlated with *I* only in the case of morally based feelings about them rather than "non-morally" based opinions (hate the sin, love the sinner). Using a "social distance" measure they found that attitudes of those scoring high on *I* toward gay men and lesbians were no more negative than their attitude toward others who violated their moral code, e.g. liars and racists. Among Lutheran pastors, Taylor (2000) found *I* uncorrelated with either prejudice against or positive attitudes toward gay men; *E* positively correlated with attitudes toward gay men (but not lesbians); *Q* correlated with positive attitudes toward both. A high score on an index combining both a measure of belief orthodoxy and *Q* was unrelated to attitudes toward gays and lesbians.

In general then, *I* is uncorrelated with measures of prejudice, although devoutly religious individuals prefer to "keep their distance" from people whom they consider "sinners." A religion of social convention (as measured by *E*) is more likely to be related to prejudice against members of an "out-group."

Prosocial Behavior and Helping

Prosocial Behavior

Establishing a connection between religion and helping others would seem to be a "slam-dunk." The record of history points to Christianity as the inventor of the nonprofit hospital, and of religious orders solely dedicated to serve in them. The presence of men and women religious ministering to the victims of various pandemics through history is well-established. Indeed, Stark (1997) contends that it was likely Christians' response to a plague in Rome, and their decision to stay and care for the sick, rather than fleeing to the countryside, that was a major impetus of

Christianity's early growth. More recently, when the Nobel Peace Prize does not go to diplomats or organizations, about half the time it goes to individuals motivated by strong religious belief (e.g., Jimmy Carter, Carlos F. X. Belo, the 14th Dalai Lama, Elie Wiesel, Desmond Tutu, Lech Walesa, Mother Teresa).

A variety of research studies have examined the religion-and-helping correlation. Gallup polls, for example, periodically assess the role of religion in helping. Among people Gallup surveyed in 1984, those who were highly spiritually committed were more than twice as likely to be currently working in giving service to the elderly, poor, or otherwise needy as who were highly uncommitted. This pattern has held consistent in follow-up studies (Colasanto, 1989; Wuthnow, 1994). Other research has found that religion is more strongly associated with planned helping, as when people consider helping an AIDS program (Omoto, Snyder & Berghuis, 1993) or other types of volunteer service organizations (Clary & Snyder, 1991, 1993). But the help religious people extend to the needy apparently has its limits, particularly when the person in need exhibits behavior that violates a religious standard (Jackson & Esses, 1997; Thurston, 2000). Here also, the religious keep their distance from outgroup members. The role of "faith-based organizations" in providing services to people in need also awaits further study (Cnaan, 2002).

Contributions of people's time and money to charities represents another area that has interested researchers. Americans donate about 1% of their incomes to religious charities, and 1% to other causes (Myers, 1992). Some suggest that much religious giving essentially serves the function of "club membership fees" rather than a charitable act (Argyle, 2000). Indeed an entire literature has grown up examining the time "spent" in religious endeavors in the context of various "rational choice" or economic theories (Iannaccone, 1997; Young, 1996).

It is true that religious people give to religious organizations to further religious ends. But to the extent that religiousness serves as a unique force to inhibit a wide variety of behaviors that are considered problematic -- crime, premarital pregnancy, alcoholism, substance abuse -- and do

so in a way that government is forbidden to do -- by instilling religious faith -- then, if perhaps indirectly, such giving is no less charitable, and perhaps at least as effective than having the funds given to other charities.

Honesty

Empirical studies of lying and religion lead to two primary conclusions. The first is that there are relatively few published studies assessing the impact of religiosity on lying. For example, a PsycInfo search for articles published during the past 20 years linking religion with either lying or deception reveals only 34 articles, the vast majority of which deal with social desirability, psychohistory, or clinical, therapeutic concerns. The second is that although religiosity appears to be the best predictor of attitudes about honesty (Katz, Santman & Lonero, 1994), religious respondents are sometimes, but not consistently, less likely to cheat or engage in deception than their nonreligious peers, despite a nearly universal religious injunction against dishonesty (Grasmick, Bursik, & Cochran, 1991; Perrin, 2000; Smith, Wheeler & Diener, 1975). Indeed, one study even reported that children who attend a religious school may cheat more frequently than those who attend a secular school (Guttman, 1984). What little research there is finds no consistent difference in the degree to which members of various religions (e.g., Christianity, Hindu, Islam and Jain) value honesty (Kothari, 1994; Wolfe & Mourribi, 1985).

