Is intrinsic religious orientation a culturally specific American Protestant concept? The fusion of intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation among non-Protestants

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Abstract

The relationship between intrinsic and personal extrinsic religious orientation as suggested by Gorsuch and McPherson is studied within four denominational samples of university students in four different cultural environments. Results show that intrinsic and extrinsic personal religious orientation form two separate dimensions only within the American Protestant sample. In three different European religious environments (one Eastern Orthodox, one Islamic, and one Roman Catholic), all extrinsic personal and intrinsic items can be combined into a single dimension. It is speculated that the intrinsic orientation may be culturally tied to Protestantism. Copyright © 2007 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

The multifaceted and complex nature of religiousness has been analytically patterned in many ways that make it more comprehensible. One of these was the classification into components by Glock and Stark (1965). Behind the behaviors, deeds, actions, and institutional affiliations, there are also motives, which are often inseparable from substantial religiousness itself. This was the approach taken by G. Allport (1950): namely, to find the ‘religious orientation’, the motives behind the actions in order to comprehend the variety of deeds, including the seemingly contradictory prejudice on the part of many Christian believers. Starting from the notions of immature and mature religiousness, he arrived at a typology involving intrinsic and extrinsic religiousness (Allport & Ross, 1967). Extrinsic religiousness was considered to be instrumental in nature, described as immature and utilitarian, whereby a person uses his/her religiousness to achieve extra-religious (psychological and social) ends. In intrinsic religiousness, the motive for religiousness would be autonomous and ‘over-reaching’. Allport summarized this distinction thus: ‘the extrinsically motivated individual uses his religion, whereas the intrinsically motivated lives his’ (Allport & Ross, 1967, p. 434). While extrinsic religious orientation was found to be negatively correlated to mental health, intrinsic religious orientation was generally positively correlated with mental health (Baker & Gorsuch, 1982; Bergin, Masters, & Richards, 1987).

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Received 13 September 2006
Accepted 9 March 2007
However, additional studies have proven that results were not uniform in confirming that intrinsic religiousness would always be psychologically ‘healthy’. It has been shown that it may also be linked to prejudice (Griffin, Gorsuch, & Davis, 1987; McFarland, 1989), to authoritarianism (Kahoe, 1977), to closed mindedness, and dogmatism and might even be contaminated by social desirability (Batson & Ventis, 1982).

Religious orientation has become the dominant paradigm in the study of religious motivation and of the psychological study of religiousness in general. This is so despite the many often-repeated reservations: thus, Hill and Hood (1999) in a review of literature and instruments in the area, write that ‘Allport’s uncanny popularity among psychologists of religion may have more to do with his apostolic reputation than with the conceptual soundness of his religious orientation framework or the instruments used to assess it’ (Hill & Hood, 1999, p. 120). The necessity for many improvements to as well as modifications and expansions of the notions and instruments in the area need to be mentioned, starting from Allport’s (1966, p. 6) need to reinterpret the analytical framework of their data findings, because of the appearance of indiscriminate pro-religious orientation, of ‘muddleheads who refuse to conform to our neat religious logic’, thus creating a need to analyze the relationship within an orthogonal framework and not as a continuum. More recently, it has been suggested that the Religious Orientation Scale (ROS) is best described as measuring three factors (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989; Kirkpatrick, 1989; Leong & Zachar, 1990; Maltby, 1999). While supporting intrinsic orientation (I) as a unified construct, these studies suggested that extrinsic religious orientation consists of two distinct components: a social and a personal one. Social extrinsic orientation (Es) deals with attainment of social benefits, while personal extrinsic orientation (Ep) deals with overcoming and controlling psychological troubles and distress.

