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# RELIGION

## An Overlooked Dimension in Cross-Cultural Psychology

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This article argues that religion should be fully integrated into cross-cultural research for four reasons: (a) religion, by itself, occupies a substantial role in people's lives across different cultures; (b) religion has been found to be a strong predictor of important life domains among individuals all over the world; (c) religion has a strong influence on cross-cultural dimensions; and (d) culture also influences and shapes religious beliefs and practices. The authors present a five-dimensional framework of religion and provide recommendations on ways it can be integrated within cross-cultural research.

**Keywords:** religion; culture; psychology; dimensions

**Religion is inextricably woven** into the cloth of cultural life. The myths, symbols, and rituals tied to religion can be understood as ways of making sense of the world (Eliade, 1958) and finding pathways through the world (Pargament, 1997). Some individuals who believe in a sacred power view the world through the lens of mythic or scriptural vocabularies and regulate their lives according to the models and injunctions set forth in their religious traditions. Groups, institutions, and cultures as a whole may represent their ideals through religious beliefs and practices (Durkheim, 1915). Given these apparently powerful links between religion, culture, and human behavior, the perspectives and theories of cross-cultural psychology can arguably play an important role in enhancing understanding of the interplay of religion and culture. As a first step in exploring this idea, we wondered about the extent to which religion or religious variables had appeared in the existing body of cross-cultural psychology research.

To assess the degree to which religion has appeared in cross-cultural research, we examined articles published in four major cross-cultural journals over the past 34 years that included religion. A computer search combining the name of the journal and the words 'religion,' 'spiritual,' or 'transcendence' highlighted the limited degree to which religion has appeared as an explicit element in published cross-cultural research. Table 1 indicates that the total number of articles (empirical and theoretical) published in these journals that dealt with religion at some level ranged from about 2% to a little below 6%. Furthermore, for each

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**TABLE 1**  
**Religion as a Topic of Study**

<i>Name of Journal</i>	<i>Published Studies Dealing With Religion</i>	<i>Percentage of Total Studies</i>	<i>Time Period</i>
<i>Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology</i>	29/1,004	2.89	1970-2001
<i>Cross-Cultural Research: The Journal of Comparative Social Science</i>	6/102	5.89	1995-2001
<i>International Journal of Psychology</i>	62/2,043	3.03	1967-2001
<i>Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology</i>	2/94	2.13	1995-2001

of these articles, the religious dimension was assessed through a few global indicators, such as church affiliation, frequency of attendance, prayer, and/or self-rated religiosity. In fairness to cross-cultural researchers, there exists much cultural work where religion has occupied an implicit role. These studies did not appear in this analysis because (a) they were published in other mainstream psychology journals, (b) they were published as chapters in books, or (c) religion was not explicitly mentioned as a variable of interest. This group of articles includes, among others, research on the influence of culture on views of self (Kakar, 1978; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Shweder & Levine, 1984), on moral development (Dien, 1982; Miller, 1994; Shweder, Mahapatra, & Miller, 1987), and on gender roles (Rapoport, Lomski-Feder, & Masalha, 1989; Youssef, 1974). Clearly, cross-cultural researchers have substantial awareness of topics and issues closely related to religion, and this awareness promotes consideration of the various roles that religion may play in influencing behavior.

Nonetheless, the relatively small number of articles with an explicit focus on one or more religious variables suggested that plenty of opportunities exist for a more complete integration of religion into mainstream cross-cultural research topics. For instance, given the seemingly conflicting cultural trends in Egypt and Iran, to what extent do differences in the manifestation of religious faith contribute to the divergence of these cultures over and above other cultural dimensions. In Egypt, on one hand, growing literacy appears to be strengthening the religious faith of the populace; in Iran, on the other hand, the strongest support for democratic reforms and opposition to clerical power has emerged from a major seat of learning, the Iranian universities. Perhaps, with a fruitful conceptualization of religious constructs, a merging of religion into current cross-cultural research frameworks can help to develop understanding of the recent events of terrorism directed by extremist religious groups at the Western world, or the Arab-Israeli conflict, or the coming to power of Hindu Nationalist parties in India. We suggest that religion has a role to play in the investigation of cultural influences on human behavior beyond the somewhat limited, implicit one it has contributed so far. One possible strategy for explicitly incorporating religion might involve the development of cross-cultural "dimensions" pertaining to religion.

Researchers have identified many dimensions through which culture appears to affect individuals, organizations, and the workings of society in general. For instance, Lytle, Brett, Barsness, Tinsley, and Janssens (1995) list 75 such cross-cultural dimensions. Prominent among these dimensions are individualism-collectivism, power-distance, masculinity-femininity, and motivational dimensions (Hofstede, 1980; Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995). Numerous studies have demonstrated the influence of these and related constructs on coping with stress, formation of social relationships, occupational attitudes, conflict, life satisfaction, and development

of values, to name a few (e.g., Bochner & Hesketh, 1994; Oishi, Diener, Lucas, & Suh, 1999; Yamaguchi, Kuhlman, & Sugimori, 1995).

