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Culture, Personality, and Religiosity

Vassilis Saroglou

Not all people around the world are religious; in all societies, there are believers and nonbelievers who coexist. Among both the religious and nonbelievers, not all hold their beliefs, worldviews, and values in exactly the same way or for exactly the same motives. This is true both within and across societies and cultural and religious groups. The present chapter focuses on the interplay between personality, religiosity, and culture. Specifically, it examines whether the personality characteristics associated with religiosity are universal or different across cultural contexts, or, more exactly, the extent to which they are both universal and culturally different.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first, short introductory section exposes the ways to conceptualize the links between personality and religiosity. A second section examines whether the personality characteristics associated with religiosity are universal, that is, found not only in Western contexts and groups of Christian tradition but also in non-Western societies and other religions. It also examines the question of isomorphism, that is, whether the personality correlates of religiosity at the individual level are the same as those at the collective (country, region) level. A third major section focuses on cultural differences between countries, world regions, or large civilizational zones in the strength or even direction of the personality-religiosity associations. Importantly, it provides theory and interpretation of the observed cross-cultural differences in the personality characteristics associated with religiosity. It also briefly examines applications of the above cross-cultural differences for some key domains of human psychology, such as morality, prosocial behavior, intergroup relations, sexuality, and well-being. Finally, the General Discussion closes with an integrative synthesis and questions for future investigations.

PERSONALITY TRAITS AND RELIGIOSITY: AT THE INTERPLAY OF GENETIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES

During the 20th century, researchers on personality and religiosity usually assumed that religious beliefs and practices would have an effect on people's personality (e.g., Allport & Ross, 1967). However, research on conversion indicates that conversion's effects in changing basic personality traits, such as the Big Five dimensions of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience, are rather non-existent (Paloutzian, Richardson, & Rambo, 1999), even if retrospectively reported (Halama & Lačná, 2011). Rather, changes associated with conversion involve less basic individual characteristics like identity, values, goals, and self-concept, which are typically perceived as more culture dependent. In Five-Factor Theory (McCrae & Costa, 2008), the latter are considered characteristic adaptations of the basic traits (but see Kandler, Zimmermann, & McAdams, 2014, for a criticism). Similarly, longitudinal evidence that religiosity impacts personality later in life exists, but is weak—at least much weaker than evidence attesting the opposite causal direction in which personality longitudinally impacts religiosity (Saroglou, 2010, for a review; see, in addition, Gebauer et al., 2014, Study 3; Huuskes, Ciarrochi, & Heaven, 2013).

Thus, today, on the basis of Five-Factor Theory, researchers tend to consider religiosity as one among many cultural characteristic adaptations of basic personality tendencies (Emmons, Barrett, & Schnitker, 2008; Saroglou, 2010; but see Piedmont & Wilkins, 2013). More precisely, it has been argued that individual differences in religiosity result from the interaction of personality traits and corresponding values with contextual and situational factors. The latter factors mainly involve the availability and salience of religion across cultures, as well as negative or positive life events and experiences that importantly affect the self (Saroglou, 2010, 2015). In other words, when religion is culturally available, mainly through socialization, and/or salient—that is, socially desirable or particularly appealing in a given emotional context—people with particular levels on certain personality traits will be more inclined to be, become, or remain religious. In the same contexts, other people, with different levels on these personality traits, will be more prone to be, become, or remain, nonreligious.

Because of this person \times environment interaction, it is expected that the personality-religiosity association should not be high overall. Religiosity is not a direct, automatic “translation” of personality traits in the existential-spiritual domain. In secular cultural contexts, people who have been socialized as nonbelievers, and who have personality characteristics that in religious contexts would predict religiosity versus nonbelief, will find alternatives to

religion—ideologies, activities, groups—to express these particular personality dispositions (Saroglou, 2010).

A slight alternative to the conceptualization of personality as impacting religiosity, at least under some conditions, is that religiosity and certain personality tendencies are influenced by common genetic predispositions, very likely through common underlying biological and physiological processes—still to be identified. There is increasing evidence in favor of this perspective, with genetic influences on personality—including low aggression (Koenig, McGue, Krueger, & Bouchard, 2007), needs to belong and reduce uncertainty (G. J. Lewis & Bates, 2013), and agreeableness and low openness (Kandler & Riemann, 2013)—importantly also accounting for genetic influences on religiosity. Going further, one can reasonably assume that personality and religiosity entertain reciprocal causal influences: if some personality traits facilitate religiosity versus atheism, then being religious or spiritual versus atheist may in turn solidify these personality dispositions (Saroglou, 2015).

Note that considering religiosity as an adaptation of basic personality tendencies, or as interdependent with personality because of common genetic and environmental influences, does not mean that religiosity—or, more broadly, spirituality—is, strictly speaking, a personality-like dimension of human existence. Like political or artistic attitudes and preferences, religiosity is best characterized, conceptually and empirically, as a sui-generis individual difference construct, proximal but not reducible to values, identity, and social and existential attitudes (Ashton, 2013; Leung & Bond, 2004; Saucier, 2000). In fact, compared to personality traits, values, as conceptually more proximal to religion, explain more variance of individual differences in religiosity (Roccas, Sagiv, Schwartz, & Knafo, 2002; Saroglou & Muñoz-García, 2008). Moreover, in addition to personality and values, differences in cognition such as slightly lower average intelligence or aspects of it (Zuckerman, Silberman, & Hall, 2013; but see Webster & Duffy, 2016, on the role of cultural factors), or preference for holistic and intuitive rather than analytic thinking (Gervais & Norenzayan, 2012), also predict religiosity versus nonbelief.

RELIGIOUS PERSONALITY: UNIVERSALS ACROSS CULTURES

To the degree that human psychology has some universal features, that religious expressions have been attested in probably all human societies, and that the psychological functions of religion seem to be rooted to basic psychological needs, including evolutionary ones (e.g., security, status acquisition, coalition formation, and mate retention), we have to anticipate

some universality in the psychological characteristics of religiosity (Saroglou & Cohen, 2013; see also Johnson, Li, & Cohen, 2015; Norenzayan, 2016). This section will examine evidence in favor of cultural universals in the personality-religiosity relationships.

Studies with the Big Five, HEXACO, and Eysenck Models

Most recent studies on personality and religiosity used the dominant Big Five personality model that distinguishes five major traits: extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness. Some very recent studies used the HEXACO model that mainly integrates a sixth dimension, that is, honesty-humility. More traditional research has used the Eysenck model that encompasses extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism, which is partly a blend of low agreeableness and low conscientiousness.

Two meta-analyses showed that religiosity is rather consistently associated with high Big Five agreeableness and conscientiousness (Saroglou, 2010), or with low psychoticism (Lodi-Smith & Roberts, 2007). The first meta-analysis was conducted on 71 studies with a total of 21,715 participants from 19 nations (for general religiosity measures: 49 samples, total $N = 15,246$ participants). The second one was conducted on 19 studies from eight countries ($N = 3,737$). In both meta-analyses, the vast majority of studies were from Western nations of historically Christian tradition.