As religious orientation became the dominant paradigm in the psychological research of religion and as it was based on general psychological theory (Allport, 1950), it was studied in non-Protestant and non-American environments as well: among others, Hovemyr (1998) studied Swedish Protestants; Socha (1999), Brewczynski and MacDonald (2006) studied the Catholic Polish environment; Tapanya, Nicki and Jarusawad (1997) studied Thai Buddhists; Iranian Muslims were studied by Ghorbani, Watson, Ghramaleki, Morris, and Hood (2000) and Watson, Ghorbani, Davison, Bing, Hood and Ghramaleki (2002); Kaldestad (1992) and Kaldestad and Stifoss-Hanssen (1993) studied Norwegian Protestants; Elbedour, ten Bensel and Maruyama (1993) studied the Palestinians. In an important paper, Cohen and associates contest that intrinsic orientation is the only authentic motivation across all religious traditions, suggesting particularly that social extrinsic orientation, including, that is, many types of ecclesiastical and community religiousness, may be an even more theologically authentic orientation in some Abrahamic religions (Cohen, Hall, Koenig, & Meador, 2005). Nevertheless, they do not address the issue of personal intrinsic orientation.

While the cross-cultural validity of the distinction between personal and social motivation in religion does not seem to be disputable, the question of dividing personal orientation into intrinsic orientation and personal extrinsickness could prove more challenging.

The issue of intrinsic–extrinsic (I-E) dimensionality has already been raised by Kirkpatrick and Hood (1990), who had noticed the intriguing results from a Gallup survey in which single-item measures of I, Ep, and Es were included. In these data, Ep and Es were mutually uncorrelated \( (r = .01) \), whereas I and Ep were significantly positively correlated \( (r = .40, p < .01) \). They also report finding a similar pattern in some of their own unpublished data. These findings are recognized by them as extremely problematic: ‘... both for the prevailing two-factor theory (according to which Ep and Es should be highly inter-correlated, as they together comprise a unitary factor) and for Allport and Ross (1967, p. 453) original bipolar conceptualization (according to which I and Ep should be negatively correlated).’

A closer look at recent studies dealing with the three-factor structure of the ROS (e.g., Brewczynski & MacDonald, 2006; Genia, 1993; Khan, Watson, & Habib, 2005; Maltby, 1999; Maltby, 2002; Watson...
et al., 2002) only adds substance to the Kirkpatrick’s and Hood’s doubts. Thus, an interesting pattern can be discerned when the correlations between the I and Ep factors are observed with regard to the denominational structure of the samples being analyzed. It appears that in all predominantly non-Protestant samples, particularly high correlations between the two dimensions occur. Thus in the study conducted by Watson et al. (2002, p. 265), the I-Ep correlation within the Iranian (Shia Muslim) sample was much higher ($r = .64, p < .01$) than within the USA (predominantly Christian Protestant) sample ($r = .30, p < .01$). Another interesting finding in a religiously heterogenous setting was the one by Genia, who found significant positive correlations between I and Ep for Unitarians ($r = .30, p < .05$) and Jews ($r = .32, p < .05$), but not for liberal Protestants and evangelical Protestants (Genia, 1993, p. 289). Moreover, Maltby (2002) found a negative correlation ($r = -.039, p < .05$) between I and Ep within a predominantly Anglican and Protestant sample, while Khan and associates (2005, p. 54) recently found a very strong positive correlation ($r = .54, p < .01$) among Pakistani Sunni Muslims. An interesting study was carried out by Brewczynski and MacDonald (2006), who set out to attempt a direct replication of the three-factor structure of the ROS instrument on a sample of Polish Catholics. Their research generally confirmed the overall adequacy of the three-dimensional structure of the ROS. On the other hand, their findings were consistent with Socha’s previous (1999) observation that the extrinsic and the intrinsic dimensions in the Polish samples appear to overlap partly. On these grounds they conclude ‘that the ROS does not demonstrate factorial invariance across English/American and Polish language and/or culture’ (Brewczynski & MacDonald, 2006, p. 72).

