

Religious quest orientation: Rising against fundamentalism

Reeshma Haji* and Deanna Hall**

Abstract: Quest, or a journey-oriented approach to religion, is one dimension of religiosity that has been consistently related to positive outgroup attitudes. The present research assessed the extent to which individual differences in quest religiosity moderated the effects of a religiosity prime on attitudes toward an outgroup religion. Christian identifying participants ($N = 55$) completed a scale measure of quest religiosity. They then read a vignette that primed quest religiosity or religious fundamentalism. Attitudes toward Muslims and Jews were assessed with evaluation thermometers. Quest religiosity interacted with the prime such that those high in quest appeared to react against the fundamentalism prime by expressing particularly positive outgroup attitudes. Trait quest religiosity appears to buffer against situational factors that are typically associated with negative outgroup attitudes. In addition, implications for research on intergroup relations of religious groups are discussed.

Keywords: Dimensions of religiosity; fundamentalism; intergroup relations; Islamophobia; quest.

Abstrak: Pencarian ataupun pendekatan perjalanan berorientasikan agama merupakan satu dimensi keagamaan yang telah sebatian dengan sikap positif kumpulan penentang. Kajian berikut menilai sejauh mana perbezaan individu terjadi semasa pencarian unsur keagamaan yang menyokong kesan utama keagamaan terhadap sikap-sikap antara kumpulan penentang agama. Peserta-peserta yang beragama Kristian ($N = 55$) memenuhi pengukuran

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sekala terhadap pencarian unsur keagamaan. Mereka seterusnya membaca tulisan yang menjurus kepada pencarian unsur keagamaan ataupun agama fundamentalisme. Sikap terhadap orang Islam dan Yahudi dinilai dengan pengukur-pngukur penilaian yang tertentu. Pencarian unsur keagamaan berinteraksi secara terus dengan sikap positif terhadap kumpulan penentang yang mana mereka yang tinggi pencariannya menunjukkan tentangan yang tinggi juga terhadap agama fundamentalisme. Sifat pencarian unsur keagamaan dilihat sebagai benteng kepada situasi-situasi yang selalunya berkait rapat dengan sikap negatif kumpulan penentang. Disamping itu, implikasi kajian terhadap pertalian antara kumpulan-kumpulan yang berunsurkan agama turut dibincangkan.

Kata Kunci: Dimensi unsur keagamaan; fundamentalisme; hubungan antara kumpulan; Islamofobia; pencarian.

As globalisation increases the frequency of interactions between people of different religious backgrounds, there is a particular impetus for the study of factors that promote and maintain positive attitudes toward those of other faiths. The present study was conducted to assess the extent to which trait quest religiosity, or the tendency to see religion as a personal search for meaning (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991a; 1991b), would act as a buffer against bias-inducing effects of the situation. The situation was manipulated with the use of priming, which refers to techniques that expose people to a stimulus and then assess the effects of that exposure on the subsequent processing of information (e.g., Srull & Wyer, 1980). Specifically, we assessed how trait quest religious orientation would affect outgroup attitudes when people were primed by reading about religious fundamentalism (which is typically associated with negative outgroup attitudes) or quest religiosity (which is typically associated with positive outgroup attitudes). The research was conducted in Canada and we were particularly interested in how members of the religious majority group, Christians, would evaluate a religious minority group, Muslims. Islamophobia is pervasive in Western contexts (e.g., Shaheen, 2003; Van der Noll, 2010). Results of a recent poll suggest that negative views of Muslims have risen in Canada in recent years (Geddes, 2013). Therefore, it is important to understand how individual difference variables, such as trait quest religious orientation, and situational contexts that promote an open-minded or closed-minded approach to religion, interact to affect attitudes toward a negatively stereotyped religious outgroup.

