Young people's attitudes toward religious diversity: Exploring the views of Muslim students

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Shaping the presentation

- Introducing the study

- Designing the quantitative strand

- Implementing the quantitative strand

- Studies on all students

- Studies on Muslim students

- Extending the quantitative study

Introducing the study: The Young People's Attitude to Religious Diversity Project

Project context

- Religion and Society Programme (AHRC/ESRC)

- Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit

- 2009-2012

- Mixed methods

- Qualitative strand first

- Quantitative strand second

Designing the Quantitative strand

Quantitative strand

- Sources of theory
- Empirical tradition
- Methods of measurement
- Instruments of measurement

Sources of theory

- The qualitative project

- Psychology of religion

- Empirical theology

The qualitative project

- What matters to young people

- How young people express themselves

- A rich and deep tapestry

Psychology of religion

- Argyle (1958)

- Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi (1976)

- Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle (1997)

- Hood, Hill and Spilka (2009)

Psychology of religion

- Individual differences approach

- Personality

Empirical theology

- Hans van der Ven

- *Journal of Empirical Theology*

- International Society for Empirical Research in Theology

Empirical theology

- Individual difference approach
- Theologically informed constructs

Empirical tradition

- Teenage Religion and Values Project

- Assessing Attitudes towards Religion

- Outgroup Prejudice Project

Teenage religion and values

- Survey of 34,000 13- to 15-year-old pupils

- England and Wales

- Diversity of schools

Teenage religion and values

- *The Values Debate* (2001)

- *Urban Hope and Spiritual Health* (2005)

- Focused papers

Assessing attitudes

- Francis Scale of Attitude towards Christianity

- Katz-Francis Scale of Attitude towards Judaism

- Sahin-Francis Scale of Attitude towards Islam

- Santosh-Francis Scale of Attitude towards Hinduism

Outgroup Prejudice Project

- York St John University
- Social proximity assessment
- Contact hypothesis
- Self-esteem
- Empathy

Methods of measurement

- Fixed choice
- Binary options
- Likert scaling

Fixed choice

What is your religion?

1	None
2	Buddhist
3	Christian
4	Hindu
5	Jew
6	Muslim
7	Sikh

Binary options

Do you like going out a lot?

- Yes
- No

Likert scaling

I find life really worth living

- Agree strongly
- Agree
- Not certain
- Disagree
- Disagree strongly

Instruments of measurement

- Psychological constructs
- Religious constructs
- Theological constructs
- Openness constructs

Psychological constructs

- Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised

- Self-esteem

- Empathy

Religious constructs

- Affiliation

- Practice (public)

- Practice (personal)

- Belief

- Attitude

Theological constructs

- God images

- Theologies of religion

Implementing the quantitative strand

Sampling strategy

- 5 nations of the UK: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and London

- 2,000+ from each

- Half from schools with a religious character and half without a religious foundation

Sample achieved

- England   2,398

- Northern Ireland   1,988

- Scotland   2,724

- Wales   2,319

- London   2,296

  Total   11,725

Creating scales

- Attitude to Religious Diversity Index (ARDI) – 11 item

- Scale of Religious Diversity (SARD) – 13 item

- Scale of Attitude toward Freedom of Religious Clothing and Symbols in School (SAFORCS) – 10 item

**Studies on
all students**

Finding 1:
Effects of religious schools

Effect of religious schools

Francis, L.J. & Village, A. (2014). Church schools preparing adolescents for living in a religiously diverse society: An empirical enquiry in England and Wales. *Religious Education*, 109 (3)

Effect of religious schools

- Runnymede Trust:

Dummett & McNeal (1981), *Race and Church Schools*

Berkeley (2008), *Right to Divide?*

Effect of religious schools

Sample:

- England, Wales, London

- male and female

- 5,402 ('no religion' and Christian; schools with a religious character and schools without a religious foundation)

Effect of religious schools

Research question:

- Multilevel linear analysis explores effects of school type on attitude towards religious diversity, after taking account of individual differences in personal factors and religious factors (and that students were nested in schools).

Conclusion

Comparable students attending Catholic, Anglican, or joint Catholic and Anglican secondary schools hold neither a more positive attitude not a less positive attitude toward religious diversity, compared with comparable students attending schools without a religious foundation.

Conclusion

This comes as a surprising finding in light of the implication of the Swann Report and the direct statement of the Runnymede Trust Report that schools with a religious character prepare students less adequately than schools without a religious foundation for life in a religiously diverse society.