The above findings may point to a quality of cultural specificity in the case of Protestantism already noted by Weber. In his view, the religious stance of the Protestant believer is expected to be markedly voluntary in its essence. He pointed out this trait as something permeating American Protestantism in general (Weber, 1948, pp. 313–314). What Weber notes involves Protestant theology, according to which faith is the fundamental element of religiousness. Campbell (1996, p. 120) notes that according to Luther, ‘... God justifies sinners (accepts them as forgiven) on the basis of faith only, not on the basis of any human works or human merit or human righteousness’. The role of the ecclesiastic institution is thus down-played in comparison to other branches of Christianity. Since ‘the Bible is the final authoritative source of Christian teaching’ (Campbell, 1996, p. 134), it is up to the believer to make decisions and to hold faith. In a similar vein, Eliade points out that, for Luther, in Christianity it was ‘experience of faith in itself that mattered, a fiducia naïve and total’ (Eliade, 1985, p. 242).

All this can be summed up as an argument on individual, voluntary faith is more pronounced in Protestantism than in most other religions. Individual, voluntary faith is here understood as being a component of religiousness differing from collective, institutional (ecclesial), social (community), and ritual forms of religiousness, as well as from other motivations. In such a view, consolation is also not pronounced, being taken either as completely unnecessary or is not directly connected to religiousness. Owing to the theologically alleged direct relationship of the individual believer to God, stripped of doctrinally prescribed links to the religious institution and community (Cohen et al., 2005), Protestants can be expected to be more inclined to establish their religion as individual belief, rather than to seek comfort in religion. The antithesis of this is to be found in institutional religion, where grace, salvation, and sacraments are mediated exclusively through the Church as institution, which represents a ‘perfect society’. This is to be found in the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox doctrine of Church (Campbell, 1996; McGrath, 1994). These ecclesiological doctrines may not constitute the sole reason for differences in religious life and motivation; they may even be less important today, but they can be expected to raise the social component of religiosity to a different status and to down-play the intrinsic component, to create different models within religious motivation. One can speculate that under such circumstances extrinsic psychological religiosity can become legitimate, as the Church, with its multitude of holy personalities, that may be invoked, is positioned as a potential refuge.
Considering all this, Stark and Bainbridge (1985, p. 13) might be correct in noting that Allport’s religious orientation framework emphasising intrinsic religious orientation as a mature religious sentiment, may well be specially suited to the peculiar features of American Protestantism. In this paper we address the problem of the inter-cultural validity of the I/Ep/Es framework and of its measurement, in four different religious groups: American Protestants, Bosnian Muslims, the Serbian Orthodox, and Slovenian Catholics. We shall focus our analysis on a single, very specific question: Is it justifiable to consider intrinsic and personal extrinsic orientation as one religious dimension in certain predominantly non-Protestant samples? On the basis of the above literature review, it is possible to hypothesise that a positive relationship will be found between I and Ep orientation in the non-Protestant environments, which will differ from the Protestant one.

**METHOD**

**Procedure**

The instrument applied was a questionnaire containing varied items, concentrated on various measures of religiosity and its possible correlates (e.g., anxiety, gender orientation, delinquency, demographic variables, and so on). The filling out of the questionnaire was conducted in groups of 10 to 40 students under the supervision of research team members and took about 40 minutes. It was carried out in the spring of 2005. The questionnaires were translated from Slovenian into the other languages and translated back to Slovenian.

**Sample**

Data were collected from undergraduate university students, primarily in the social sciences and humanities, in four different cultural settings. Out of the entire sample (N = 1786), only affiliates of the major religions in the particular environments were chosen for this study. In this way our sample comprised the following groups: Slovenian Catholics (N = 361, a university in Slovenia), Bosnian Muslims (N = 392, a university in Eastern Bosnia), Serbian Orthodox (N = 396, a university in Southern Serbia), American Protestants (N = 329, a university in Alabama). The mean age was 20.3 (SD = 1.5), in all samples ranging between 20 and 21. The relative share of males varied from 38% in the Bosnia and Herzegovina sample to 46% in the Alabama sample.