Quest religiosity

Among psychologists who study religion, there has been a discussion of religious orientations or dimensions of religiosity, which basically describe different approaches to religion. Allport (1950) initially described immature and mature religion as developmental stages, though it was possible that adults did not advance beyond immature religion. Whereas immature religion was unreflective and guided by fear or utilitarian motives, mature religion was reflective and guided by higher order (rather than self-serving) goals. Mature religion could transform a person's life because of the meaning of religion for that person. This form of religion was characterised by morality, purpose in life, and understanding that derived from reflection and doubt. Allport contrasted this with immature religion which, because of its unreflective nature, was associated with prejudice and discrimination. He later refined the notions of immature and mature religion into the concepts of extrinsic and intrinsic religious orientations respectively (Allport & Ross, 1967).

Research on extrinsic and intrinsic religiosity and racial prejudice supported the notion that it was indeed extrinsic religious orientation and not intrinsic religious orientation that was related to prejudice (Allport & Ross, 1967). These results were further supported by Kahoe (1974) who found that extrinsic motivations had a strong, positive correlation with authoritarianism and prejudice, whereas intrinsic motivations were only moderately related to these factors.

There was criticism, however, by subsequent researchers (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993) that Allport's measure of religious orientations did not fully capture his original conceptualisations of intrinsic religious orientation. Specifically, it was argued that the Allport and Ross (1967) measure of intrinsic orientation tapped into religious commitment, but not understanding that arose from reflection and doubt. The introduction of the quest orientation was an attempt to capture this aspect of religiosity (Batson et al., 1991a, 1991b). Thus, Batson et al. (1993) proposed that there were actually three types of religious orientations; extrinsic (religion as a means to an end), intrinsic (religion as an end in itself), and quest (a journey to religious understanding). They gave examples of persons who typified the quest orientation, including Siddhartha (Buddha), Gandhi, and Malcolm X. Further, they

argued that it was quest orientation and not intrinsic orientation that was consistently related to tolerance. Batson et al. (1993) further clarified that, rather than a typology, their view of religiosity consisted of dimensions that could be combined to describe a single individual.

Rather than in terms of absolutes, those high in quest religiosity approach religion as a continuous search for understanding and meaning (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991a, 1991b). The present research focused on quest religiosity, because it has consistently been related to more positive outgroup attitudes. Quest religiosity was found by Leak and Finken (2011) to be negatively correlated with prejudice based on race, sexual orientation, and religion. Batson, Flink, Schoenrade, Fultz, and Pych (1986) found that having an open-ended (or quest-oriented) view of religion showed a negative correlation with racial prejudice by white participants in an overt condition, as well as in a covert condition (which were both measured by choosing between sitting in a theatre with a white person or in a theatre with a black person). In the overt condition, the same movie was playing in both theatre locations, whereas in the covert condition there were different movies playing at each location. These results of quest-oriented individuals were in comparison to intrinsic religious individuals, who demonstrated an obvious preference to sitting near the white individual in the overt condition, but no preferences in the covert condition. Reviews of the literature confirm that quest religiosity is associated with openness toward other groups (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993; Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005).

There appears to be at least one situation, however, when quest-oriented individuals may express negative outgroup attitudes. Goldfried and Miner (2002) suggested that people who are high in quest religiosity may express prejudice toward those with a religious fundamentalist view. When given the opportunity to assist a peer who was presented as holding either religious fundamentalist beliefs or one with unspecified beliefs, participants who scored high on quest religiosity showed an inclination towards helping the person with non-specified beliefs over helping the person who espoused religious fundamentalism. Given the general finding that those who are quest-oriented are more open to others, it is conceivable that they may respond in ways that are more accepting

of others, even in situations where other people may be more likely to express prejudice.

Religious fundamentalism

According to Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992), religious fundamentalism is an attitude towards religion that is stiff and unwavering about beliefs, truth of teachings, and the special relationship with the deity that followers receive. In their study, they found that those high in religious fundamentalism showed attitudes that were more prejudicial, with a lack of compassion and openness. Based on this, it is conceivable that priming religious fundamentalism could alter a person's current religious state enough to affect how they feel about other religious groups. In the present study, we expected that the fundamentalism prime would have just this sort of effect by putting people in a fundamentalist mindset and making them less accepting of those with other religious beliefs.