The mean effect sizes (see Table 6.1) were modest but not negligible: $r = .19$, $.16$, and $-.18$, respectively, for agreeableness, conscientiousness, and psychoticism. Importantly, as shown in Saroglou (2010), the results were consistent across age groups, genders, countries, religious traditions, measures of personality, measures and forms of religiosity (personal general religiosity, spirituality and mature faith, and fundamentalism/orthodoxy), and even cohorts (data from the 1940s to 2000s). Moreover, religiosity was overall unrelated to extraversion, neuroticism, and openness to experience, with respective mean $r = .07$, $-.04$, and $-.04$. However, openness to experience showed opposite relationships with religious fundamentalism ($r = -.21$) and spirituality and mature faith ($r = .18$). Finally, when focusing on many more specific personality traits/facets instead of the broad personality factors (e.g., low openness to values instead of Openness; low excitement-seeking and high warmth instead of Extraversion), the explained variance of religiosity increases up to 15–25% (Kandler & Riemann, 2013; see also Paunonen, 1998; Saroglou & Muñoz-García, 2008).

Several additional studies recently used the HEXACO model of personality, which includes a sixth factor, honesty-humility, combining, but not reducible to, elements from Big Five agreeableness and conscientiousness. This factor emerged more clearly when focusing, in lexical studies, on languages other than English and German (Ashton, 2013). These studies,

Table 6.1 Average Associations of Religiosity with the Big Five Personality Traits in Meta-Analyses and International Studies

Studies	Countries (samples)	Total N	Religiosity Measures	Personality Measures	E	A	C	N	O
Lodi-Smith and Roberts (2007)	8 (<i>k</i> : 5–30)	1,805–12,117	Various measures	Various measures	–	.16	.09	.00	–
Saroglou (2010)	19 (<i>k</i> = 49)	15,246	Various measures	Various measures	.07	.19	.16	–.04	–.04
Leung et al. (2012)	11	2,217	Religiosity as social axiom	Mini-IPIP	–	.18	–	–	–
Gebauer et al. (2014, Study 1a)	66	1,129,334	Religious self-identification (1 item)	Big Five Inventory	.03	.15	.10	.04	–.01
Schmitt and Fuller (2015)	56 (in 10 world regions)	16,712	Religious self-identification (1 item)	Big Five Inventory	.04	.16	.13	–.04	–.02

Note. E = extraversion; A = agreeableness; C = conscientiousness; N = neuroticism; O = openness to experience; P = psychoticism; IPIP = International Personality Item Pool. Correlation or regression coefficients $\geq .10$ are in bold.

conducted in Canada, Iran, Malaysia, New Zealand, Poland, and the United States, confirmed that (intrinsic) religiosity is positively related to HEXACO agreeableness, honesty-humility, and/or conscientiousness (Aghababaei, 2012; Aghababaei et al., 2016; Aghababaei, Wasserman, & Nannini, 2014; Lee, Ogunfowora, & Ashton, 2005; Sibley et al., 2011; Silvia, Nusbaum, & Beaty, 2014). Note that occasional lower associations of religiosity with HEXACO agreeableness in these studies than with humility-honesty may be due to the fact that HEXACO agreeableness, in addition to clearly prosocial facets, incorporates some emotional facets of Big Five neuroticism—a factor known to be overall unrelated to religiosity.

Studies with Non-Christian Western Samples and Recent International Studies

Whereas the vast majority of studies included in the above two meta-analyses were based on Western samples of Protestant and Catholic tradition, single studies with participants from other religious traditions and cultures overall confirm the above personality profile of religiosity. The same pattern of results is attested in recent large international studies that, unlike the two meta-analyses, used the same measures for both religiosity and personality across an important number of countries in different parts of the world (see Table 6.1).

Indeed, individual monocultural studies have shown that religiosity is related to agreeableness, conscientiousness, low psychoticism, or honesty-humility among Christian Orthodox in Greece (Youtika, Joseph, & Diduca, 1999) and Romania (Krauss, Streib, Keller, & Silver, 2006), Jews in Israel (Francis & Katz, 1992; Francis, Katz, Yablon, & Robbins, 2004; Roccas et al., 2002), Muslims in Kuwait (Abdel-Khalek, 2013), Iran (Aghababaei et al., 2014; Aguilar-Vafae & Moghanloo, 2008), Malaysia (Aghababaei et al., 2016), and United Kingdom (Wilde & Joseph, 1997), Buddhists in Belgium (Saroglou & Dupuis, 2006), and Hindus in the United Kingdom (Francis, Robbins, Santosh, & Bhanot, 2008).

In a study in 11 countries across different world regions (total $N = 2,217$), Leung et al. (2012), using the Mini-International Personality Item Pool to measure the Big Five personality traits, found that religiosity, as one of five social axioms, was positively associated with agreeableness in all countries studied, and significantly so in eight of them (see Table 6.1). This association held also for countries culturally and/or religiously perceived as different from the West, including East Asian (China and Hong Kong; see also Chen, Fok, Bond, & Matsumoto, 2006, and Lam, Bond, Chen, & Wu, 2010) and African (Ghana and South Africa) countries.

More recently, Schmitt and Fuller (2015), using the Big Five Inventory (John & Srivastava, 1999), analyzed data from the International Sexuality