The interplay of religion and culture is not expressly apparent in the great majority of these cross-cultural dimensions. For example, Lytle et al.'s (1995) list contains a dimension that pertains to individuals' culturally influenced perception of time: the dimension of monochronicity versus polychronicity. From a psychology of religion standpoint, however, this way of conceptualizing time fails to capture beliefs about the cyclicity of time (e.g., the concept of reincarnation as a cycle of birth and rebirth in some Eastern religions). Perhaps this and other cross-cultural dimensions could be supplemented or complemented by dimensions that took religious variations across cultures into account in an explicit way.

Such developments would pose a challenging set of research tasks. As Capps (1977) said, "The religious is not elusive because it lurks behind ordinary phenomena but because it is woven into the phenomena" (p. 48). Nonetheless, in this article, we argue that cross-cultural psychologists could improve theory and research by explicitly considering the influence of religion on cross-cultural dimensions. We also assert that cross-cultural researchers should include religious measures when studying any religiously heterogeneous population. The dual purposes of this study are to provide a justification (supported by empirical evidence wherever possible) for including considerations of religion in cross-cultural research and to outline a framework for the inclusion of religion-related theory in cross-cultural research. This framework includes recommendations for research design and sampling, augmented measurement of religiosity, data analysis, and interpretation of results.

### **THE RELEVANCE OF RELIGION IN CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH**

There are several reasons to integrate religious dimensions in cross-cultural studies. First, although the significance of religion may vary over time and place, it is clear that religion is salient for people across cultures. For example, in the United States, as many as 95% of adults express a belief in God (Hoge, 1996), 84% believe God can be reached through prayer, and 86% state religion is important or very important to them (Gallup & Castelli, 1989). In a sociological survey conducted in 1991, Borowik and Pawluczuk (1994) reported that more than 42% of individuals from Byelorussia, Russia, and Ukraine described themselves as either deep believers, believers, or attached to their religious tradition. In the same survey, a larger percentage of Poles (more than 80%) said that they were either deep believers or believers of their faith. Using data from the "Role of Religion" surveys administered to several countries of Eastern and Western Europe by the International Social Survey Program in 1991, Gautier (1997) found that respondents from Poland and Hungary reported the highest rates of religious affiliation (95.2% and 93.9%). Affiliation rates in Western and Eastern Germany were reported to be 86.7% and about 36%, respectively. Poles reported the highest rate of church attendance, followed by Hungarians and Western Germans, and finally, Eastern Germans. In Africa, almost all the people surveyed professed adherence to a religious group; the same survey described about 80% of Asians as belonging to a certain religious faith (Barrett & Johnson, 1998). Together, these findings underscore the influence of religion over the lives of a vast majority in different parts of the world.

Next, religion has been found to be an important predictor of health and other important variables across cultures. Jahangir, Rehman, and Jan (1998) reported that among depressed

Afghan refugees, patients with a higher degree of religiosity were rated as less vulnerable to suicidal planning or attempts. Religion has also been found to be a resource for coping with stressful life circumstances, such as the demands of acculturation for Asian-Indian immigrants to the United States (Vohra & Broota, 1996) and the challenges of raising a child with autism in Ireland (Coulthard & Fitzgerald, 1999). Religious rituals have also been linked to the alleviation of distress during troubled times. In an empirical analysis of ethnographic descriptions of 78 cultures, Rosenblatt, Walsh, and Jackson (1976) found that members of cultures with final ceremonies for the dead experienced far fewer signs of prolonged grief, such as suicidal behavior, troubled dreams, work-related difficulties, and mental and physical illness. Among church members in the United States coping with a major negative life event, Pargament et al. (1990) found that members who adopted a collaborative form of religious coping (work with God as partners in coping with stress) reported better outcomes on all measures of psychological adjustment. In contrast, Baider and De-Nour (1987) reported that Arab Muslim women who underwent a mastectomy and interpreted their illness as "God's will" adopted a passive response to their life-threatening illness. Even after the operation, few had any information about the disease or the operation.

Third, religion can be predictive of several important cross-cultural dimensions. For example, Huismans and Schwartz (1992) showed that religiosity is tied to certain motivational types of values. In their study of Dutch Roman Catholics, Dutch Protestants, Dutch nonaffiliated, and Israeli Jews, religiosity was linked positively to traditional motivation and negatively to hedonism motivation. Furthermore, the researchers identified a sociological dimension endorsed by the Jewish sample (reflected by the correlation between Jews' religiosity and values of tradition, conformity, and security). Also, religiosity was connected more strongly with the value of tradition among Protestants than Catholics. In another study involving 88 samples from 40 countries, Schwartz and Sagiv (1995) reported that the value of a spiritual life was closely linked to the value of tradition among Catholic and Muslim teachers. The value of tradition was theoretically associated with the overarching cross-cultural dimension of conservation. Spiritual life also overlapped with the value of benevolence, which was conceptualized to reflect the cross-cultural dimension of self-transcendence. Overall, these results point to religion as a distinctive predictor of cross-cultural dimensions.