**Measures**

The questionnaire contained items on intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation, taken from the Gorsuch and McPherson (1989) Intrinsic–extrinsic/revised scale. We decided to employ this particular scale in this study, enabling a fair scope for cross-cultural analysis.

measure because it was expressly constructed to separate the social and personal components of extrinsicness (Hill & Hood, 1999, p 120). All items were measured on a 1 to 5 Likert-type scale. The goal of our study was to investigate the relationship between intrinsic orientation and personal extrinsic orientation within the observed religious samples. We used the original three extrinsic personal (Ep) items and limited ourselves to five intrinsic items with pro-intrinsic wording. It was not possible to carry out the analysis with the items originally labeled by Gorsuch as Extrinsic other (Eo), which Gorsuch and McPherson later defined as basically intrinsic in their I/E-R scale. One reason for this could have been the difficulty of translating these items into the three languages while conveying the original meaning. Even though we believe that we succeeded in doing this, the entry of these items created confusion in the functioning of the items and scales, thus making it imperative to omit them. Gorsuch & McPherson, indeed, make special effort to enter these particular items under intrinsic orientation, indicating the tentativeness of their intrinsic nature. Their introduction of these items under intrinsic orientation is based on one study only, in contrast to the other items, which come from the much applied ‘Age Universal ROS’ (Gorsuch & Venable, 1983).

Plan of Analysis

In keeping with the objective of this paper, we shall endeavor to determine the relationship between intrinsic orientation and personal extrinsic orientation in the observed environments, commencing by exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, continued by consistency and correlation analysis among the constructs, and concluded by a comparison of the quantitative presence of different religious orientations within the four samples observed.

RESULTS

At the beginning we apply the principal components procedure with varimax rotation, following the Kaiser rule to drop all components with eigenvalues below 1.0.

As shown in Table 1, the intrinsic and extrinsic personal items load on separate components only among American Protestants (forming three components in this case). Within the Slovenian Catholic, Bosnian Muslim and Serbian Orthodox samples, the alleged two religious dimensions merge into one dimension.

It should be mentioned that the Kaiser rule to drop all components with eigenvalues below 1.0, played an important role in producing the above factor solutions. In all three samples in which I and Ep items loaded together, the third factor fell only slightly below the Kaiser limit. Eigenvalues for the third factor varied between 0.823 for Slovenian Catholics and 0.999 for Bosnian Muslims.

In order to further explore these findings, confirmatory factor analysis was employed. For each of the four samples, we tested the goodness of fit for a two-factor model, distinguishing I and Ep items as one dimension and Es items as another, and for a three-factor model, distinguishing items I, Ep, and Es items as three separate dimensions. No error terms were allowed to correlate.

Generally, an acceptable fit for a model to the given dataset is indicated by a CMIN/DF ratio below 5; for the CFI, a fit between 0.90 and 1.0 is considered acceptable (Bentler, 1992); as for the RMSEA, a value of less than 0.05 demonstrates excellent fit, and a value between 0.05 and 0.08 suggests a reasonable fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993). As can be discerned from the data in Table 2, only the two-dimensional model in the US Protestant sample yields no acceptable fit to the data. In all the...
non-Protestant samples, the two-factor model (combining I and Ep items into a single factor) yields an acceptable fit.

Obviously, all the three indicators in each of the four samples improve substantially when a three-factor model is introduced. Thus, the basic three-factor structure for the religious orientation concept, as suggested by Kirkpatrick (1989) and Gorsuch and McPherson (1989), is applicable in all the samples observed.