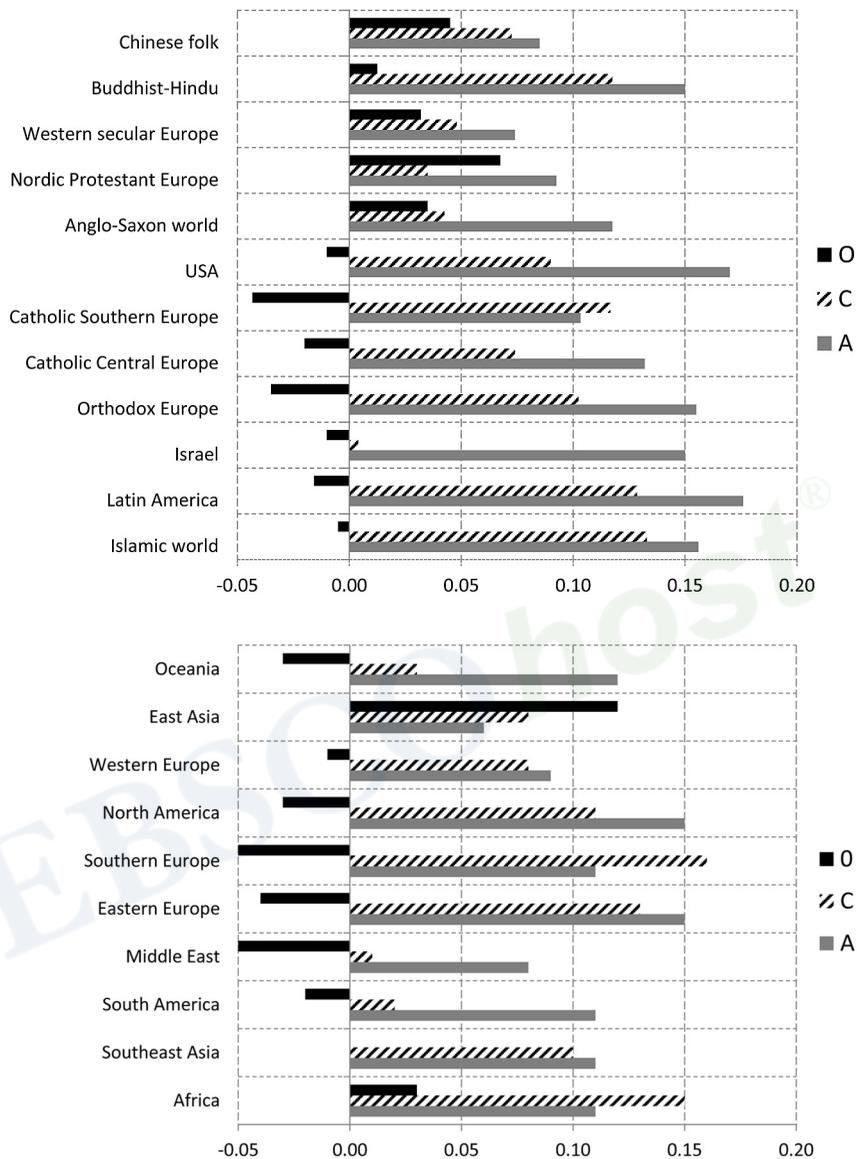


Figure 6.1 Average, by civilizational zone, associations of religiosity with agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience, based on data from (top) Gebauer et al. (2014, Study 1a, 66 countries) and (bottom) Schmitt and Fuller (2015, 56 countries).

Description Project in 56 nations (total $N = 16,712$), organized into 10 major world regions: North America, South America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, Middle East, Africa, Oceania, South/Southeast Asia, and East Asia. Self-identification as religious was positively and significantly associated with agreeableness in all 10 world regions (worldwide $r = .16$) and positively associated with conscientiousness in all 10 world regions and significantly in seven of them (worldwide $r = .13$) (see also Figure 6.1, bottom). In contrast, religiosity was overall unrelated to extraversion, neuroticism, and openness to experience.

Finally, Gebauer et al. (2014, Study 1a) analyzed online data for more than one million participants from 66 nations on religiosity (self-identification as religious) and personality (Big Five Inventory). The five personality traits were simultaneously entered in the regression as predictors of religiosity. Religiosity's links with both agreeableness and conscientiousness were positive in all 66 countries. For agreeableness, with the exception of nine nations where the regression coefficient was smaller than .09, the other 57 coefficients varied from .09 to .25. For conscientiousness, in 23 countries the regression coefficient was lower than .09, whereas, in the remaining large majority of 43 countries, it varied from .10 to .20. Again, religiosity was overall unrelated to the other three factors.

Understanding Universals in Religious Personality

The above evidence across single studies, meta-analyses, and large international studies in all world regions confirms that more agreeable people tend to be slightly more religious (or more religious people tend to be slightly more agreeable than average) with overall 58–60% probability—if we translate the mean effect sizes of .16 and .20 into probability percentages. Though the effect is small, it is impressively consistent across cultural contexts (genders, age groups, cohorts, religions, nations, world regions). Overall, the results indicate that prosocial and agreeableness-related tendencies are rather universally part of religious personality. To a lesser extent, that is, in most but not all cultural contexts, and with lower probability (55–58%, corresponding to mean effect sizes of .10–.16), religious people also tend to be slightly more conscientious than disorganized—or conscientious people tend to be slightly more religious.

This pattern of results suggests that several psychological motives for being religious versus irreligious are rather universal. These include the need to belong and search for quality in interpersonal relations (agreeableness-related motives), but also the need for personal and social order and achievement of goals in life (conscientiousness-related motives); and, consequently, search for moral self-transcendence (both traits-related motives) (see Saroglou, 2010, 2015, for reviews of studies offering behavioral validation). Additional motives such as need for amusement and activity (extraversion),

need for emotional regulation (low neuroticism), and search for variety, novelty, complexity, and thus change (openness to experience) are overall unrelated to religiosity, or at least nonuniversally related to it.

Since most research on personality and religiosity has been based on self-reports, concerns have been raised about the possible role of several biases. Indeed, research indicates that the personality-religiosity links may be amplified by general social desirability, in particular impression management (C. A. Lewis, 2000; Saroglou, Pichon, Trompette, Verschuere, & Dernelle, 2005, Study 4), specific desirability (positive perception) of certain traits (Ludeke & Carey, 2015), stereotypical perceptions of the religious versus atheist personality, or by ingroup bias (Galen, Williams, & Ver Wey, 2014). However, these biases typically fail to fully explain the personality-religiosity associations (Galen et al., 2014; C. A. Lewis, 2000; Ludeke & Carey, 2015; Saroglou et al., 2005, Study 4). Moreover, if these biases are indeed artifacts and independent of “real” personality, then the common genetic influences found for agreeableness, conscientiousness, and religiosity would need to be interpreted primarily as genetic predispositions for hypocrisy and impression management. A more parsimonious interpretation is that such “biases” are not necessarily “distortions” but rather part of people’s personalities, which determine the way these people think, feel, and try to behave (Paulhus & Vazire, 2007). More importantly, accumulated evidence shows that when the results are significant, which of course is not always the case given the typical personality-behavior discrepancy, the self-reported tendencies of more religious people toward (ingroup) prosociality and personal and social order are also validated by peer-ratings and confirmed by relevant behavioral indicators, and this in an impressively consistent way (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009; Saroglou, 2010, 2012, 2013).

An interesting implication of the universality of the main personality characteristics associated with religiosity concerns gender differences. Across societies, in both religious and secular cultural contexts, women tend to be more religious, in particular in terms of religious and spiritual beliefs and attitudes (Francis & Penny, 2014; Voas, McAndrew, & Storm, 2013). Several studies suggest that universal gender differences on religiosity can be explained, at least partly, by universal gender differences on certain personality traits, with women averaging higher in risk avoidance, social conformity, prosocial orientation, and conscientiousness, and lower in analytic thinking and psychoticism (Francis & Penny, 2014; Penny, Francis, & Robbins, 2015; Rosenkranz & Charlton, 2013).

Isomorphism between the Individual and Collective Levels

Research also indicates a meaningful isomorphism between the individual and the collective (country, region) levels in the personality-religiosity

associations. The country's mean level of religiosity (or, inversely, a low percentage of atheists) is positively related to the country's mean level of agreeableness (McCrae, 2002, 36 countries, $r = .59$) and conscientiousness, controlling for the country's Gross Domestic Product (r across measures: .46–.69), particularly for the facets of order and achievement striving (Möttus, Allik, & Realo, 2010, 60 countries). Similarly, Rentfrow, Gosling, and Potter (2008), analyzing data from the 50 U.S. states, found that higher mean agreeableness and conscientiousness (but also extraversion) at the state level are associated with the state level means for religiosity, after controlling for several sociodemographic variables ($r = .22$ – $.31$). In sum, more religious regions are also regions where people tend to be more agreeable and conscientious, which seems to be in favor of the idea of a person-environment fit. There is no basis (see also the first section of this chapter) to anticipate that religiosity makes both individuals and countries agreeable and conscientious; but, possibly, collectivistic/conservative environments, known to be traditionally religious, are ones that encourage the expression of individuals' agreeableness combined with conscientiousness through religiously based ideas, practices, values, and goals.

