

The Psychology of Religion & Prejudice



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The Psychology of Religion and Prejudice



“The role of religion is paradoxical. It makes and unmakes prejudice. While the creeds of the great religions are universalistic, all stressing brotherhood; the practices of these creeds are frequently divisive and brutal.”

~ Gordon Allport (1954, p. 444)

Theoretically, incorporation of religious teachings should lead to more positive attitudes toward others (e.g., love your neighbor → acceptance, liking, compassion), but that’s not always what happens

The Psychology of Religion and Prejudice



- Early studies reveal positive associations between religiousness and prejudice....but it's not that simple.
- There are different dimensions of religiousness
 - Religious Fundamentalism
 - Christian Orthodoxy
 - Intrinsic, Extrinsic, Quest Religious Orientation
- There are also different measures and forms of prejudice
 - Explicit vs. implicit measures
 - Proscribed vs. non-proscribed prejudices (prohibited vs. allowed)

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- Study 1: Predictors of Implicit Racial Prejudice
- Study 2: Predictors of Implicit Sexual Prejudice
- Study 3: Religion and Prejudice in a National Sample of Americans

Study 1

Predictors of Implicit Racial Prejudice

Rowatt & Franklin (2004)



- 158 college students completed a race-IAT

Table 1. Sequence of IAT Trial Blocks

Block	Number of trials	Practice or test	Left category	Right category
1	20	Practice	Black	White
2	20	Practice	Pleasant	Unpleasant
3	20	Practice	Black or pleasant	White or unpleasant
4	40	Test	Black or pleasant	White or unpleasant
5	20	Practice	White	Black
6	20	Practice	White or pleasant	Black or unpleasant
7	40	Test	White or pleasant	Black or unpleasant

Note. Whether Black or White was paired with pleasant first was counterbalanced. Whether Black appeared on the left versus right first was counterbalanced.

Study 1

Predictors of Implicit Racial Prejudice

Rowatt & Franklin (2004)



- Self-report measures of:
 - Religious Fundamentalism
 - Christian Orthodoxy
 - Religious Orientations (intrinsic, extrinsic, quest)
 - Right-wing authoritarianism
 - Social Desirability

Predictors of Implicit Racial Prejudice Rowatt & Franklin (2004)



TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics and Zero-Order Intercorrelations Between Measures of Religiosity,
Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Socially Desirable Responding, and Implicit Racial Prejudice Among
White College Students

<i>Variable</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>12</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	
1. Religious fundamentalism	—												5.42	1.42	.89
2. Christian orthodoxy	.58												6.39	0.98	.89
3. Intrinsic religious orientation	.70	.55											3.88	0.77	.87
4. Extrinsic religious orientation	-.56	-.46	-.68										2.09	0.59	.79
5. Extrinsic-personal religious orientation	-.35	-.30	-.42	.81									2.49	0.80	.58
6. Extrinsic-social religious orientation	-.18	-.21	-.24	.67	.44								2.00	0.72	.59
7. Quest religious orientation	-.39	-.24	-.21	.24	.15	.12							4.85	1.12	.73
8. Right-wing authoritarianism	.71	.50	.53	-.37	-.27	.03	-.31						5.41	0.92	.87
9. BIDR–impression management	.15	.29	.35	-.39	-.22	-.21	-.03	.07					0.22	0.17	.76
10. BIDR–self-deceptive enhancement	.01	.11	.15	-.16	-.08	-.11	.04	.06	.58				0.26	0.14	.62
11. Modern racism	.13	.04	.05	.20	.09	.37	-.05	.31	-.13	.00			3.12	1.03	.48
12. Race-IAT effect (log-latency)	.10	-.08	.06	.04	.06	.07	-.15	.20	.03	-.02	.15	—	0.36	0.17	—

Notes. BIDR = Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding; IAT = Implicit Association Test; $n = 111$. For $r > .19$, $p < .05$; for $r > .24$, $p < .01$; for $r > .35$, $p < .001$.

Note: Higher values of race-IAT effect reflect more negative implicit associations

Predictors of Implicit Racial Prejudice Rowatt & Franklin (2004)



TABLE 2

Multiple Regression of the Race–Implicit Association Test Effect on Measures of Religiosity, Right-Wing Authoritarianism, and Impression Management

<i>Independent Variables</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Christian orthodoxy	–.26	–2.15	.03
Right-wing authoritarianism	.31	2.22	.03
Religious fundamentalism	.02	0.13	.90
BIDR-impression management	.08	0.76	.45

Note. BIDR = Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding.