Nearly all such studies, however, have been done in school settings and offer even less empirical evidence regarding the relation between religiousness and cheating or lying among adults than they do among students. Furthermore, from a psychological perspective most studies of honesty have treated religion in a relatively unsophisticated way. This fact, combined with the inconsistent results in the area, invites additional research. For example, there is great potential for experimental studies that would enable researchers to examine the effect of religiousness conceived as a personality variable alongside situational inducements to perform an honest or dishonest act. Given the paucity of experimental studies in the psychology of religion, and the

core assumption that religion affects individuals' honesty, this is an area sorely needing research attention.

Sexuality

If there is a single issue about which psychology and religion are perceived to be most at odds, it must surely be the area of sexuality. Shea (1992) asserts that a conservative “estimate the number of castrations, whippings, incarcerations, burnings ... and other executions attributable directly to [Christianity's hostility to sex] to be in the millions. [and they] ... continue to the present time” (p. 70). Shea offered no citations to support this assertion, simply stating it, as if it was self-validating. Aside from the patent absurdity of the statement that they “continue to the present time,” even the statement that they were once common is no longer considered tenable. Stark's (2003) review of recent historical research, and his own archival analyses, indicate that many beliefs about such a vicious and violent past are modern-day stereotypes, largely the result of the biases of certain 19th- and early 20th-century historians. Such presumptions likewise ignore the place of the medical profession, as opposed to religion, in advancing sexual repression while “Christianity gave America an ethic of sexual pleasure.” (Gardella, 1985; title).

So if we can allow that the influence of religion on sexuality is not one of brutal repression, what does the research tell us about the relation between the two? The effect of religiosity on sexuality has been examined in many studies, frequently with nationally representative samples. For example, Cochran and Beeghly (1991) examined a subset of 15,000 US respondents from NORC surveys conducted between 1971 and 1989. Analyses showed a strong ($r = .51$) correlation between religious commitment and belief that extramarital sex is wrong. Conservative denominations were more likely to condemn extramarital intercourse than were mainline denominations, and Jews reported the least condemnation of extramarital sex. Within denominations the correlation between religious commitment and condemnation of extramarital intercourse also varies in a manner roughly consistent with the degree to which the

denomination is at odds with the dominant culture; stronger correlations between religious commitment and condemnation of extramarital sex were found among sects, while Episcopalians displayed much weaker correlations.

Similar patterns of correlations have been found for self-reports of engagement in premarital sex. Indeed, Benson, Donahue and Erickson (1989) stated that major reviews that were conducted, not by social scientists of religion but by adolescent pregnancy researchers (e.g., Chilman, 1980; Hayes, 1987) and major nationwide interview data (Zelnik, Kantner, and Ford, 1981) indicated strong “constraining effects of religion on the likelihood of engaging in premarital intercourse” (p. 170).

Some research on this subject generates results that invite further questions. One such study surveyed over 2700 American adults and found that religious people were less likely to report having had extramarital affairs than were non religious people (Janus & Janus, 1993). Curiously, however, adults reporting themselves to be “religious” were less likely to have had affairs (26%) than were adults who reported themselves to be “very religious” (31%). This finding deserves some pursuit by researchers studying the connection between religious attitudes and social behavior, as a variety of social and psychological mechanisms might be at work.

Sexual orientation and religion has begun to be investigated, but substantial gaps remain in our knowledge of this issue. While it is generally found that religious orthodoxy or conservatism is associated with greater prejudice toward homosexuals (Morrison & Morrison, 2002), the more interesting questions concern the psychological dynamics for this relation. One explanation for this effect is that religious groups unwittingly exacerbate a natural “us vs. them” mentality that heightens prejudice toward people who are seen as threatening the group (Altemeyer, 2003). Another promising explanation for the effect focuses on how the content of one’s beliefs accounts for prejudice toward homosexuals (Laythe, Finkel & Kirkpatrick, 2001). Of course, these are not necessarily incompatible hypotheses, and we look forward to research that

addresses them.

Another area worthy *of* further examination is the types of spiritual conflicts experienced by homosexuals (Buchanan, Dzelme, Harris & Hecker, 2001; Rodriguez & Ouellette, 2000). Data from one small-scale study suggests that spiritual conflict affects approximately two-thirds of all gays and lesbians (Schuck & Liddle, 2001) but the extent to which this problem actually occurs remains unknown without reliable statistical estimates garnered from large samples. Likewise, these analyses have not adequately addressed the extent to which cognitive dissonance theory, social identity theory, or other frameworks might best account for people's experiences with sexual orientation and religion.