CULTURE AS A MODERATOR OF THE PERSONALITY-RELIGIOSITY RELATIONSHIPS

Three of the above-mentioned studies with large multicountry data sets tested statistically for moderation of the personality-religiosity association by national culture (Saroglou, 2010, 19 countries; contrasts between the United States, Canada, Europe, and "other countries") or by a specific cultural factor at the country level (religion as normative: Gebauer et al., 2014, Study 1a, 66 countries), or provided results aggregated into 10 world regions (Schmitt & Fuller, 2015, 56 countries). These studies offer a glimpse at possible cultural differences in the personality characteristics associated with religiosity in diverse cultures. Table 6.2 summarizes, based on a visual inspection of these results, the notable differences in the effect sizes between world regions or religious civilizational zones for each of the five personality factors.

From the Saroglou (2010) meta-analysis, I do not include here data (mean correlations) from seven "other" than North American and European countries, since this group of nations was very heterogeneous, both religiously and geographically. The 10 world regions in Schmitt and Fuller (2015) were presented earlier in this chapter (see also Figure 6.1, bottom). For the data of Gebauer et al. (2014, Study 1a), in line with Schmitt and Fuller (2015), I aggregated the associations (regression coefficients) from the 66 countries into 12 civilizational zones, following Huntington (1996) and Inglehart and Welzel (2005). Figure 6.1 (top) presents through bars a visual representation

Table 6.2 Differences between Civilizational Zones on the Associations of Religiosity with the Big Five Personality Traits

Types of Association	E	A	C	ES (-N)	O
	Saroglou (2010): 12 countries				
Positive/healthy	North America: [.06, .07]	North America: .20 EU: .13	North America, EU: [.15, .17]	USA: .07	
Almost null	EU: .03			EU, Canada: -.03	North America: [-.02, -.03] EU: -.10
Negative/nonoptimal					
	Gebauer et al. (2014, Study 1a): 66 countries, 12 civilizational zones				
Positive/healthy	USA, Latin America, Orthodox, Budd.-Hindu: [.03, .05]	Elsewhere: [.11, .18] Secular West. EU, Sinic world: [.07, .09]	Elsewhere: [.10, .13]		Sinic world, Nord. Prot. EU: [.04, .07]
Almost null	Elsewhere: [-.00, .02]		West. EU, Sinic world, Israel: [0.00, 0.07]	Elsewhere: [-.04, -.01]	Elsewhere: [-.01, .01]
Negative/nonoptimal				Orthodox, East Asia, Nord. Prot. EU: [-.06, -.08]	Orthodox, Cath. Centr. & South. EU: [-.02, -.04]

(continued)

Table 6.2 (Continued)

Types of Association	E	A	C	ES (-N)	O
Schmitt and Fuller (2015): 56 countries, 10 major world regions					
Positive/healthy	North America,	North America,	Elsewhere: [.10, .16]	North America,	East Asia: .12
	East Asia: [.07, .10]	East EU: .15	West EU, East Asia: .08	Africa: [.06, .07]	
Almost null	Elsewhere:	Elsewhere: [.09, .12]			
	[-.02, .04]	Middle East, East Asia: [.06, .08]			
Negative/Nonoptimal	Africa: -.07		South America, Middle East, Oceania: [.01, .03]	Elsewhere: [.04, -.02]	Elsewhere: [-.03, .03]
					East.-South. EU, Middle East: [-.04, -.07]

Note. The average associations (correlations for Saroglou, 2010, and Schmitt & Fuller, 2015; regression coefficients for Gebauer et al., 2014) or ranges of them for more than one world region are classified into three clusters, in terms of direction, effect size, and corresponding personality trait's impact on well-being and personal growth: (1) positive/healthy, (2) almost null, and (3) negative/nonoptimal. EU = Europe (not necessarily part of the European Union). E = extraversion; A = agreeableness; C = conscientiousness; ES = emotional stability; N = neuroticism; O = openness to experience.

of these aggregated associations. These 12 religious civilizational zones were: (1) Buddhist-Hindu (India, Singapore, Taiwan, and Thailand), (2) Sinic/Confucian (China, Hong Kong, Japan, South Korea), (3) Latin (Catholic) American (20 countries, including Philippines), (4) Muslim and African (nine Muslim countries including Lebanon, plus South Africa), (5) Orthodox Christian (Greece, Romania, Russia, Serbia/Montenegro), (6) traditional Catholic European (Austria, Croatia, Hungary, Ireland, Poland), (7) Southern Catholic (Italy, Portugal, Spain), (8) secular Western European (Belgium, France, Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland), (9) Nordic Protestant (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden), (10) Anglo-Saxon (Australia, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand), (11) United States, and (12) Israel.

Across these three multicountry studies, some consistencies emerge as regards the moderating role of culture in the personality-religiosity associations (see Table 6.2). Given the very large sample sizes, in this section, I will descriptively present and comment on the most notable differences between civilizational zones, especially when consistent across studies, and provide possible interpretations.

Openness to Experience and Conscientiousness

In the context of religion, these two personality dimensions may be seen as in interesting interaction, with the one qualifying the other. Low openness to experience, in combination with high conscientiousness, may point beyond a search for order and structure in life, to also encompass dogmatism, conservatism, and intolerance. In contrast, high conscientiousness accompanied by high openness to experience should reflect a search for personal and social order and structure in life, while, at the same time, indicating some flexibility and interest in variety, novelty, and complexity of ideas and experiences.

Openness to Experience

As indicated in Table 6.2 (see also Figure 6.1, top and bottom), there exists a clear distinction between nations in which religiosity is slightly positively related to openness to experience, others in which the two constructs are overall unrelated, and, finally, some others in which religiosity is slightly negatively related with this personality trait. At the individual level, it is religious fundamentalism, and not general personal religiosity, that overall relates to low openness, whereas spirituality and mature faith relate to high openness (Saroglou, 2010). Given this pattern at the individual level, a plausible way to understand the above differences at the country level is the following: in some countries, individual religiosity is, on average, more fundamentalist in nature and in others more oriented toward devotion and

spiritual maturity. Having said that, it remains important to see what may be the underlying cultural and religious factors explaining these correlation differences at the country level.

The group of countries with slightly positive associations of religiosity with openness to experience mainly includes East Asian nations of various religious traditions: Buddhism, Hinduism, and folk religion (average correlation of .12, in Schmitt & Fuller, 2015). This might be understood as pointing to the specifics of Eastern religions and cultures, which, compared to Western monotheistic contexts, have been found to reflect higher tolerance of contradiction, lower discomfort with science, and more tolerance of religious and ethnic outgroups (Clobert & Saroglou, 2015; Clobert, Saroglou, & Hwang, 2016; Clobert, Saroglou, Hwang, & Soong, 2014).