On the other hand, it is no surprise that adding another dimension improves the goodness of fit indicators. It is logical that the more factors retained, the better the model will fit the original data (Field, 2005, p. 634). From that point of view, the basic question is, how many factors are required to

| Table 2. Basic statistics from confirmatory factor analysis testing the goodness of fit for two- and three-factor models of religious orientation |
|---------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-----------|
|                                | CMIN/DF   | CFI       | RMSEA     |          |          |           |
|                                | Two factors | Three factors | Two factors | Three factors | Two factors | Three factors |
| BH Muslims                      | 2.33      | 1.31      | 0.96      | 0.99     | 0.06      | 0.03      |
| Serbian Orthodox                | 3.53      | 1.64      | 0.92      | 0.98     | 0.08      | 0.04      |
| Slovenian Catholic              | 3.40      | 2.17      | 0.94      | 0.97     | 0.08      | 0.06      |
| US Protestants                  | 8.43      | 3.86      | 0.79      | 0.92     | 0.15      | 0.09      |
keep the model within the acceptable range for the goodness of fit indicators. The answer to this question differs for the Protestant sample and for the three non-Protestant samples. In the latter case, the two-factor model is acceptable, while in the former it is not. This indicates, that the intrinsic and extrinsic personal items can be regarded as measures of a single dimension in the three non-Protestant samples, but not in the Protestant sample.

We can further clarify this by concentrating on the relationship between I and Ep dimensions only. In the first step, we will employ Cronbach alpha coefficients, indicating the internal reliability of each particular summational instrument. Table 3 presents alphas for scales composed of intrinsic and extrinsic personal items and for a possible compound scale composed of all eight items.

As is discernible from the data in Table 3, in all but the American Protestant sample, the internal consistency of the intrinsic summation is improved by adding the three Ep items. In the American Protestant case, however, the Cronbach alpha diminishes if Ep items are added. These results suggest that in the three non-Protestant samples, a one-dimensional solution, combining all the I and Ep items, is preferable to a two-dimensional one.

To further corroborate our finding, we can look into zero-order correlations between the supposed two dimensions. For that purpose, we computed two averaged summation variables, one for the five intrinsic items and the other for the three personal extrinsic items (alpha coefficients are presented in Table 3).

Table 4 provides firm support for our case. In all the non-Protestant samples, the correlation between intrinsic and extrinsic personal scales is very strong, while it is not even statistically significant in the American Protestant case. Furthermore, in all the non-Protestant samples the correlations between the two summations are substantially stronger than are the average inter-item correlations for any of the two scales, pointing to the fusion of the two scales in these environments. The American Protestant sample, on the other hand, clearly indicates two distinct dimensions.

All these findings contribute to our hypothesis being confirmed: the relationship between I and Ep is basically different in the two non-Protestant environments (in comparison to the Protestant one).

| Table 3. | Alpha coefficients for the intrinsic, the extrinsic personal, and the compound summation |
|----------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
|          | Bosnian Muslims | Serbian Orthodox | Slovenian Catholics | US Protestants |
| Intrinsic items | .803 | .778 | .818 | .849 |
| Extrinsic psychological items | .618 | .773 | .777 | .718 |
| Compound | .827 | .837 | .866 | .739 |

| Table 4. | Average inter-item correlations for intrinsic and extrinsic personal items and zero-order correlations between intrinsic and extrinsic personal summations |
|----------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Pearson r between intrinsic and extrinsic personal item summation | .580* | .580* | .659* | .078 |
| Average inter-item correlation for intrinsic items | .454* | .413* | .474* | .530* |
| Average inter-item correlation for extrinsic personal items | .354* | .534* | .538* | .458* |

* p < .01 (two-tailed).
Finally, we shall check whether the relative presence of intrinsic religious orientation, as compared to the personal extrinsic one, is greater in the Protestant sample. In order to do that, means for averaged summations of the three dimensions (I, Ep, and Es) were computed (see Table 5).