Religion-Related Abuse

Is religion a risk factor for child abuse? Vivid reports in the 1980's of "satanic ritual abuse" and of ritualistic sacrifice of infants were found to be spurious (Richardson, Best & Bromley, 1990). Curiously, a small number of therapists reported a relatively large number of such incidents among their clients; it was virtually unknown among the clients seen by most therapists (Bottoms, Shaver, Goodman & Qin, 1995). More recent headlines have been about sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests. Terrible incidents of abuse occurred, and there may have been cases of malfeasance to preserve the reputation of the Catholic Church. But one of the most striking findings of the National Review Board established to examine the scandal was the lack of research into relevant questions. Is the rate of abuse by Catholic priests more or less than the rate in other denominations? More or less than the rates among men in similar positions of authority, such as Boy Scout masters or teachers?. Some 80% of the priests engaged in sexual contact with postpubertal boys, an act technically known as ephebophilia, rather than pedophilia. Research at this time indicates the clinical profiles of ephebophiles and pedophiles differ markedly, and the two terms should not be interchanged (McGlone, 2004). The commission of these crimes peaked in 1980, with a major decline since then. Is this somehow

related to Catholic Church history or was there such a pattern in the society at large? No one knows the answers to these questions; there is little or no relevant research (National Review Board, 2004).

Child physical abuse has received somewhat more research attention but remains little understood. The most consistent effect appears to be that fundamentalist religious beliefs are associated with a greater likelihood of violence among Jewish (Shor, 1998) and Christian (Ellison, Bartkowski & Segal, 1996) families. The effects of such abuse are just now beginning to be the subject of empirical research. Compared to a group of victims whose abuse did not involve religion, victims of religion-related physical abuse showed greater levels of depression, anxiety, hostility, psychoticism, and other psychological problems years later (Bottoms, Nielsen, Murray & Filipas, 2004). To the extent that these data are replicated in other samples, they suggest that when abuse is connected to religion the negative effects are compounded. Additional research is sorely needed so that we better understand the extent of the problem, the psychological mechanisms by which it occurs, and the possibility that child sexual abuse, religion-related medical neglect and other forms of abuse might show similar effects. Theoretical perspectives such as attachment theory (Kirkpatrick, 1997) and the role of God in coping (Pargament, 1997) could be useful in explaining the long-term effects of religion-related abuse (Bottoms et al., 2004). In the case of attachment theory, the notion of God as an attachment figure that substitutes for weak parental attachments would suggest that the person who suffers religion-related abuse is likely to be deprived of a close attachment to God as well as to parents. Pargament's research on religious coping would suggest that the victim would be deprived of the significant positive effects of using God as a resource for coping with distressful events. These theories provide readily testable hypotheses for researchers investigating religion-related child abuse, whether physical or sexual in nature.

Crime and Punishment

By definition, criminal acts are antisocial. Research addressing religion's role in promoting or inhibiting crime has a long history. A recent meta-analysis of the area (Baier & Wright, 2001) examined 79 effect sizes across 60 studies. They found that "the mean reported effect size was $r = -.12$, and the median was $r = -.11$ " ... none of them were positive. ... These findings show that religious behavior and beliefs exert a significant, moderate deterrent effect on individuals criminal behavior. (p. 14).

The authors also went on to examine some related hypotheses. One is the hypothesis that the deterrent effect of religion is increased when one is immersed within a religious community, religion has a stronger deterrent effect; they found the data supported this. In addition, they found that nonvictim crimes (e.g., gambling and drug use) were also more likely to be deterred by religion.

Attitudes regarding the punishment of criminals are related to religiosity. For example, 75% of Americans in general favor the death penalty, but among those who say religion is important the figure increases to 84% (Gallup & Lindsay, 1999). Of course, this finding speaks of religion in general, with no fine distinctions being made among denominations or religious belief. While Christian orthodoxy correlates positively with endorsement of the death penalty, we begin to see that such attitudes are malleable when we consider the case of Roman Catholics living in the U. S. Recent research conducted by Bjarnasson and Welch (2004) found that church attendance is positively correlated with endorsement of Cardinal Bernadin's (1984) statement regarding "a seamless garment" on "life issues" which speaks against both capital punishment and abortion. After Bernandin's framing of the issue in this way, U. S. Catholic support for capital punishment changed markedly. Whereas Catholics were generally more likely than non-Catholics to support the death penalty during the early 1970s, this difference has declined, particularly among parishioners who were highly integrated into the parish (Bjarnasson & Welch, 2004). This pattern also is consistent with the notion that one's social identity helps guide individual

attitudes.