Next, some Western secularized countries, especially Nordic countries of Protestant tradition (known to value individuality), are characterized by weak but still positive relations between religiosity and openness (average regression coefficient of .07 in Gebauer et al., 2014). It may be that secularization diminishes religious closed-mindedness and facilitates attraction to religion of more tolerant, or less intolerant, religious people. These results are in line with a meta-analysis of studies on religiosity and Schwartz's values (Saroglou, Delpierre, & Dernelle, 2004), where several indicators of the country's socioeconomic development, which is typically a correlate if not a predictor of secularity, were found to predict the reduced importance of conservation values and the attenuation of the low importance of autonomy among religious people.

On the basis of their moderation analyses, Gebauer et al. (2014) went further and argued that, in secular countries, religious people may be people who, because of their openness, go against the normative secularism, "swimming against the stream" by embracing alternatives to the normative beliefs and practices. Note, however, that the occasional positive associations between religiosity and openness, even in very secular contexts, remain typically very low (from 0 to .08). In only three out of the 304 cases in the multiple studies by Gebauer et al. (2014) did the regression coefficients exceed .09. Thus, individuals who are liberal and "anti-status quo" (i.e., open to experience) are not very likely to be religious and spiritual even in very secularized cultural contexts. (There is even some evidence from the World Values Survey that whereas human development generally leads to the decline of both social conservatism and religious participation, religious individuals become more socially conservative relative to the population average; Gaskins, Golder, & Siegel, 2013.)

Beyond these "positive exceptions," in the majority of the other countries in the world, comprising Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions, religiosity is overall unrelated to openness to experience (average coefficients ranging from about .03 to -.03 in Gebauer et al., 2014 and Schmitt & Fuller, 2015).

In these nations, the need for, and value of, personal order, social cohesion, and harmony in interpersonal relations (i.e., agreeableness and conscientiousness) are very likely the exclusive motives for being religious. The overall lack of association of religiosity with openness may indicate that, in these nations, religiosity can be embraced by either open-minded or closed-minded people, independent of the search for order and harmony.

Finally, it is unclear why, in some countries, the association between religiosity and openness to experience becomes slightly negative (average coefficients ranging from about $-.04$ to $-.07$ in the two international studies). In addition to low secularization (Gebauer et al., 2014), other factors may play a role. For instance, in countries of Eastern, Central, and Southern Europe (Orthodox or Catholic traditions and/or communist past), as well as Turkey (Islamic tradition; regression coefficient of $-.11$ in Gebauer et al.'s, 2014, data) and the Middle East (mixed traditions), but not in Latin America, personal religiosity is slightly negatively related to openness to experience (average correlations ranging from $-.04$ to $-.07$; Schmitt & Fuller, 2015). One speculative interpretative hypothesis could be that there exists a cultural religious syndrome confined to Mediterranean and European border regions. These nations have been historically—and are still today—highly monoreligious, have an ethnic/national language that is distinct if not unique with respect to those in neighboring countries, and, importantly, are geographically located at the frontiers of long-standing religious, cultural, and territorial conflicts. These include conflicts between Eastern versus Western Christianity, Greek and Slavic versus German and Latin cultures, poor Southern and Eastern Europe versus wealthy Western and Nordic Europe, and, finally, Christianity versus Islam. Thus, higher religiosity in these nations may still express, to some extent, higher sensitivity to the preservation of cultural and ethnic identity, and, in turn, lower openness to experience.

This hierarchy between religious civilizational zones in the religion-openness association may not perfectly correspond to the hierarchy between world religions regarding (il)liberal morality and (in)tolerance of outgroups. For instance, Malka (2014; see also Jäckle, 2015), analyzing a large international data set on moral conservatism and intolerance of moral outgroups (homosexuals and women who have an abortion), found differences between religions (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, Muslim, Hindu, and Buddhist) at both the individual and the country levels, even after controlling for socioeconomic factors. Overall, Muslims were the most morally conservative, whereas Catholics and Protestants the least—what confirms Inglehart and Norris's (2003) argument that the clash of civilizations between Islam and the West may rather be about (sexual) morality. Hindus and Buddhists were more conservative than Catholics and Protestants. Among Christians, Catholics were more conservative toward abortion,

whereas Orthodox were more negative against homosexuality. Furthermore, analyzing data from 23 countries, Milligan, Andersen, and Brym (2014) found that people living in Muslim-majority countries, compared to those living in Western countries, tend to be less tolerant of ethnic and religious outgroups, but that nonpracticing Muslims in Western countries are the most tolerant even compared to other Westerners.

Conscientiousness

Conscientiousness follows, to some extent, a parallel, but inverse pattern from openness to experience with respect to cross-cultural differences in its association with religiosity. Indeed, across the 66 countries studied by Gebauer et al. (2014, Study 1a), the correlations of openness and conscientiousness with religiosity are negatively interrelated, Spearman's $\rho = -.39$. In most world regions (see Table 6.2 and Figure 6.1, top), the association between religiosity and conscientiousness is positive and not negligible (i.e., between .10 and .17). In those regions, religiosity is also often slightly negatively related to openness. However, in nations where the openness-religiosity association becomes slightly positive, the conscientiousness-religiosity association weakens—though remains positive. This is the case for Western secular Europe (as in Gebauer et al., 2014, and Schmitt & Fuller, 2015; but not as in Saroglou, 2010, data from much fewer countries) as well as East Asian religious and cultural contexts. Below, for these two cultural contexts, I will further elaborate for conscientiousness the interpretations offered above for openness to experience.

First, in very secular contexts, the search for personal and social order, and proneness to be methodical in order to achieve goals and personal success (i.e., inhibitive and proactive aspects of conscientiousness), become less central for people interested in and attached to religion and spirituality. For instance, Western Europeans who have converted to Buddhism, and those who are attached to modern spirituality—unlike their traditional Catholic co-religionists—are not necessarily high in need for epistemic closure (Duriez, 2003; Saroglou, 2002; Saroglou & Dupuis, 2006). Analyses of data from 14 countries also show that the lower a country's mean religiosity, or GDP per capita high, the less religiosity reflects the need for closure, $\rho = .53$ and $.53$, $p < .05$ (Saroglou et al., 2012b). Similarly, in these cases, greater spirituality is related to existential quest (Saroglou et al., 2012a, $\rho = -.80$ and $-.41$, $p < .05$ and $< .10$), that is, openness to questioning and changing one's own existential beliefs and worldviews (Van Pachterbeke, Keller, & Saroglou, 2012).