Findings 2:
Effects of religious education

Effect of religious education

Francis, L.J., ap Sion, T., McKenna U., & Penny, G. (in press). Does Religious Education as an examination subject work to promote community cohesion? An empirical enquiry among 14- 15-year-old adolescents in England and Wales. *British Journal of Religious Education*.

Effect of religious education

- AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme

- Does RE Work? Project (Conroy *et al*)

Effect of religious education

Sample:

- England, Wales

- male and female

- 3,052 (RE examination students and non-examination students)

Effect of religious education

Research question:

- Does Religious Education as an examination subject work to promote community cohesion?

Conclusion

After controlling for contextual factors (school type and geographical location), personal factors (sex and age), psychological factors (psychoticism, neuroticism and extraversion), and religious factors (Christian affiliation, worship attendance, personal prayer, and belief in God), a small but significant positive association was found between taking Religious Education as an examination subject and attitude toward religious diversity.

Findings 3: Focusing on individual nations

London

Francis, L.J. & Penny, G. (in press). The personal and social significance of diverse religious affiliation in multi-faith London. In E. Arweck (Ed.) *Attitudes to Religious diversity: Young people's perspectives*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Northern Ireland

Francis, L.J., Penny, G. & Barnes, P. (in press). Testing the 'worlds apart' thesis: Catholic and Protestant schools in Northern Ireland. In E. Arweck (Ed.) *Attitudes to Religious diversity: Young people's persepctives*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Wales

Francis, L.J., Penny, G. & ap Sion, T. (2017). Schools with a religious character and community cohesion in Wales. In E. Arweck (Ed.) *Attitudes to Religious diversity: Young people's perspectives*. Farnham: Ashgate.

England

Francis, L.J., Penny, G. & McKenna U. (2017). Does RE work and contribute to the common good in England? In E. Arweck (Ed.) *Attitudes to Religious diversity: Young people's perspectives*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Scotland

Francis, L.F., Penny, G. & Neil, P. (2017). Growing up in Scotland: not one Catholic community but three. In E. Arweck (Ed.) *Attitudes to Religious diversity: Young people's perspectives*. Farnham: Ashgate.

Finding 4:
Social and public significance

Social and public significance of religion

Francis, L.J., ap Sion, T. & Penny, G. (2014). Is belief in God a matter of public concern in contemporary Wales? An empirical enquiry concerning religious diversity among 13- to 15-year-old males. *Contemporary Wales*, 27, 40-57.

Social and public significance of religion

Research questions:

- In contemporary Wales today, how does the worldview of young people who believe in God differ from the worldview of those who do not believe in God?

- Does personal belief in God help young people to make sense of life in a religiously diverse society?

- Does belief in God intensify suspicions and competition between different religious groups?

Wellbeing

I feel my life has a sense of purpose

- Atheist   37%
- Theist   67%

Respect for religion

We must respect all religions

- Atheist   49%
- Theist   77%

**Studies on
Muslim students**

Study 1

- Francis, L. J., & McKenna, M. (in press). The religious and social correlates of Muslim identity: An empirical enquiry among male adolescents in the UK. *Oxford Review of Education*.

Study 1

Compares the responses of 1,932 male students who self-identified as religiously unaffiliated with 158 male students who self-identified as Muslim.

Study 1

Comparisons are drawn across two domains defined as religiosity and social values. The data demonstrated that for these male adolescents self-identification as Muslim encased a distinctive profile in terms of religiosity and social values.