There have been a number of studies that discuss the relationship between religious fundamentalism and prejudice (Hill, 2010; Hill, Terrell, Cohen, & Nagoshi, 2010; Hunsberger, 1995, 1996; Hunsberger, Owusu, & Duck, 1999; Johnson et al., 2011; Laythe, Finkel, & Kirkpatrick, 2001; Rowatt & Franklin, 2004; Rowatt et al., 2006). Crowner (2007) found religious fundamentalism to be significantly and positively correlated with religious proscription of racism, prejudice toward homosexuals, and hostile sexism toward women. Leak and Finken (2011) found religious fundamentalism to be weakly correlated with prejudice towards African Americans, strongly correlated with prejudice towards Muslims, and very strongly with prejudice against homosexuals.

Although there could be numerous reasons for the relationship between religious fundamentalism and prejudice, in Altemeyer's (2003) study on why religious fundamentalists tend to be prejudiced, a correlation between religious fundamentalism and religious ethnocentrism was found with an "us" versus "them" attitude seemingly taught at a young age. This study showed a correlation between religious fundamentalism and prejudice against racial-ethnic minorities and religious ethnocentrism and found that those high in religious fundamentalism were most likely to make judgements against religions other than their own.

Overview

There is some evidence that priming religious concepts can lead to prejudiced outgroup attitudes. For example, participants primed with Christian religious concepts such as Bible and faith expressed more subtle and overt prejudice towards a minority racial group compared to those who received neutral priming words such as shirt and butter (Johnson, Rowatt, & LaBouff, 2010). The present study extended this line of research by priming different approaches to religion with the expectation that priming religious fundamentalism would lead to more outgroup prejudice.

A primary interest in the present research was assessing the extent to which trait quest religiosity acted as a protective factor against the prejudice-inducing effects of the situation. Given that past research has shown that religious fundamentalism is associated with negative outgroup attitudes, we expected that exposure to a religious fundamentalism prime would elicit negative outgroup attitudes. Participants completed a scale measure of trait quest religiosity and then read a story about someone who had a fundamentalist approach to religion (fundamentalism prime) or a quest oriented approach to religion (quest prime). Christian attitudes toward those of religious outgroups were assessed on self-report scales. The selected outgroups, Muslims and Jews, both represent minority groups in the Canadian context. In 2011, Muslims comprised about 3% of the population of Canada and Jews comprised about 1% of the population (Allen & Boyce, 2013). We were specifically interested in attitudes toward Muslims because of growing concerns over Islamophobia in Western contexts. We also assessed attitudes toward Jews who comprise another salient minority religious group in Canada. Trait quest religiosity was expected to moderate the results of the priming manipulation. Whereas fundamentalism priming was expected to lead to more negative outgroup attitudes, we expected that those high in quest religiosity would be resilient to this effect.

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from the undergraduate research participation pool at a college campus in Ontario, Canada. They received course credit (0.5%) for their participation. Eighty-six participants (55 Christians, 6

Muslims, 3 Buddhists, 2 Hindus, and 20 of other religious affiliations) completed the study. To enable clear interpretations of group-related attitudes and because they represented the largest group of participants, only the Christian participants were included in the statistical analysis. Of this group, there were 8 men, 47 women, and a mean age of 20.09 ($SD = 3.02$).

Measures

Religious Life Inventory (RLI-R): The RLI-R (Hills, Francis, & Robbins, 2005) is a 24-item questionnaire that measures the extrinsic, intrinsic, and quest dimensions of religiosity. Only data from the 8-item quest subscale were included in the present research. Items such as “there are many religious issues on which my views are still changing” were rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1, *strongly agree* to 7, *strongly disagree*). The Cronbach’s alpha for the present sample was .72.

Evaluation Thermometer: The evaluation thermometer used was a 10-point scale (0-10°, extremely unfavourable, to 90-100°, extremely favourable) adapted from Haddock, Zanna, and Esses’ (1993) measure. This scale is used to measure an individual’s overall warmth toward a target. Participants were asked to report on the degree of warmth felt toward Muslims and Jews.