Second, the slightly lower positive associations of religiosity with conscientiousness in East Asian religious and cultural contexts than in many other parts of the world can be interpreted—in line with what was advanced above

for openness to experience in these contexts—as more broadly reflecting lower need for order, structure, and self-control in the expression of religiosity. Indeed, Sasaki and Kim (2011), in a series of three studies with diverse methodologies (i.e., religious priming, survey, and analysis of church websites), found that religion clearly serves personal control among European Americans but not among Asian Americans and East Asians. Similarly, religion has an effect in sustaining moral order when it promotes the belief in powerful, active, conscious, morally concerned gods, which is less typical of Eastern religions or cultures compared to Western ones (Stark, 2001).

The above cross-cultural differences in the associations between religiosity and conscientiousness have some implications for other domains of human psychology. Sexuality is a first example. Probably because of the above-mentioned cultural and religious reasons for weaker links of religiosity with conscientiousness in some cases, Western Europe and East Asia are the two world regions where religiously conservative sexual attitudes (i.e., restrictive socio-sexuality as a function of religiosity), slightly (in Western Europe) or importantly (in East Asia) are lower, as compared to all other eight world regions in Schmitt and Fuller's data (2015).

Well-being is a second example. Conscientiousness-related attitudes (e.g., the capacity to resist temptations), beliefs (e.g., self-control), and practices (e.g., low substance use) are known to constitute important contributors to health and well-being. Therefore, one of the typical mediators of the modest but most often positive links between religiosity and well-being is conscientiousness-based beliefs and practices (McCullough & Willoughby, 2009). Interestingly, a series of recent international studies demonstrate the moderating role of various factors at the country level in the association between individual religiosity and well-being. The usually positive association between religiosity and well-being or health decreases, disappears, or even becomes negative to the extent that: (a) the socioeconomic conditions of the country are high (Diener, Tay, & Myers, 2011), (b) the government regulates religion more severely (Elliott & Hayward, 2009), and (c) the country's mean religiosity is low or the level of secularization is high (Gebauer, Sedikides, & Neberich, 2012; Lun & Bond, 2013; Okulicz-Kozaryn, 2010; Stavrova, 2015).

These moderation effects may be interpreted as indicating, in secular countries, the reduced role of religion in satisfying the need to belong and maintain social support and social self-esteem, especially when socioeconomic conditions are comfortable and thus religion less necessary for compensation. These effects may also indicate the risks a religious person takes as an outsider within a normatively secular society. However, they can also be interpreted as resulting from the weakening of religious conscientiousness and related practices, such as participation in rituals, including prayer, and self-control-oriented attitudes and behaviors in secular countries.

Extraversion and Emotional Stability

Extraversion and emotional stability point to an emotionally healthy personality that is in good relation with, respectively, the social and internal worlds. These two traits are, as presented earlier, overall unrelated to religiosity, but may characterize specific religious forms, for example, modern spirituality (Saroglou, 2010) or faith marked by a secure attachment to God (Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002), respectively. No sizable or consistent cultural differences in the associations between religiosity and these two factors emerged from the above-mentioned three large studies (see Table 6.2).

Nevertheless, in two of the studies, religiosity in the United States or North America turned out to reflect, to some extent, an emotionally more positive personality (high extraversion and emotional stability) compared at least to European countries (Saroglou, 2010; Schmitt & Fuller, 2015). One interpretation is that religiosity may have followed global personality changes in the United States in recent decades, where high extraversion has become more predominant and more desirable (Twenge, 2001). In favor of this interpretation is the fact that mainstream Protestantism, historically known to be rather morally rigid and oriented toward avoidance of sin (see also the links of religiosity with neuroticism in the Protestant Nordic European countries in Gebauer et al., 2014), has partly been replaced in the United States by extraverted and charismatic religious forms.

Agreeableness and Religious Prosociality

Agreeableness is the primary personality factor responsible for the quality of interpersonal relations. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, this personality dimension is rather consistently related to religiosity and its different forms. As can also be seen from Table 6.2 and Figure 6.1, the agreeableness-religiosity association is consistently positive across the various cultural zones (average associations varied from .06 to .15 in Schmitt & Fuller, 2015; and from .07 to .18 in Gebauer et al., 2014, Study 1). It is also relatively stronger in size compared to the associations of religiosity with the other personality factors. However, beyond interindividual variability, interesting cultural differences in these associations due to specific cultural factors are increasingly reported in the empirical literature. Similar differences are reported in studies focusing on religious prosociality. I will present and comment below on differences that have been statistically tested in recent multicountry studies.

Religious Prosociality in Secular versus Traditional Religious Contexts

In very large data sets (from 66 countries, 50 U.S. states, 121 UK urban areas, and 15 German states), Gebauer et al. (2014, Studies 1–5) found that

the agreeableness-religiosity association decreases—but remains positive—when one moves from very religious cultural contexts to very secular ones. At the same time, as mentioned earlier, a parallel increase is observed in the positivity of the openness-religiosity association (i.e., a shift from a negative or null association to a slightly positive one). Gebauer et al. interpreted this pattern of findings as confirming a more general theoretical perspective. According to this perspective, in contexts where religion is socially very normative and important, people who are agreeable and conscientious, but not necessarily open, will be relatively high in religiosity because this helps them to be fully assimilated into the society. In contrast, social assimilation is not a pertinent motive for religiosity in normatively secular contexts where religion, as an alternative to the dominant secular ideology, will instead attract people who are rather high in openness—but not necessarily high in agreeableness and conscientiousness—and thus eager to “swim against the stream.”

In evaluating this theoretical perspective, however, it is important to note that the hypothesized decreases and increases in the respective religiosity-trait associations, when moving from very religious to very secular contexts, were very small and did not constitute a real reversal of the personality pattern underlying religiosity (see also Table 6.2 and Figure 6.1, top). Also, this theoretical perspective may put too much emphasis on the conformity aspect of agreeableness and conscientiousness at the detriment of their core character, which involves prosociality and personal self-control, respectively. Nevertheless, these findings corroborate previous work, also with a large international data set, in which Gebauer, Paulhus, and Neberich (2013) found that, in religious countries, religious people tend to be communal, thus seeking assimilation with the ambient culture, whereas, in secular countries, they tend to be agentic because they seek differentiation from the ambient culture.

This pattern of results, however, appears to contrast importantly with work by Stavrova and Siegers (2014). In their analyses of data from more than 70 countries, these researchers found that, in more secular countries, religiosity more strongly predicts engagement in charity work (Study 2), disapproval of lying in one’s own interests (Study 3), and low reported engagement in fraudulent behaviors (Study 4). These results indicate that, in countries where religion is an issue of personal choice rather than social pressure and social conformity, religiosity is more intrinsic in nature (Stavrova & Siegers, 2014, Study 1) and thus its positive prosocial and moral effects more clearly present.

These two multicountry studies, one focusing on agreeableness and conscientiousness (the two moral traits of the Big Five) and the other on prosociality and morality, seemingly provide diverging findings and raise a key question: Are religious people in secular countries more or less prosocial

than religious people in traditionally religious cultures? Does religiosity become more morally “authentic” in secular contexts, its values more internalized, and thus moral behavior more pronounced? Or do universal moral values fail to distinguish religious from nonreligious people in secular contexts? There seem to be several arguments in favor of Stavrova and Siegers’s (2014) conclusion.