Finally, cultural forces can influence religious beliefs and practices. For example, an individual's perspective about death can be shaped by cultural beliefs and practices. Wikan (1988), an ethnographer who lived among and studied Muslim communities in two different countries (Egypt and Bali), found that despite their common religion, the members of the two cultures coped very differently with death. In Egypt, the death of a child precipitated intense emotional reactions, whereas the Balinese reacted with calm and composure to the same event. Religion, Wikan explains, is filtered through culture. The Muslims in Egypt and Bali draw on Islamic components that are most consistent with their cultural ethos. For Egyptians, the cultural norm regards emotional expression as critical to positive health; for the Balinese, on the other hand, emotional expression represents a threat to oneself, others, and the dead and is said to interfere with judgment. Thus, Islam takes a different shape in different cultures. As another example, Roccas and Schwartz (1997) studied the association between values and religiosity among Roman Catholics in six countries. In countries with oppositional church-state relations (Poland, Czech Republic, and Hungary), religiosity correlated less positively with values of conformity and security and more negatively with values of power, achievement, and universalism when compared with countries such as Italy, Spain, and Portugal that had more cordial church-state relations. Thus, dynamic cultural factors can also shape the links between religion and individual values.

In summary, religion exercises its own impact on the beliefs and practices of cultures. In turn, cultural norms, behaviors, and changes shape the manifestation of religion in different countries. Hence, culture and religion need to be examined together to gain a better understanding of cross-cultural similarities and differences. The next section elaborates on a religious framework for cross-cultural research.

## PROPOSED RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

In this section, we propose a five-dimensional framework of religion that can be applied when researching across cultures. The framework is based on the works of Glock (1962), Padden (1988), Smart (1998), and research in the psychology of religion. We provide a broad definition of these religious dimensions, discuss how the dimensions can influence cultures, and if relevant, suggest cross-cultural dimensions that may be conceptually linked with each religious dimension. Note that we are not proposing a unidirectional causal link from religious to cross-cultural dimensions. Instead, we believe that each influences the other in significant ways.

### IDEOLOGICAL DIMENSION

This dimension refers to religious beliefs and their salience in a person's life. These include beliefs about the nature of the divine, the ultimate destination or purpose of life, and pathways people should follow to fulfill this divine purpose. Cultures differ in their views of the nature of God. For example, tribal religions refer to a Creator God who is ultimately responsible for the world but has withdrawn from acting on it; in biblical traditions, theocratic images of an active God who has power over the world are central; in Hindu tradition, ontological metaphors dominate—Brahman, is consciousness, joy, the holy power that animates existence itself; Buddhas are defined in archetypal virtues of wisdom and compassion; and Chinese religion pictures the cosmos as the harmonious Way (Tao) of "heaven and earth" (Padden, 1988; Smart, 1998; Smith, 1991).

Additionally, religions differ in what they believe to be the ultimate purpose of human beings and pathways that should be followed to fulfill the divine purpose (Pargament, 1997). To achieve complete surrender to the will of God, Islam has laid out the five pillars for all Muslims (i.e., declaration of faith, prayers, fasting during the month of Ramzan, alms tax, and pilgrimage to Mecca). Among Buddhists, the eight-fold path of Buddhism (e.g., right speech: speaking truthfully and compassionately; right action: abstaining from killing, lying, stealing; right livelihood: engaging in occupations that promote life) is said to help followers of that faith attain spiritual enlightenment. Hinduism offers its adherents four different paths through which they can achieve spiritual liberation (i.e., knowledge, work, devotion, and psychospiritual exercises). Similarly, followers of Taoism choose one of three ways to facilitate the Tao's power as it flows through human beings: philosophical Taoism, Taoist hygiene and yoga, and religious Taoism. Finally, sacramental religion (e.g., Catholicism) finds God and salvation through the rites of the church and shrine. The multiple paths indicate that individuals may choose a variety of ways to practice their religion.

Religious ideology may influence many dimensions of life. For instance, the identification of the sociological dimension among Israeli Jews in the study by Huismans and Schwartz (1992) emphasizes the role of religion in their desire for preservation of a social order and structure as they believed is justified by Judaism. This finding is consistent with the



theme of "Tikkun Olum" (i.e., desire to fight for justice and improve the world) identified by Semans and Fish (2000) in their interviews with Jewish families in the United States. Religious/spiritual beliefs can also be an integral part of a culture's conceptualization of health, as found among the communally organized Maori (Durie, 1994). Among Maoris, health is influenced by four dimensions: spiritual, mental, physical, and family; of these, the spiritual dimension, which consists of religious beliefs and practices and relationships with the land, is the most essential. Working with diverse samples (U.S. and Israeli samples), researchers have also linked religious/spiritual beliefs to an active form of coping when faced with a life-threatening illness, such as cancer (Baider et al., 1999; Holland et al., 1999). Additionally, research on religious coping (conducted mainly among Christians) has identified specific religious beliefs, such as belief in a benevolent and forgiving God, that are associated with better health and others, such as appraising situations as a punishment from God and questioning God's powers, that are tied to poorer mental and physical well-being (Pargament, 1997).