Many different theoretical viewpoints are available for application to these issues. Whether the subject is crime, family violence, or prosocial behavior, analytic perspectives can draw from a range of theories that emphasize the “micro,” such as cognitive dissonance theory, to the “macro,” such as rational choice theory. Using such a multilevel approach to do this promises at least two important benefits: it can improve our understanding of social behavior and religion, and it can facilitate interdisciplinary dialogue because of the wide variety of theories available. For example, psychological (e.g., theories of attitude-behavior consistency; social identity theory) and socioeconomic (e.g. rational choice theory) approaches could be examined profitably in the context of volunteerism. Ideally, these approaches could be examined jointly in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the way individual- and social-level influences combine to account for people’s behavior.

Psychology of Religion, Politics, and Peace

The psychological study of religion sits at a crossroads between psychology and religious studies. Social psychology is at a similar crossroads with other social sciences, and this fact presents the opportunity for cross-fertilization among these disciplines. We focus now on the relevance of psychology of religion on two such areas of inquiry.

Psychology of Religion and Politics

The political and religious spheres are often tightly intertwined. Psychological theories can be helpful in understanding such interconnections. As one example, consider the finding that in 1990, before the demise of the Soviet Union, merely 15% of Ukrainians identified themselves as Orthodox Christians. Seven years later, however, after establishing its independence, 70% of Ukrainians so identified themselves (Kolodny, 1997). Such an enormous change in religious identity illustrates the powerful interconnections among religious-, political- and national

identities.

Political leaders also use religion in order to garner and maintain power. For example, widely accepted among Middle-East studies scholars is the idea that the House of Saud endorses Wahabbism in order to maintain their power (Esposito, 1987). Political scientists reach the somewhat similar conclusion that George W. Bush has formed an important base of support among Evangelical Christians (Rozell, 2003). Just as religion can serve political ends, so too can politics serve one's religious goals. Recent survey data illustrate this point. Most Americans (79%) agree with the notion of separating church and state, but conservative Protestants and Evangelicals, a significant portion of the U. S. populace, desire religion to have a greater influence on the U. S. political scene, whereas non-evangelicals do not (Gallup & Lindsay, 1999).

Among the more informative projects in this area is the Clergy Study Project (CSP), which examined the roles of clergy in Judaism, Unitarian-Universalism and in 16 Christian religious bodies in the 2000 national election (Smith, 2004). The majority of clergy engaged in some form of political activity, including delivering sermons on politics, organizing study groups, or performing some form of activist work on behalf of candidates. Whether conservative Evangelicals who view the world as being in a state of moral decline (Guth et al., 2004) or Unitarian-Universalists working toward a more liberal social-political agenda (Green, 2004), the clergy viewed their efforts as a natural moral obligation to be involved in society. Thus, religious belief expresses itself as engagement with society and with political structures. This effect is moderated, however, by the degree to which one's religion is accepted by society. In a separate study, U. S. Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims expressed a high degree of alienation from society and were less likely to become involved in political activity (Wuthnow & Hackett, 2004).

History abounds with examples of the religious affecting the political, and vice versa. Psychological theories regarding attitude-behavior consistency, leadership, and decision-making have much to contribute to understanding the way that individuals' attitudes and values shape

their decisions and are quite relevant to questions concerning when and how people construe religion and politics, and how they maintain separate vs. combined goals in those spheres. As we seek to understand these phenomena, however, we must extend our knowledge base to include other disciplines, either by independent study or, more preferably, by working with colleagues in other disciplines. By drawing from the expertise of colleagues in disciplines such as political science or sociology, and by integrating their broad, “macro” analyses with more “micro” psychological theories, we will add breadth and depth to our understanding of the way that religion and other social institutions affect people. We also can gain insight into the underlying question of religion as a means or as an end, a question that has been a prime concern at least since Allport articulated the I/E typology (Batson, Schoenrade & Ventis, 1993).