Procedure

Participants were tested in groups of up to three participants at a time by an undergraduate student experimenter. They were randomly assigned to conditions based on a draw of numbers, using sampling without replacement. Upon arrival, participants were seated at individual computer cubicles. After participants had given informed consent, the experimenter gave brief instructions to answer the questions on the computer and to remain seated until after all participants had finished. Participants first completed individual difference measures, including the RLI-R.

Religious Priming Manipulation: The priming manipulation consisted of two levels: religious fundamentalism and quest religiosity. Each level involved a brief, one paragraph vignette about a fictional person. The religious fundamentalism prime depicted a young man by the name of David who had rigid religious beliefs, and who viewed his religious tradition as the only path to salvation. The quest

religiosity prime described a young man with the same name, but was continuously further developing his understanding of his faith and who was trying to learn from other religious traditions as well as his own. The fundamentalism vignette was based heavily on Altemeyer and Hunsberger's (2004) Revised Religious Fundamentalism scale, and the quest vignette was based on the quest subscale of the RLI-R (Hills et al., 2005). Participants had exactly one minute to read the vignette, after which the screen automatically advanced to the next part of the study.

There were then three manipulation check questions related to the religious prime manipulation. Participants were asked, "How open is David to teachings of other religions?", "How firm is David in his religious beliefs?", and "To what extent does David see his religious journey as clear-cut?" These questions were rated on 5-point scales (1 = *not at all*, 5 = *extremely*) and a mean score was computed after the questions were coded in the direction of open-mindedness.

After completing a filler-writing task, participants completed the evaluation thermometer and the social distance scale to assess their attitudes towards people of the Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faiths. Next, they completed demographic questions. These were followed by an open-ended question that probed for suspicion about the purpose of the experiment. Once participants had been orally debriefed, they were informed that there were informational pamphlets on several online multi-faith groups that were free for them to take if they so choose. If participants chose to take a pamphlet, it was seen as an extension of their increased positive outgroup attitudes.

Results

The descriptive statistics and alpha reliabilities for the primary measures are presented in Table 1. Because the focus was on outgroup attitudes, only data for outgroup attitudes are presented.

We verified that participants who were exposed to the fundamentalism prime viewed David as less open-minded than did those who were exposed to the quest prime. A significant *t*-test for the manipulation check suggested that this was the case, $t(54) = 14.39$, $p = .001$. Participants exposed to the fundamentalism vignette rated David as less open-minded ($M = 1.33$) than did those who were exposed to the quest vignette ($M = 3.62$).

Table 1: Descriptive statistics

Variable	Mean	SD	A
Quest	4.29	.93	.72
EVM	5.70	2.66	--
EVJ	6.79	2.52	--

Note: N = 55; SD = Standard Deviation; α = Cronbach's alpha; Quest = trait quest religiosity based on Religious Life Inventory subscale; EVM = Evaluation Thermometer towards Muslims; EVJ = Evaluation Thermometer towards Jews.

Quest by religiosity priming interactions

Moderated multiple regression analysis (Aiken & West, 1991) was used to assess two-way categorical (religious priming manipulation) by continuous (individual differences in quest religiosity) variable interactions. The religious prime was effect-coded (1 = quest, -1 = fundamentalism) and quest was centred at the mean. Simple slopes analyses were conducted at one standard deviation above and below the mean of quest.

The overall outgroup evaluations were assessed by the participants' answers to the Evaluation Thermometers towards both those of the Muslim and those of the Jewish faith. There was a marginal main effect of prime on overall evaluation of people of the Muslim faith, $\beta = -1.33$, $t(51) = -1.87$, $p = .07$. There was also a significant association between trait quest and overall evaluations of Muslims, $\beta = 1.92$, $t(51) = 2.68$, $p = .01$. These effects were, however, qualified by a significant Religious Prime x Trait Quest interaction, $\beta = -2.18$, $t(51) = -2.53$, $p = .02$.