Religion may be more integral to the health of individuals in some cultures relative to others. For example, students in Uganda reported that supernatural factors had more of an influence on their health than did British students who felt that religion was irrelevant to their health status (Furnham & Baguma, 1999). The associations between specific religious coping methods and psychological well-being can also vary across cultures. Bjorck, Lee, and Cohen (1997) found that greater causal attribution of a negative event to God was associated with lower depression among Caucasian American Protestants whereas the reverse was true for Korean American Protestants. They suggest that among Koreans, God control beliefs embody negative judgments of God and lead to feelings of self-blame and increased depression.

Some of the existing cross-cultural dimensions, such as monotheism versus polytheism (Lytle et al., 1995), mastery/harmony/subjugation to nature (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961) and self-enhancement versus self-transcendence (Schwartz, 1992) address the ideological religious dimension. Studies suggest that beliefs about nature (as measured by values of protecting the environment, regarding the world as full of beauty, and seeking unity with nature) influence behavior toward the environment (Schultz & Zelezny, 1998), and motivational factors (e.g., self-transcendence, conservation) have implications for values and behaviors that are held in high esteem by a culture (Schwartz & Sagiv, 1995).

#### RITUALISTIC DIMENSION

This religious dimension refers to behaviors expected of a person who identifies with a certain religion. Temple/church attendance, idol worship, prayer, observing religious festivals, rites of passage, and fasting are all part of the ritualistic aspect of religion. Whereas Buddha advocated a religion without ritual, other religions place greater emphasis on rituals, such as the Armenian Apostolic mass that can last about an hour and a half. For Jews, Biblical holidays such as Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are set aside for synagogue attendance, soul searching, repentance, and judgment. Rituals can also form the foundation of an individual's everyday life. According to the Five Pillars of Islam, a Muslim is expected to pray five times a day, whereas Hindu scriptures encourage its adherents to begin their day with morning prayers and meditation. Critical life transitions, such as adolescence, marriage, childbirth, and death can also serve as occasions that bear religious significance. Although all religions may contain similar ritualistic elements, their salience may differ. Attending services at church may be more important for Christians than for Hindus (Larson, 1994; Smart,

1998); for the latter, the practice of yoga may be more intimately tied to their religion and serve as a path for spiritual liberation. Overall, rituals prescribed by religions can have a significant influence on people's daily behavior.

Religious rituals and practices, such as prayer, church services, and pilgrimages, have been followed by individuals across cultures (Pargament, 1997; Richards & Bergin, 2000) and may serve diverse functions. Among Muslim families, daily prayer is said to strengthen their faith and make Islam a way of life (Carolan, Bagherinia, Juhari, Himmelright, & Mouton-Sanders, 2000). For Jewish families, religious rituals serve as a symbolic reminder of Jewish history, promote developmentally appropriate transitions for children, help children/adolescents in their identity development, and provide a context for bringing family members together (Semans & Fish, 2000). Tyler and Sinha (1988) reported that for Hindus, the religious pilgrimage served as a way to seek the support of their religion to counter external forces that were controlling their lives.

Although rituals are common across diverse cultures, the nature of these rituals differs across cultures, especially when coping with stressful situations. Wahass and Kent (1997) observed that schizophrenic patients in Saudi Arabia were more likely to use religious practices such as prayer and listening to religious cassettes in coping with their symptoms when compared to similar patients in the United Kingdom. Furthermore, Laungani (1994) reported that when compared to individuals in England, those in India did not perceive stress as requiring the expertise of psychologists/psychiatrists; instead they used indigenous forms of medicine and healing, yoga, exorcizing evil spirits, ayurvedic and homeopathic medicines, and religion.

#### EXPERIENTIAL DIMENSION

This religious dimension is concerned with the inner mental and emotional world of the individual (e.g., religious mysticism, intense religious experiences), and includes the sense of physical, psychological and spiritual well-being an individual derives from religious beliefs and practices. Certain sects of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism have been described as "mystical" (i.e., interior illumination of reality) whereas prophetic religions such as Judaism and Islam have been described as "numinous" (i.e., experience of a dynamic external presence) (Smart, 1998). For instance, the significance of transcendental meditation in Eastern religions is connected to the goal of producing an altered state of consciousness; the importance of intense conversion experiences, such as those described by James (1902), is related to the experiential goal of connecting to Jesus Christ among Christians. It has been suggested that these diverse peak experiences can strengthen one's belief in religion and make a significant impact on individual functioning (e.g., creating a sense of oneness; sense of community) (d'Aquili & Newberg, 1993).

Research has examined the significance of the experiential dimension across cultures. For instance, when faced with anxiety, Guajiro Indian migrant women have been observed to rely on mystical or supernatural solutions, such as those contained in dreams to overcome their conflicts (Watson & Watson-Franke, 1977). In Quebec, researchers found that over a period of 7 years, use of the transcendental meditation technique by government officials resulted in significantly lower physician payments (Herron, Hillis, Mandarino, & Orme-Jackson, 1996). Another study conducted in India reported that when compared to non-meditators, individuals who meditated regularly improved their attention processes (Rani & Rao, 2000). Additionally, in Taiwan, relaxation training, combining imagery with meditation, was reported to lower the stress level and improve the psychological health of nurses



working in a hospital, when compared to a control group with no such training (Tsai & Crockett, 1993).