Psychology of Religion, Peace, Conflict, and War

Significant implications exist for religious attitudes and beliefs on people’s views regarding war. Indeed, the U. S. Naval War College recognizes this, offering an elective course, EL 581, titled Faith and Force: Religion, War and Peace. This is an important, yet generally neglected, area of study by psychologists of religion (but see Silberman, Chapter 29, this volume, for a discussion of religious terrorism). A good base for examining these relations is found in the work of Christie, Wagner and Winter (2001), who distinguish between direct and structural violence. Direct violence entails actions that directly, immediately, and adversely affect another person’s life. It is intentional, dramatic, and can kill people outright, as in cases of war or hate crimes. Structural violence is more indirect, chronic, and results in a long-term adverse effects that decrease one’s life span, often dramatically.

Recent history offers examples of religious bodies and individuals advocating direct violence for religious reasons (Juergensmeyer, 2000). Religious leaders also may advocate support of war, as when the Southern Baptist convention president announced, “We will enlist prayer warriors as special forces to pray for our troops and their families” (Graham, 2003).

When leaders encourage people to draw connections between the religious and the martial by using religious language to describe the righteousness of their cause or to describe the enemy as evil, however, such “tough talk” promotes authoritarianism and polarization in a conflict, working against the prospects for a peaceful end to the conflict (Pettigrew, 2003).

The relation between religion and structural violence can be more subtle than with direct violence. To the extent that societal resources are allocated with great inequities, structural violence is being done (Christie, Wagner, & Winter, 2001). Religions that support such inequities would be considered as contributing to structural violence. White supremacist Christianity in the U. S., extremist interpretations of Islam in Afghanistan or Saudi Arabia, among others, illustrate religion’s role in maintaining structural violence.

Efforts to reduce direct violence are known as peacemaking. While such work takes different forms, they advocate nonviolent means to reduce direct violence; they are reactions to specific events; they occur in a defined time and place; and they tend not to disrupt the current power structure (Christie et al., 2001). Religion can play an important role in understanding the peaceful resolution of conflict. On an institutional level, religions may issue statements (Atlanta Journal-Constitution, 2003) or hold vigils and other efforts to convey their message to political leaders and to the public (e.g., National Council of Churches, 2003). Although such peacemaking efforts may be associated with relatively liberal forms of religion, peacemaking is also evident in religions that are conservative, as was the case when the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints helped to defeat the MX intercontinental ballistic missile system in the 1980s (Nielsen, 2004). Religion also can be an important element contributing to dramatic and heroic personal interventions in the midst of war (Oliner & Oliner, 1988).

Actions to address structural violence are known as peace-building; many religions encourage such efforts, which may be consistent with their stated mission in social outreach activities and represent important expressions of religious belief and attitudes. Examples of

peace-building at an institutional level include many Roman Catholic pastoral letters and encyclicals during the past century which address the fair and equitable distribution of the world's resources, equal access to political power, social justice and fairness reflect the basic concerns underlying structural violence and peace-building. The 2003 World Council of Churches statement advocating peace through passive resistance, education and other means also illustrates principles of peace-building. On an individual level, religious peace-building may be exemplified by Mohandas Gandhi, whose promotion of peace drew from his ecumenism. Gandhi's use of civil disobedience to achieve civil rights inspired Martin Luther King, A. J. Muste, and many others (Barash & Webel, 2002; Muste, 2002).

For psychologists of religion, people's efforts in peace making and peace-building represent a prime opportunity to examine important, tangible effects of religious belief. Potentially useful theoretical perspectives for such research are truly diverse, including moral judgment, social exchange theory, theories regarding norms, social influence, social learning theory, conflict resolution and many others. For example, stereotyping research could examine the effect on people's beliefs of learning that Palestinian "suicide bombers" are often educated, middle-class, and without deep religious commitment (Pettigrew, 2003). Religion can play an important part in people's efforts to cope with conflict, as it did during the contentious overthrow of Philippine president Joseph Estrada in 2001 (Macapagal & Nario-Galace, 2003; for more on religious coping see Pargament, Chapter 26, this volume). Additional research into religion's roles in fomenting and resolving conflict and war is warranted, and would be an important contribution that psychology of religion can make to psychology.

Possible Theoretical Frameworks

We have described a wide range of subjects that have received, and in our view should continue to receive, research attention from psychologists of religion. There are several different theoretical frameworks that may be useful in conducting this research. We discuss here a few,

recognizing that this list is brief and that there are many others that would be useful. As we improve our understanding of psychology and religion by pursuing research in these areas, we also can promote the study of religious behavior & belief by other psychologists. We move from examples illustrating distinctly “psychological” to the more sociological and philosophical.