Note: Higher values of race-IAT effect reflect more negative implicit associations

Study 2

Predictors of Implicit Sexual Prejudice

Rowatt et al (2006), Tsang & Rowatt (2007)



- 124 college students completed:
 - Sexual Orientation IAT
 - Attitudes Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Scale
 - Same measures of RF, RWA, CO, social desirability

Predictors of Implicit Sexual Prejudice

Rowatt et al (2006)



TABLE 3
MULTIPLE REGRESSION OF IMPLICIT ATTITUDE ON RELIGIOUS
PERSONALITY DIMENSIONS

Personality Measures	Standardized Beta (β)	t	p	Unstandardized Beta (B)	95 Percent Confidence Intervals for B	
					Lower	Upper
Religious fundamentalism	-0.38	-2.67	0.01	-0.06	-0.10	-0.01
Christian orthodoxy	0.06	0.41	n.s.	0.01	-0.06	0.09
Right-wing authoritarianism	0.10	0.83	n.s.	0.03	-0.04	0.09
BIDR-impression management	0.00	0.30	n.s.	0.00	-0.26	0.27

Note: Higher values on the Implicit Association Test measure represented a more positive attitude toward homosexual men relative to heterosexuals. BIDR = Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (i.e., socially desirable responding). The regression structure coefficients between “implicit attitude toward gay men relative to heterosexuals” and the predictors in this regression were as follows: RF ($r_s = -0.82$), CO ($r_s = -0.47$), BIDR-IM ($r_s = -0.21$), and RWA ($r_s = -0.19$).

Note: Higher values of the IAT effect reflect more positive implicit associations

Study 3

Religion and Prejudice in a National Sample of Americans

Rowatt et al (2009)



- 1588 adults completed Baylor Religion Survey administered by Gallup Org. (phone, print survey) in 2007.
- Religiousness = freq of attendance, scripture reading, prayer, and self-reported religiosity.
- Social Distance Scales were used to estimate racial attitudes (e.g., how comfortable would you be working with, if family moved next door, dining with, daughter married someone who is Black, Asian, Hispanic).
- Attitude Toward Homosexuals was assessed with 4-items

Study 3 findings



Table 3
Correlations Between General Religiousness, Individual Differences, and Prejudice in a National Sample

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. General religiousness	—											
2. Right-wing authoritarianism	.27**	—										
3. Political ideology	-.39**	-.40**	—									
4. Gender (1 = male; 2 = female)	.18**	.05*	.10**	—								
5. Age	.09**	.16**	-.08**	.02	—							
6. Race (0 = non-White; 1 = White)	.04	.08**	.06*	.03	-.10**	—						
7. Education	-.04	-.35**	.16**	-.03	-.07**	-.03	—					
8. Household income	-.11**	-.19**	-.01	-.07**	-.02	-.14**	.39**	—				
9. Protestant (0 = no; 1 = yes)	.48**	.35**	-.32**	.10**	.11**	.04	-.17**	-.11**	—			
10. Against gay marriage/unions	.54**	.41**	-.56**	-.04	.09**	-.03	-.22**	-.15**	.40**	—		
11. People choose to be homosexuals	.42**	.28**	-.46**	-.18**	-.05	.03	-.15**	-.10**	.28**	.64**	—	
12. Attitudes toward homosexuals	.53**	.39**	-.57**	-.12**	.03	.00	-.20**	-.14**	.38**	.92**	.89**	—
13. General racial prejudice	.08*	.31**	-.20**	-.03	.23**	.02	-.23**	-.22**	.20**	.29**	.18**	.26**

* $p < .01$. ** $p < .001$.

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Tentative Conclusions

- Dimensions of religiousness correlate + with non-proscribed prejudice at both implicit and explicit levels of measurement.
- Religiousness is negligibly associated with measures of explicit racial prejudice (Rowatt et al. 2009).
- Christian Orthodoxy and implicit racial prejudice are negatively associated (Rowatt & Franklin, 2004)

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Why are dimensions of religion and prejudice associated?

- Technically, cannot say...
- Religious persons or organizations may socialize some social attitudes (e.g., discourage some forms of prejudice, encourage negative attitudes toward value-violating persons/groups.)
- Current experiments: Using priming methods to activate mental representations of religion and observing racial attitudes.