First, the findings and conclusions of Stavrova and Siegers (2014) are in line with classic theorizing by Allport and Ross (1967) and Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis (1993), who have argued that the outcomes of intrinsic religiosity (religion that is an end in itself and not a means to primarily serve other goals) should be more other oriented and altruistically motivated than the outcomes of extrinsic religiosity. The findings also converge with important previous research showing that in more modern, socioeconomically developed, and secularized countries, religiosity becomes more spiritual and devotional, less coalitional, and thus more oriented to the values of self-transcendence (vs. self-expansion) rather than staying fully or only concerned with the conservation (vs. openness to change) axis of values (Saroglou, 2003, 2008).

Second, the studies of Gebauer et al. (2014) and Stavrova and Siegers (2014) may not be totally comparable. The prosocial and other aspects of moral behavior (e.g., honesty) assessed by Stavrova and Siegers are not automatically or exclusively a behavioral translation of the agreeableness trait assessed by Gebauer et al.; there is not a pure correspondence between personality traits and behavior. Moreover, Gebauer et al. assessed religiosity using one self-identification item, whereas Stavrova and Siegers used a two-item index, with religious attendance added to religious identification. Furthermore, the associations of agreeableness with religiosity in all of Gebauer et al.’s studies were estimated with multiple regression analyses in which all five personality traits were simultaneously entered as predictors. This may have diminished the strength of each trait’s association with religiosity. In addition, variance common to all five traits probably reflecting a kind of general positivity or g factor of personality may not have been captured. In addition, Stavrova and Siegers, unlike Gebauer et al., controlled for each country’s Gross Domestic Product per capita, as well as individuals’ employment status or income. This strengthens the conclusion that the differences found between religious and secular countries are not due to socioeconomic differences at the individual and collective levels.

Finally, if we place full trust in the findings of both studies, there is a way to integrate them. We can apply a theoretical perspective in which religiosity is viewed as a characteristic adaptation of agreeableness, in interaction with the cultural context, and thus in turn impacting prosocial behavior. From this perspective, the lower religion-agreeableness link in secular, compared to religious, contexts would reflect the fact that agreeable people have

many possibilities, not only religious ones, to express their dispositional agreeableness, for instance, through secular humanist attitudes. Thus, the lower association would be an effect of stronger person \times environment interaction in the secular countries. However, in these secular contexts, people who are religious are those who have more freely and thus more strongly internalized religious values and translated them into prosocial behavior, compared to religious people in cultures where there is social pressure to be religious.

Note that when one moves from the individual level (culture as moderating the association between individual religiosity and prosociality) to the national (aggregate) level (associations between country's mean level of religiosity with mean level of prosociality), an interesting pattern emerges. The more religion is normative within a country, the less people report prosocial behaviors of donating, volunteering, and helping a stranger (Smith, 2015). However, this effect may be due to other characteristics of the country: prosocial behaviors are stronger in rich countries, with high social trust, low corruption, and low ingroup favoritism. In these countries, sociocultural religiosity is low (Paul, 2009; Smith, 2015).

Cultural Differences in the Nature of Religious Prosociality

Beyond cultural differences in the strength of the religiosity-prosocial personality association, it is also important to consider possible cross-cultural or religious differences in the very nature of religious prosocial tendencies. These differences may involve the scope of prosociality with respect to the nature of the target. For example, prosociality may be universal versus limited to ingroups and discriminatory toward outgroups, particularly moral ones. Differences might also involve the underlying motivation of prosocial behavior, for example, whether altruistic, egotistic, or solely based on principles. Indeed, accumulated research suggests that religious prosociality differs depending on the religious orientation (intrinsic versus extrinsic, modern spirituality versus traditional religiosity), the content of the religious prime/stimulus (devotional versus coalitional aspects of religion, loving versus punitive concept of God), and the presence of contextual factors, in particular the emotions induced (Saroglou, 2013).

These variations in religious prosociality can translate to the level of culture and cross-cultural/religious differences. It is unclear whether the causes of this variation are theological (i.e., observable in fundamental texts or in modern religious discourse), relate to economy and social development, or depend on deep cultural personality characteristics (Saroglou & Cohen, 2013). However, some empirical work offers initial evidence in favor of such cross-religious/cultural differences. For instance, the effects of religious primes on prosociality and decreased in/outgroup distinction are clearer

when the primes (concepts or images) are Buddhist rather than Christian or Muslim, and this is the case in samples of both Western Europeans and East Asians (Clobert & Saroglou, 2015; Clobert, Saroglou, & Hwang, 2015). Similarly, among both South Korean and U.S. consumers, highly religious Buddhists, compared to Christians and atheists, were found to be more likely to participate in sustainable behaviors, such as purchasing green cleaning supplies, recycling, and purchasing organic foods (Minton, Kahle, & Kim, 2015). Finally, Christians report higher frequencies of experiencing love, whereas Muslims report shame and fear with greater frequency (Kim-Prieto & Diener, 2009). Finally, as far as behaviors related to the honesty-humility dimension are concerned, a recent analysis of data from 66 countries showed that, even after controlling for other economic and political factors, Protestantism and Buddhism, and to a lesser extent, Hinduism, have a much clearer inhibitive effect on the level of corruption than other Christian denominations, Islam, and the “other religion/no religion” group (Mensah, 2014).

In sum, although the associations of religiosity with agreeableness and some kinds of prosociality are consistently positive across cultures and religions, the normatively religious versus secular character of the country, as well as specifics of each religious tradition, influence the size of the associations and color the nature (i.e. motivation and scope), of the religious prosocial orientation.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

Evidence has accumulated through dozens of single studies, meta-analyses, and large international studies in all major world regions attesting to both universals and cultural differences in the personality characteristics associated with religiosity. Agreeableness, consistently across studies, and, to a lesser extent, conscientiousness, make people more prone to adopt religious beliefs, values, and practices. This is observed also at the collective level, with country-level means for religiosity being related to country-level mean scores on these personality traits.

However, religious ideological and other cultural factors related to socio-economic development and secularization influence the strength of the positive associations of religiosity with agreeableness and conscientiousness, and in some contexts the direction, positive or negative, of religiosity's association with another Big Five factor, openness to experience. These differences in religious personality are not isolated, but seem to have implications for the different ways in which religiosity, across cultural contexts, interacts with key life domains such as values and morality, prosocial behavior, intergroup relations and conflict, sexuality, and health and well-being.

At the level of world regions and large civilizational zones, interesting and meaningful cultural specificities in the correlates of individual religiosity have been observed. In characterizing more religious people within various world regions, important examples include East Asia (less order-oriented and more tolerant of outgroups), countries of Muslim tradition (stronger conservative morality), the Mediterranean and Balkan regions (clear discomfort with openness and universalism), and North America (higher prosocial orientation and possibly emotional positivity).