#### INTELLECTUAL DIMENSION

This refers to an individual's knowledge about his or her faith. With respect to Christianity, the intellectual dimension includes knowledge about the 1st-century setting in which Jesus appeared, the roots of Christianity in Judaism, and the disciples of Christ and their teachings, among others. In Hinduism, this includes knowledge of the development of the Vedas and Upanishads, doctrine of karma, and the significance of specific religious rituals. The intellectual dimension also refers to the individual's openness toward examining his or her faith. Some people are highly orthodox and may view their tradition's writings as infallible and as literally and completely the word of God. Others see them as metaphorical—in need of interpretation. Furthermore, the salience of this dimension can vary across faiths. For example, the path of philosophical Taoism represents a distinctive route to spiritual liberation. Additionally, individuals differ in the importance they place on learning about their faith. Hence, some people who strictly conform to their religious practices may not necessarily possess in-depth knowledge about their religion's literature or frequently read the sacred texts of their faith.

An individual's knowledge about religion could have implications for his or her cultural/ethnic identity. For instance, many Hindus in the United States practice rituals such as celebrating annual religious festivals, attending services at the temple, and honoring the multiple Hindu deities (Eck, 2000). However, they also struggle with a lack of knowledge of the meaning of the religious rituals and hence encounter difficulties in passing their tradition and culture on to their children (Venkatachari, 1996).

The way in which an individual understands his or her religion could also influence tolerance toward members of other religions. Empirical literature has noted the links between unwavering devotion to strict religious interpretations and practices with prejudice and bigotry to groups, including Blacks, non-Christians, women, Jews, homosexuals, and Communists (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Jackson & Hunsberger, 1999; Kirkpatrick, 1993). These findings hold true across diverse samples, fundamentalist Christians, Hindus, Muslims, and Jews. Other researchers have tied fundamentalism to rigid thinking and right wing authoritarianism. For instance, Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) reported that the association between fundamentalism and prejudice was largely mediated by right wing authoritarianism. Overall, the implications of religious knowledge can be significant for defining an individual's cultural/ethnic identity, behavior, and intergroup processes across cultures.

#### SOCIAL DIMENSION

Religious beliefs and practices are held and observed in a social context. They are observed in temples, churches, mosques, pagodas, gurdwaras, and meeting houses—homes that draw together individuals with a common and distinctive set of beliefs, creating a context for social interaction, intimacy, and a sense of belongingness. Across cultures, religion has the potential to influence relationships between individuals, within couples, families, groups, organizations, communities, and in society. For example, the mitzvot in Judaism may be classified as those that define the individual's relationship with God and those that regulate relationships with fellow humans. Among mainline and conservative Protestants,

significant emphasis is placed on forgiveness as a potential solution to interpersonal and life problems (McCullough & Worthington, 1995). Based on Hindu doctrine, the caste system established a hierarchy within Hindu society that restricted roles to be played by its members. Additionally, within the concept of Hindu dharma, each individual is conceptualized to be inherently part of a social body; dharma represents moral duty, code for conduct, right action, and inherent character (Kakar, 1978). Furthermore, the practices of the eight-fold path in Buddhism are intimately tied to how individuals relate to one another in society.

Studies have confirmed the significance of religion for the social lives of individuals. Miller (1994) has described how the precepts of Hindu dharma and karma potentially inculcate the "duty-based interpersonal code" among Hindu Indians, stressing broad and enforceable interpersonal obligations. According to her, this is qualitatively different from the morality of justice (Kohlberg, 1981) and morality of caring (Gilligan, 1982) reported in studies in the United States that more closely reflect American individualism. Carolan et al. (2000) found that among Muslims in the United States, women largely bore the responsibility for parenting their children whereas the men were expected to provide religious and spiritual guidance for their children and become more involved as their children grew older. Sered (1989) noted that for elderly Jewish women in Israel, the aim of religious ritual is to relate the sacred to interpersonal relationships. Sered (1987) also observed that for Oriental Jewish women whose religious world may be severely sexually segregated, the essence of female religiosity is interpersonal whereas that of male religiosity is ritualistic (praying and studying). It is interesting that secondary analyses on data from the European Values Survey (EVS) indicate that nations that score lower on Hofstede's (1980) dimension of masculinity also score lower on religious involvement (Verweij, 1998). According to the author, it is possible that, in masculine societies, modernization might have forced women to move closer to religion whereas in feminine societies, both men and women (who are equally powerful) may have lost their values in religious matters. Finally, researchers have noted the influential role of religion as a social institution in the lives of many Americans. Prayer groups, bible study, and mission groups provide fertile ground for enhancing intimate sharing and interpersonal commitment among members of diverse congregations (Maton & Rappaport, 1984).