1 Religious identity

My religious identity is important to me

- 88% Muslim

- 9% unaffiliated

1 Religious identity

My father's religious identity is important to him

- 80% Muslim

- 8% unaffiliated

1 Religious identity

My mother's religious identity is important to her

- 86% Muslim
- 12% unaffiliated

2 Religious importance

Most of my friends think religion is important

- 54% Muslim
- 11% unaffiliated

2 Religious importance

My parents think religion is important

- 90% Muslim

- 10% unaffiliated

3 Religious self-assessment

My life has been shaped by my religious faith

- 71% Muslim

- 5% unaffiliated

3 Religious self-assessment

When making important decisions in my life, my religion plays a major role

- 73% Muslim

- 5% unaffiliated

4 Religious conversation

I often talk about religion with my mother

- 65% Muslim

- 9% unaffiliated

4 Religious conversation

I often talk about religion with my father

- 60% Muslim

- 9% unaffiliated

5 Studying religion at school

Studying religion at school has helped me understand people from other religions

- 81% Muslim

- 64% unaffiliated

5 Studying religion at school

Learning about different religions in school is interesting

- 69% Muslim
- 28% unaffiliated

6 God images

I think of God as loving

- 83% Muslim
- 10% unaffiliated

6 God images

I think of God as forgiving

- 83% Muslim

- 10% unaffiliated

7 Personal wellbeing

I feel my life has a sense of purpose

- 85% Muslim

- 39% unaffiliated

7 Personal wellbeing

I find life really worth living

- 79% Muslim

- 62% unaffiliated

8 Social wellbeing

I am bullied because of my religion

- 23% Muslim

- 3% unaffiliated

8 Social wellbeing

I am bullied because of my race or colour

- 23% Muslim

- 4% unaffiliated

9 Attitude toward religious plurality

We must respect all religions

- 87% Muslim

- 52% unaffiliated

9 Attitude toward religious plurality

All religious groups in Britain should have equal rights

- 84% Muslim
- 54% unaffiliated

10 Living with cultural diversity

Having people from different religious backgrounds makes my school/college an interesting place

- 78% Muslim
- 35% unaffiliated

10 Living with cultural diversity

People from different religious backgrounds make where I live an interesting place

- 60% Muslim

- 29% unaffiliated

Study 2

- Francis, L. J., & McKenna, M. (in press). Assessing attitude toward religious diversity among Muslim adolescents in the UK: The effect of religious and theological factors. *Journal of Beliefs and Values*.

Study 2

Understanding variations in public attitudes toward religious diversity is a matter of concern within both the social scientific study of religion (concerned with *religious* factors) and empirical theology (concerned with *theological* factors).

Study 2

Drawing on data provided by 335 13- to 15-year-old Muslim students from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, this study tests the power of religious factors and theological factors to explain variance within the Muslim Attitude toward Religious Diversity Index (MARDI).

Study 2

Regression analyses demonstrate that theological factors account for much more variance than religious factors in explaining individual differences in Muslim students' attitudes toward religious diversity. In this regard understanding Muslim students' theological identity is more important than understanding their religious practice.

MARDI

- 12 items
- Alpha = .89

Sample item

I am interested in finding out more about Christians

- .67 correlation
- 50% agreement

Sample item

Learning about different religions in school is interesting

- .55 correlation
- 74% agreement

Sample item

We must respect all religions

- .39 correlation

- 91% agreement

Regression model

- Personal factors

- Psychological factors

- Religious factors

- Theological factors

Personal factors

- Sex   .06
- Age   -.02

Psychological factors

- Extraversion   .08
- Neuroticism   .08
- Psychoticism   -.16**

Religious factors

- Religious identity .11
- Worship attendance -.02
- Scripture reading .08
- Personal prayer .11
- Belief in God .10
- Attitude toward theistic faith .02
- Religious classes .04

Theological factors

- Exclusivism -.14*
- Pluralism A .04
- Pluralism B .21***
- Interreligious .11
- Atheism -.29***
- Agnosticism .01

Study 3

- Francis, L. J., & McKenna, M. (in press). Muslim attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in schools within the UK: The effect of religious and theological factors. *Religione e Società.*

Study 3

Understanding variations in public attitudes toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school is a matter of concern within both the social scientific study of religion (concerned with *religious* factors) and empirical theology (concerned with *theological* factors).

Study 3

Drawing on data provided by 335 13- to 15-year-old Muslim students from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, this study tests the power of religious factors and theological factors to explain variance within the Scale of Attitude toward Freedom of Religious Clothing and Symbols in School (SAFORCS).

Study 3

Regression analyses demonstrate that theological factors account for significant additional variance, after religious factors have been taken into account. In this regard understanding Muslim students' theological understanding is as important as understanding their religious practice.

SAFORCS

- 10 items
- Alpha = .93

Sample item

Muslims should be allowed to wear the headscarf in school

- .71 correlation
- 86% agreement

Sample item

Muslims should be allowed to wear the burka in school

- .60 correlation
- 65% agreement

Sample item

Christians should be allowed to wear crosses in school

- .67 correlation
- 77% agreement

Regression model

- Personal factors

- Psychological factors

- Religious factors

- Theological factors

Personal factors

- Sex   .09
- Age   .03

Psychological factors

- Extraversion   .05

- Neuroticism   .01

- Psychoticism   -.10

Religious factors

- Religious identity   -.04

- Worship attendance   .06

- Scripture reading   .08

- Personal prayer   -.12

- Belief in God   -.01

- Attitude toward theistic faith   .32***

- Religious classes   .03

Theological factors

- Exclusivism   -.06
- Pluralism A   -.02
- Pluralism B   .05
- Interreligious   -.05
- Atheism   -.31***
- Agnosticism   .04

Extending the qualitative study

Replicating elsewhere

- Republic of Ireland with Dublin City University

- Australia with Monash University

- Russia

- ???

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