As shown in Figure 1, Christians who were high in trait quest and exposed to the fundamentalism prime tended to express the most positive evaluations of Muslims. Simple slopes analyses were conducted at one standard deviation above and below the mean of quest. The simple slope of the religious prime was significant at high trait quest religiosity, $\beta = -3.25$, $t(51) = -4.06$, $p < .01$. Among those high in quest religiosity, the fundamentalism prime elicited more positive views of people of the Muslim faith than did the quest prime. The simple slope of the religious prime was not significant at low trait quest.

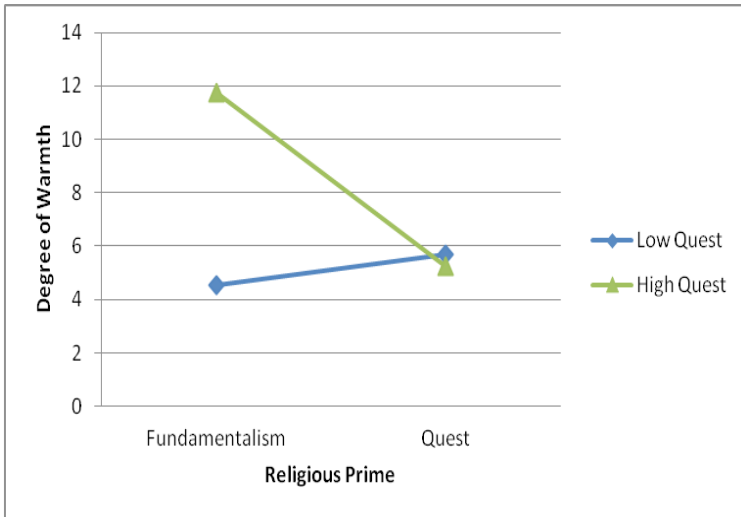


Figure 1. Christian overall evaluations of people of the Muslim faith as a function of religious priming manipulation and trait quest religiosity. Higher scores indicate more positive attitudes.

For the Christians' overall evaluations of people of the Jewish faith, there was an approaching significant association between trait quest and overall evaluation, $\beta = 1.20$, $t(51) = 1.78$, $p = .08$. This was qualified by a significant Religious Prime \times Trait Quest interaction, $\beta = -1.94$, $t(51) = -2.40$, $p = .02$.

As shown in Figure 2, Christians who were high in trait quest and exposed to the fundamentalism prime tended to express the most positive evaluations of people of the Jewish faith. The simple slope of the religious prime was significant at high trait quest religiosity, $\beta = -2.28$, $t(51) = -3.02$, $p < .01$. Among those high in quest religiosity, the fundamentalism prime elicited more positive views of people of the Jewish faith than did the quest prime. Although the simple slope was not significant at low quest, the simple slope was marginally significant at very low quest (2 SD below the mean), $\beta = 2.84$, $t(51) = 1.87$, $p = .07$. Among Christians low in quest, those who were exposed to the fundamentalism prime tended toward more negative overall evaluations of those of the Jewish faith.

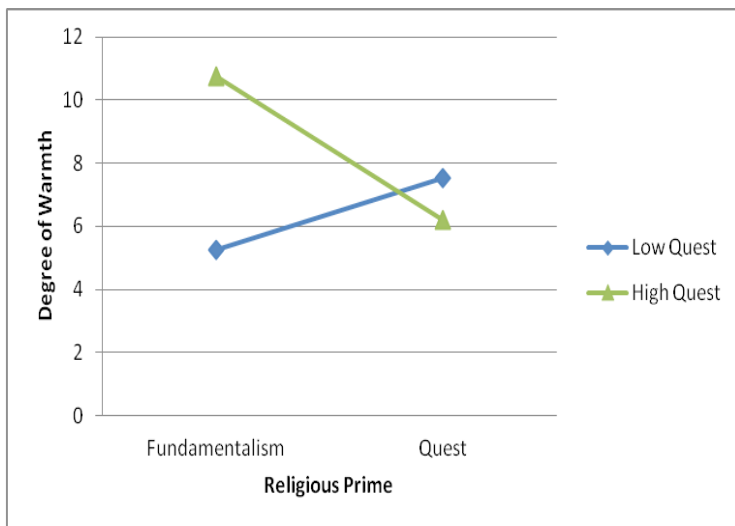


Figure 2. Christian overall evaluations of people of the Jewish faith as a function of the religious priming manipulation and trait quest religiosity. Higher scores indicate more positive attitudes.