The extrinsic social religious orientation is the one least present among the three observed orientations in all the samples studied, but there is one exception when the means of the other two variables are compared. The presence of intrinsic religious orientation surpasses that of the personal extrinsic one only among US Protestants. In all other environments, extrinsic personal religiousness has a stronger presence than the intrinsic one.

### CONCLUSION

Our findings do not cover all world religions, even less the main religious groups. Furthermore, they are limited to students, whose religiousness may be more intellectual and thus possibly more inclined toward intrinsic orientation. On the other hand, homogenizing samples to students enhances comparability. Nevertheless, our findings do suggest that intrinsic religious orientation is particularly linked to (American) Protestantism, and that in a broader cross-cultural perspective, it may be part of a more general personal religious orientation.

The I-E framework seems to fail in taking into account the non-Protestant religious traditions’ wider, more varied understanding of authenticity and the substance of being religious (Cohen et al., 2005). Such pillars of religiousness may be tradition, ritual, the religious institution (not only as an environment of religious life, but as a sacred institution on its own), and the community of believers. In many religions, these items should dominate religious motivation as well, and should appear as elements of authentic religious orientation. Without them, it is impossible to comprehend many religions’ not only theologies, but also ways of being authentically religious within them. Additionally, the consolation and comfort the religion extends may also be part of the authentic religiousness, as suggested by our findings.

As mentioned in the introduction, Cohen and associates (2005) have indicated a theoretical reservation as to social extrinsic orientation being truly extrinsic in many environments. Our study, on the other hand, points to the weakness of the personal component of extrinsic orientation. This does not mean that personal extrinsic orientation is an nonexistent dimension (even when amalgamated with intrinsic orientation for factor analysis). On the contrary, one may speculate to its being even more relevant than intrinsic orientation itself, particularly if the consolational, compensatory function of religion is taken into account as a possible basis of religion (Marx, [1844] (1966), Stark & Bainbridge, 1985). This would explain why intrinsic items and extrinsic personal items load into a single factor in non-Protestant environments, suggesting an amalgamation of the two. In this view, Protestant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I</th>
<th>Ep</th>
<th>Es</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slovenian Catholics</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bosnian Muslims</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serbian Orthodox</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>1.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US Protestants</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>2.39</td>
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Range:1 (minimum)–5 (maximum).
surroundings, where personal extrinsic orientation tends to be clearly separated from the intrinsic, might be seen rather as the exception to a general tendency toward amalgamation of these two personally oriented religious orientations.

The limitations of our findings result from the following issues: not all major religions are considered; that there may potentially be an influence of ethnicity upon religious orientation not via religion; that the samples are limited to students, quest orientation was not taken into consideration (without which such an analysis is incomplete); that the particular scale was applied, which is revised, and possibly it down-plays the authenticity of Es. Thus we are not able to reach any unconditional conclusions. Many issues concerning the relationship between I and E, I, Ep and Es remain without final resolution.

Further study of religious orientation seems to be needed on the basis of new approaches and instruments. Beside general considerations of the multiplicity of types of extrinsicness (Gorsuch, Gaithri, & Gorsuch, 1997, p. 254) and extrinsicness having ‘positive as well as negative adjustment implications’ (Ghorbani et al., 2002, pp. 69–70), historical changes since Allport and Ross’s 1967 formulation need to be taken into consideration. Cohen et al. (2005, p. 58) use the term ‘post-Christian’ for the United States. The situation is more varied and complex if one ventures to other cultures. As far as Europe is concerned, the words of Cohen et al. (2005, p. 58) on the ‘secular, materialist landscape’ seem particularly plausible, although this does not mean that it is no longer relevant to pursue the study of religion and religious orientation. What needs to be focused on are the changes indicating possible new structures and polarities in religious orientation, enabling an understanding of the religion of today, particularly if such structures are to function cross-culturally. A potential issue to consider is the formulation of authenticity of non-intrinsic religious orientation, including social extrinsic orientation not just as sociability, but as a legitimate path for achieving grace and salvation.

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