Overall, this section offered a broad, conceptual look at five proposed religious dimensions. Using theological underpinnings and empirical evidence, we tried to substantiate the relevance of each of these dimensions for cross-cultural psychology. Because empirical scrutiny of religion is still in its nascent stages, more work will have to be done to articulate these dimensions more sharply.

### **INTEGRATION OF RELIGIOUS FRAMEWORK INTO CROSS-CULTURAL RESEARCH**

Given that religion can form a critical component of culture, we now propose a framework for its inclusion in cross-cultural research (see Table 2). The sections that follow are organized according to three different levels of complexity within which religion can be integrated in cross-cultural research. Within each level of integration, we highlight recommendations for sampling, measurement of religious constructs, and data analysis, as well as possible directions for future research.

**TABLE 2**  
**Framework for Integration of Religious Constructs Into Cross-Cultural Research**

<i>Levels of Integration</i>	<i>Sampling/ Study Design</i>	<i>Constructs/ Measurement</i>	<i>Data Analysis</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
1. Methodological control of confound	Purposive homogeneity Purposive heterogeneity	Ignore Measure affiliation, church/temple attendance, self-rated religiosity, and frequency of prayer	Ignore Control variables in ANCOVA or regression	Limits to generalization
2. Exploratory analysis	Purposive heterogeneity	Measure affiliation, church/temple attendance, self-rated religiosity, and frequency of prayer Measure potentially relevant religious dimensions	Post hoc assessment of group differences and/or correlates of religious dimensions	Supply suggested paths for future research or theory development
3. Theoretical integration	Stratification	Validate constructs in multiple groups Establish discriminant validity from overlapping religious dimensions Measure theory-relevant dimensions	A priori hypothesis tests of group differences and/or religious correlates	Extend or trim extant integrative theory

#### LEVEL 1: METHODOLOGICAL CONTROL OF CONFOUND

At this level of integration, we suggest that researchers pay attention to religion as a variable that may confound the relationship between various cross-cultural dimensions (e.g., individualism-collectivism) and outcome variables of interest (e.g., workers' relationships, job performance, etc.). To make valid cross-cultural comparisons, we recommend one of two strategies: (a) Researchers can make their sample homogeneous by examining the variables of interest only within one religious group, or (b) researchers can control for religiosity and religious affiliation as covariates among other demographic variables in a heterogeneous sample. In the latter case, religiosity can be measured through four items that are typically used in research where religion may or may not be the primary variable of interest: denominational affiliation, frequency of church/temple attendance, frequency of prayer or meditation, and self-rated religiosity/spirituality. Ordinal variables such as frequency of religious attendance can be entered into statistical analyses as is, whereas nominal variables, such as specific religious affiliation, can be dummy coded for inclusion as covariates in relevant analyses.

As an example of purposive homogeneity, consider the study by Roccas and Schwartz (1997) that examined the influence of church-state relations on the association between religiosity and values among Catholics in six countries. In that study, the researchers restricted their sample to Catholics and, in fact, further divided their sample into two categories based on the church-state relations in the countries (church-state opposition and cordial separation between church and state). Restricting their sample to Catholics enabled the researchers to control for religious denomination while allowing them to examine the moderating influence of church-state relations as a contextual variable on the relationship between religiosity (measured on an 8-point scale from *not at all religious* to *very religious*) and values. The results of the study indicated that when compared to countries with cordial relations between church and state (i.e., Italy, Spain, and Portugal), individuals in countries where the church and state were in conflict (i.e., Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia) reported lower correlations among religiosity, and the values of conformity, security, universalism, power, and achievement were lower.

Even when religion is not the central variable of interest, researchers can still include religious indicators. For example, in studying the coping strategies of parents who had lost their child to sudden infant death syndrome, McIntosh, Silver, and Wortman (1993) included three items to measure religiosity (salience of religion, frequency of church attendance, and religious affiliation), along with other coping variables (e.g., social support, cognitive processing, finding meaning). In this way the researchers were able to examine the unique effect of religiousness on the parents' psychological adjustment as well as control for this effect when examining the effects of the other coping methods.

Each of these strategies (i.e., purposive homogeneity and heterogeneity with measurement of religiosity) has its limitations. In the first case, results from a homogeneous group may not generalize to other samples (e.g., other religious groups). In the second case, by controlling for religion, researchers risk overlooking potentially important findings such as moderating effects. Additionally, although the results may be generalizable to a wider population, measuring religion by just a few items presents difficulties because these are global indicators and do not reflect the multidimensional nature of religion. Furthermore, for some religious groups, such as Hindus, some of the items (e.g., frequency of temple attendance) may not be integral to their religious practice (Venkatachari, 1996).