Discussion

Trait quest religiosity acts as a protective factor against certain situational factors that can elicit prejudice. The present research comprises preliminary evidence that trait quest religiosity makes people resilient to the prejudice-inducing effects of exposure to religious fundamentalism.

Religious fundamentalism has been linked to prejudice in a number of past studies (Hill et al., 2010; Hunsberger, 1995; Johnson et al., 2011; Rowatt & Franklin, 2004; Rowatt et al., 2006) and thus the fundamentalism prime was expected to lead to more negative attitudes toward religious outgroups. Although the simple slopes were generally non-significant, this appeared to be the pattern for those low in trait quest religiosity. Christians who were low in quest and who were primed with fundamentalism tended toward less warmth toward those of the Jewish faith. The stronger and more consistent result was that those who were high in quest reacted against the fundamentalism prime by expressing particularly warm overall outgroup evaluations toward those of the Muslim and Jewish faiths. This converges with correlational research that found that quest religiosity has been associated with more positive attitudes towards outgroups and more general openness (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992).

It could be argued that the religious fundamentalism prime created an almost defensive reaction in those with high trait quest. Specifically, in an effort to prove their own openness those high in quest may have reacted strongly against the religious fundamentalism prime. This contrasts with some past research that found that quest was negatively correlated with religious defensiveness (Beck, 2006). However, Goldfried and Miner (2002) found that those high in quest religiosity tended to show prejudice towards those with a religious fundamentalism stance, which would be consistent with a defensive reaction to the religious fundamentalism prime in the present research.

The present research also suggests that exposure to a short vignette about someone with a fundamentalist approach to religion can affect how people react to those of other faiths. Findings from the manipulation check demonstrate that participants who were exposed to the fundamentalism prime did indeed view David as less open-minded than did those who were exposed to the quest prime. Contrary to our expectation, the fundamentalism prime did not have significant effects on those low in quest. Nonetheless, participants high in trait quest reacted against the fundamentalism prime.

When considering the implications of the current results, some limitations of the research should be noted. The research was conducted with a young adult sample in a moderately sized city in Canada, where at least some exposure to religious diversity was likely. It is possible that more negative outgroup attitudes would be observed among older adults and those with less exposure to religious diversity. Additionally, although the manipulation check supported the effectiveness of our priming manipulation, perhaps a more sensitive measure would have detected positive effects of the quest prime and stronger effects of the fundamentalism prime among those low in quest. The inclusion of a measure of implicit attitudes, such as an Implicit Association Test (IAT), would be informative in subsequent research on the combined effects of trait quest and religiosity priming. Indeed, past research using religiosity priming has detected effects on implicit measures (Rowatt, Franklin, Cotton, 2005; Rowatt et al., 2006).

Conclusion

The present research indicates that trait quest religiosity can be associated with extreme reactions, but these are associated with

favourable outgroup attitudes rather than negative outgroup attitudes. Trait quest appeared to be associated with opposition to fundamentalism. Those high in quest seemed to express especially positive outgroup attitudes after being exposed to the fundamentalism prime. These findings add to the evidence that religious priming can affect outgroup attitudes. Further, the present findings demonstrate that religious orientations, in this case quest religiosity, can be important predictors of the effects of religious priming. Specifically, trait quest may be associated with taking a stand against ethnocentric views of religion, resulting in especially favourable views of other groups. These results were observed not only with attitudes towards Jews, but also with attitudes toward Muslims, who may comprise a more salient outgroup in the cultural context of the research. One important implication of the current research is that although individual differences in religious orientations predict religious prejudice or tolerance, in the case of quest orientation they can also predict resilience and opposition to situational contexts that promote closed-minded views of religion. Perhaps one key to religious tolerance in multi-faith settings is to provide a context that promotes religious quest.

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