In addition, when moving from traditionally religious and poorer societies to more secular and wealthy cultural contexts, the underlying motives and functions of individual religiosity seem to change. In the former societies, individual religiosity seems to be more associated with social conformity and integration (high agreeableness and conscientiousness, with no link to openness), which results in more conservative morality and stronger ingroup/outgroup distinctions, but also psychological adaptation to difficult conditions. In the latter societies, individual religiosity appears to be more intrinsic, less conservative, and associated with stronger and possibly more extended prosociality (increased prosocial behavior, weaker conscientiousness, and slight tendencies toward openness), and greater independence from compensatory needs associated with subjective well-being. In sum, in more secular and developed versus traditionally religious contexts, more religious people, compared to less religious people or nonbelievers, become less rigid and moralistic and lose some benefits in well-being, but gain in prosociality and autonomy.

Limitations and Measurement Issues

The present chapter focused on the question of how cultural factors moderate religiosity's psychological characteristics in terms of personality and its outcomes. However, the alternative pattern of moderation also exists, with religiosity at the individual and/or collective level moderating the culture-human psychology relationships (Loewenthal, 2013). This is possible because religion constitutes itself a cultural system (Cohen, 2009) and may function as a subculture. For example, whereas personal income in general predicts psychological adjustment, this effect weakens among religious individuals and in religious countries, possibly because religion implies some moral opposition to the wealth (Gebauer, Nehrlich, Sedikides, & Neberich, 2013).

A number of limitations involving measurement can also be noted for the studies reviewed in this chapter. First, in the two largest studies, which included many dozens of countries (Gebauer et al., 2014, Study 1a; Schmitt & Fuller, 2015), the personality measure used was the Big Five Inventory, which does not measure the Big Five dimensions and its associated facets

as comprehensively as larger inventories such as the Revised NEO Personality Inventory (Costa & McCrae, 1992). More importantly, participants self-identified their degree of religiosity with a single item. Although one-item measures of religiosity are valid estimators of personal global religiosity, their ability to predict external constructs is attenuated. It is thus likely that the size of the associations with religiosity was underestimated in these studies, and thus cross-cultural differences were underdetected. For instance, in Saroglou's (2010) meta-analysis, the mean effect sizes were slightly stronger, which may be due to the fact that many studies included in the meta-analysis used large Big Five instruments and measures of religiosity (alternatively, it may be that U.S. samples were over-represented in that meta-analysis).

Second, and in line with the previous point, the effects in the two large international studies may also have been underestimated because the religiosity index only measured self-identification as religious. However, there are multiple and perhaps more central aspects of religiosity. For example, participants in secular countries, even if religious believers, may be reticent to endorse items that assess traditional and coalitional rather than devotional aspects of religion. In fact, in secular countries, the importance of religion in life is much less endorsed, or much more disliked, than the importance of God or prayer (Saroglou, 2003).

Third, the above point raises the broader issue of the multidimensionality of religiosity and the possible cultural variability on religion's dimensions and their associations with personality. In integrating and advancing previous theory, I argued (Saroglou, 2011) that four basic dimensions of religiosity are universal: *believing* (holding specific beliefs in reference to a reality perceived as transcendent), *bonding* (through rituals, with this reality and with others), *behaving* (correctly, in conformity with established norms), and *belonging* (to a group perceived as prestigious and eternal). However, there is also important cross-cultural/religious variability on the mean intensity of each of the four dimensions and their interrelations. Beyond this, there is also important variability, across groups and societies, in the presence of specific religious forms, such as fundamentalism versus religion-as-quest.

Finally, Schmitt and Fuller (2015) reported the use of the translation/backtranslation process for their whole questionnaire. In contrast, no information is provided in Gebauer et al. (2014) on whether cross-cultural equivalence was demonstrated. Of course, the self-identification item used to measure religiosity is simple. However, one cannot exclude, for instance, cross-cultural bias in the meaning of "religious." More generally, systematic work is needed in future research in order to carefully test, at all levels, the cross-cultural equivalence of various measures of religiosity. Existing preliminary evidence suggests that cross-cultural measurement of religiosity is

realistic. For example, Clobert et al. (2014, 2015, 2016) found factorial equivalence across Taiwanese and Western samples. Other studies reported similar external outcomes when measures of religiosity were administered in samples of various languages, cultures, and monotheistic religious traditions (for review: Saroglou, 2011; Saroglou & Cohen, 2013).

Questions for Future Research

It will be important to address further questions through future empirical research. A first question is whether more nuanced cultural/religious differences, for all the Big Five factors, can be found if one focuses on the more refined facets level of personality. For instance, the associations of religiosity with A-modesty, C-achievement striving, E-positive emotions, and O-aesthetics may vary more across different religious groups, major religions, or cultural groups than, respectively, A-altruism and compliance, C-self-discipline and dutifulness, E-warmth, and O-values and ideas. For example, not all denominations and religions value work and professional success (e.g., achievement striving) to the same degree (Hayward & Kimmelmeier, 2011). Similarly, not all cultural/religious groups value extraverted positive emotions (Tsai, Miao, & Seppala, 2007).

A second direction for future research is to carefully examine the interaction of persons and environments in predicting different trajectories with respect to religion and spirituality, in particular conversion and deconversion. More specifically, it seems useful to test the hypothesis (see Saroglou, 2015) that the associations of adult religiosity with agreeableness and conscientiousness will be stronger in the context of religious family socialization. In particular, this may be the case when attachment in childhood is secure (Granqvist & Kirkpatrick, 2016). In contrast, in the context of family socialization to irreligion, especially within normatively secular societies, these associations should be weak or null, except in the case of insecure attachment or important negative life events. In other words, agreeable and conscientious people who grew up as nonbelievers in nonreligious families within secular societies may have little reason to become religious later in their life, especially if they had developed a secure attachment in childhood.

CONCLUSION

Current research in the area of culture, personality, and religion is nicely progressing in detecting and describing universals and cultural differences. It also provides several interesting, though not yet definitive interpretative frameworks. In this research, cultural factors are mostly studied as moderators, across cultures, of the links of individual religiosity with personality and related psychological outcomes at the individual level. Other research

focuses on analyses only at the collective level, that is, associations of country mean religiosity with country mean scores on personality and related psychological outcomes. There is a need for a stronger integration of these two research streams, through more systematic multilevel analyses testing the role of various cultural factors at both the individual and collective levels. This will facilitate a better understanding of how religion works at both the individual and collective levels. Furthermore, there is a need to more strictly test causal directions and explanatory processes regarding the interplay between these four components: personality, religion, cultural factors, and other psychological domains. To achieve these goals, additional alternative methodologies, such as cultural experiments or cross-cultural content analyses of significant texts, as well as interdisciplinary work, are welcome.

To conclude, the existing research shows several similarities across cultural contexts in the personality characteristics of more religious people, compared to less or nonreligious people. This certainly points to common psychological motives of religiosity across cultures. However, the same research also indicates differences across cultural contexts in the strength and even the presence of certain personality characteristics of (more) religious people. People seem to also use religion (or avoid using it) differently across cultural contexts, to solidify, counter, or compensate for specific cultural tendencies and forces.

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