## LEVEL 2: EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS

At this level of integration, cross-cultural researchers attempt to go beyond distal measures of religiousness to include potential religious indicators that could influence cultures and measured outcomes, and vice versa. Our five-dimensional conceptualization of key religious variants may be helpful in framing the choice of indicators. In this exploratory research context, heterogeneous samples are needed to assess variations on the included religious dimensions. For example, when studying ways that African American parents/caretakers cope with the demands of raising a child with mental retardation, Rogers-Dulan (1999) included distal indicators of religion (i.e., religious denomination, church membership, and religious salience), a 28-item multidimensional measure of "Religious Connectedness" (e.g., religion in personal and family life, religious socialization, organized religious participation), and interviews with caretakers all aimed at examining the role of religion in raising a child with special needs. Post hoc analyses thereafter could provide directions for future development of these religious dimensions or aid in the formation of a theory on relevant religious constructs for cross-cultural research.

Gillard and Paton (1999) studied the role of religious differences among Christian Fijians, Indian Muslims, and Indian Hindus living in Fiji in coping with the aftermath of a hurricane. They conducted interviews with members of each of the three religious denominations to learn how religion affected their personal experience of hurricanes. The interviews indicated that although religious beliefs were a resource for members of all three religious groups, there were significant differences between them with respect to amount of assistance provided and demands made on them by their respective religions. Overall, compared to their Muslim and Hindu counterparts, Christian Fijians received higher levels of assistance and had lower demands placed on them after the hurricane. Note that the exploratory nature of both these examples has its weaknesses because the religious indicators are more empirically than theoretically driven.

### LEVEL 3: THEORETICAL INTEGRATION

At the third and most sophisticated level of integration, researchers must first develop a theoretical conceptualization of religion and cross-cultural variables and how they singly and jointly influence people's lives. The theory would then define the sampling requirements needed to test *a priori* hypotheses regarding group differences on religious constructs or correlates of religion and outcome variables (e.g., goals, values, attitudes, and behaviors). The theory would also help to define the operationalization of important religious dimensions to be included in the research, such as the ones we proposed in our five-dimensional framework. At this level, measurement of religious constructs would be guided by theory and would be suitable to examine across multiple religious groups (*etic* approach) with varying contextual factors (geographical region, denomination, race, etc.).

The study on clergy and members' views of their congregation's social control and belief systems by Pargament, Tyler, and Steele (1985) serves as an example of this level of theoretical integration. The authors hypothesized that churches and synagogues that were hierarchical (i.e., nonparticipative/individually restrictive social control) would manifest a more authoritarian set of beliefs, whereas those that were horizontal (i.e., participative/individually enhancing social control) would manifest a less authoritarian set of religious beliefs. Furthermore, they also predicted that the members of these two types of churches and synagogues would differ on psychosocial competence characteristics. The samples were drawn from four Protestant churches, four conservative Jewish synagogues, and four Roman Catholic churches from a relatively homogeneous section of the United States. Demographic variables such as age, gender, and response rates were comparable between the two types of congregations. The clergy and members completed scales that measured the church/synagogue orientation (social control and authoritarian religious belief) as well as measures of individual psychosocial competence. Using the scores of clergy and members on the orientation scales, analyses were conducted to divide the 12 congregations into the two categories, hierarchical and horizontal; thereafter, the mean scores of the hierarchical and horizontal congregation members on the psychosocial competence measures were compared. Overall, the authors found that religious congregations differ as religious belief and social control systems. More specifically, when compared to horizontal congregation members, hierarchical congregation members indicated less trust in others, greater sense of control by powerful others and God, and a less self-critical stance.

In short, the theoretical conceptualization and measurement of religion at this level may help in conducting cross-cultural research across heterogeneous religious groups in multiple cultures. Integrating a theoretical perspective into religious measurement can also help to

sharpen and develop existing measures of religiosity. With these strategies, we may be able to learn more about religious dimensions that have greater or lesser relevance for cross-cultural research, thereby extending or trimming integrative theory.

#### **LIMITATIONS AND ALTERNATIVES TO THE DIMENSIONAL APPROACH**

We must acknowledge that the proposed dimensional approach to religion is just one way of understanding the interplay of religion and culture. Our proposed three levels of integration fit with contemporary mainstream psychology in a paradigmatic sense but are not fully representative of the many social science approaches to examining religion or culture. The three-level framework for incorporating religion into cross-cultural studies is also consistent with standard models of statistical analysis of variables contributing to complex multicausal and multi-interactive phenomena. Yet statistical analysis of quantitatively measured dimensions of religion may also fail to represent the broad range of options for characterizing the dynamics of cultural and religious phenomena. As with all research, we must exercise care in how we frame the study of religion and culture and we must remain mindful of the limitations of our methodologies and the inferences we derive from the data.