One core issue in social psychology concerns the degree to which attitudes and behavior are consistent, and some of the classic studies relevant to psychology of religion, such as *When Prophecy Fails* (Festinger, Riecken & Schachter, 1956), have been based on relevant theories such as cognitive dissonance theory. While there has already been interesting and insightful research using this paradigm, its value is by no means exhausted for the psychology of religion. The same is true of related questions dealing with attitude – behavior causality and attitude change. Attitude researchers have used religion as a content area in which to test out various theories and processes, but in our view this area of research is far from exhausted.

Social identity theory is adopted by many involved in peace psychology (e.g., Christie et al, 2001), and may be of value for psychologists of religion. It appears in the I/E/Q paradigm as a social-extrinsic religious orientation (Kirkpatrick, 1989), although most attention has focused on intrinsicness instead. Social identity theory also resonates with some recent writing in the psychology of religion, such as Buddhist psychology (de Silva, 2000). From this view, people’s alienation from society, or “identity crisis,” ultimately generates a pathological society. Careful examination of the ways that religion affects identity and may be used to promote positive or harmful social interactions is warranted, as the effects appear vitally important (Keen, 1986).

Sociology of religion has devoted a great deal of attention to secularization and the question of whether religious belief or adherence is decreasing as society becomes more technologically advanced. This is highly relevant to the psychology of religion in terms of people’s religious doubts and uncertainty (see Paloutzian, Chapter 17, this volume). A social psychological understanding of religion would seem incomplete without examining the degree to

which this idea applies to the individual as well as to society, or considering how the basic idea of disbelief differs at the personal- and societal- levels of analysis. More research in this regard is needed.

Conservatism, humanism, and other value systems provide a foundation to the psychology of religion, and to religious individuals themselves (see Baumeister, Chapter 21, this volume). Despite this fact, the relation between values, attitudes, and religion remains a subject that has received less attention by psychologists than it deserves. Indeed, a PsycInfo search combining these terms returned merely two dozen entries, few of which were recent. Conceptual analyses of the differences between values and attitudes; the translation of general values to specific attitudes; and the various expressions of values and attitudes in everyday life all warrant further research, and religion provides an excellent context for doing this.

Conclusions and Implications

Religion's impact on social life is perhaps the most vigorous area of study in the psychology of religion, not only in terms of the number of studies conducted, but in terms of the range of phenomena and relevant theories. In this brief survey, we have seen that religion affects social attitudes and behavior in myriad ways. Prejudice and helping, honesty and sexuality, child abuse and other crimes, and politics and peace all are highly impacted by one's religious beliefs and behaviors. These results point to the complex nature of religion in people's lives and in society—on one hand, religion can promote prejudice, intolerance and war. On the other hand, it can promote understanding, tolerance and peace. Working out the details concerning when religion does each will undoubtedly continue to occupy researchers for years to come.

Just as social implications of religion are diverse, so to should be the methods and theoretical perspectives of the psychologists who study them. By using different methods to examine attitudes and social behavior, researchers improve our measurement of constructs and

better establish validity. Social psychology and related disciplines offer numerous methods readily applicable to the topics in this chapter (see Hood & Belzen, Chapter 3, this volume; Reis & Judd, 2000). Likewise, one can draw from a wide variety of theories selected from psychology and other relevant disciplines. Because it represents an intersection of many interests, examining the social implications of religion necessarily requires a willingness to consider divergent theoretical and even disciplinary perspectives. Studying and religion, for example, using the I/E/Q paradigm and variations of the “lost letter” technique and while doing content analyses of material published by various religions or denominations, will serve psychology of religion far better than a sole reliance of only one research method or theoretical perspective. Depending on one’s focus, theories from fields as diverse as anthropology, criminology, and political science would be useful in such research, although they are rather rarely used at present. Forming partnerships with colleagues in those disciplines who share an interest in religious phenomena is a fruitful way to begin such work.

Finally, the importance of the issues examined in this chapter can be seen on at least two levels beyond the obvious goal of advancing the psychology of religion. First, addressing the social aspects of religion can also enhance our understanding of basic psychological matters, as Festinger, Riecken & Schachter (1956) demonstrated. Perhaps more importantly, because they also deal with significant societal issues the topics addressed in this chapter ultimately can exert a significant practical effect on people and on society. If there is a common theme to the research in this area, it must be that religion engages others, whether for better or for ill.

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Footnotes

1. Although *Dissertation Abstracts International* citations are given in the reference list, full-text versions (rather than abstracts) were consulted via ProQuest Digital Dissertations. <http://wwwlib.umi.com/dissertations/> Accessed July 9, 2004.