In particular, the proposed framework suffers from some of the same limitations intrinsic to all dimensional strategies. First, it is possible that researchers may overlook the expressions of religion that are unique to different cultures. For example, research conducted among Hindus (Miller, 1994; Shweder & Much, 1987), Buddhists (Huebner & Garrod, 1991), and various African cultures (Okonkwo, 1997) has documented that for these cultures, morality may be intimately tied to spiritually based issues that are orthogonal to concerns with justice or of community. Hence, when working within these societies, it will be important to acknowledge how, among other manifestations, religion is inextricably woven into ethical decision making. Second, as we have already noted, specific religious dimensions may be more significant for some cultures than others and hence not readily transferable across cultural contexts. For example, the experiential dimension may be more important to members of Hindu and Tao religious traditions when compared to Judeo-Christian traditions. In representing the experiential dimension in universally comparable ways, we may unknowingly and unintentionally fail to understand varied expressions of this religious dimension among these cultures. Third, the dimensional framework assumes that religious manifestations remain somewhat invariant across times and contexts. However, ample evidence demonstrates that both religion and culture undergo continuous modification within contexts of evanescent sociohistorical events (Smart, 1998). It is possible that the proposed approach might fail to account for these changes and may overlook some of the nuances of changing cultural forms. In fact, some cross-cultural researchers argue that in many settings religion is so fully integrated into cultural meanings and everyday practices that at no time can it be meaningfully separated from culture (e.g., Shweder, 1990); accordingly, individuals are best understood within historical and sociocultural contexts (closer to an emic approach) and it may not even be useful to compare individuals across cultures. Proponents of the latter model usually choose to study culture using non-hypothetico-deductive or nonpositivist approaches and may refrain from proposing midlevel theories or using such theories to make cross-cultural comparisons.

In the arena of racial and ethnic relations, the Identity Structure Analysis conceptual framework (ISA) (Weinreich & Saunderson, 2002) is an example of a more sensitive approach to the cognitions, values, and historical development of varied cultural and



subcultural groups, as well as their continuous dynamic evaluations of themselves and other groups. Consistent with this approach, individuals are continuously engaged in resolving their identification conflicts with respect to others in the cultural/subcultural group by reevaluation of their selves and, consequently, broadening their own value system and establishing a new context for the definition of self. Thus, according to the ISA approach, individuals are active agents of change, capable of generating novel ways of defining the world, inventing new institutions and lifestyles, and attenuating traditional value systems. With respect to religion and culture, the ISA approach implies that religious identities and expressions of persons and groups of people also undergo modifications within changing sociohistorical contexts, and obtained patterns of religious beliefs and practices cannot be assumed to persist over time. Thus, the proposed dimensional framework and religious indicators within each of the three levels may have to be frequently tested and revised. Furthermore, the conceptual framework of the ISA approach derives its strength from the meticulous way in which it integrates emic considerations at a fundamental level with etic concerns about universal processes and concepts, such as religious orthodoxy and ethnicity.

Similar to the ISA approach, it is our position that a broadly applicable dimensional approach (etic) where culture is conceptualized as a discrete phenomenon and an approach where culture is conceived to be inseparable from everyday behavior are both needed (Boesch, 1996) and can complement each other (Triandis, 1997). Thorough cultural investigations can inform and complement the use of cultural dimensions discovered in cross-cultural research (Adamopoulos & Lonner, 2001) to enhance sensitivity of the varied expressions of phenomena (e.g., religion) across cultures. Even for a given culture, the etic approach can elucidate connections between cultural dimensions and people's beliefs and practices. We can also compare the significance of cultural dimensions across cultures, increasing our knowledge about cultural expressions that unify and differentiate people across different cultural contexts.

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Religion and culture are often inextricably woven; both must be considered when we try to understand people's beliefs and practices. However, each also has unique significance in influencing the lives of people, and an explicit focus on each variable can further our knowledge about their respective contributions. We provided four major reasons why religion needs to be included in such research: (a) religion is important in the lives of people across cultures, (b) religion has been found to be a significant predictor of salient variables (e.g., physical and mental well-being) across cultures, (c) religion is associated with critical cross-cultural dimensions, and (d) culture also shapes religious beliefs and practices.

To assist cross-cultural researchers in articulating the role of religion in people's lives, we proposed a religious framework highlighting dimensions that underscored the multidimensional nature of religion. Next, we presented a framework for cross-cultural research that integrates consideration of religion. Researchers can conduct studies that include religious indicators at three levels of integration: (a) at Level 1, one includes 'distal' religious measures to avoid confounding explanations and maintain internal validity; (b) at Level 2, distal measures of religion are supplemented by an in-depth exploratory examination of religion; and (c) at Level 3, the religious dimension is studied with the utmost sophistication—theoretically derived religious indicators and a priori hypotheses.

We offer several broad implications derived from our review of religion in cross-cultural psychology. First, cross-cultural researchers need to be cautious about their sample selection procedures, especially with respect to cultural and religious variables and in the conclusions that they draw from those samples. Kağıtçibasi and Poortinga (2000) recommended that researchers not only pay attention to the cultural level of analysis but also indicate “which cultural level” (implying the need to describe specific subpopulations, e.g., by income level, education, acculturation, etc.). The same caution applies to the religious affiliation and religiosity of subpopulations within a defined culture. Second, although our study was geared toward cross-cultural psychologists, psychologists of religion also need to attend to cultural dimensions that shape religious practice and belief. Third, collaboration between researchers of religion and cross-cultural researchers may be needed to develop psychological measures that are theoretically and contextually driven and address the various subtleties in the measurement of religion and culture. We believe that the wealth of knowledge and experience that psychologists in these two different disciplines possess could be shared to increase our understanding of the interaction of religion, psychology, and culture.

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