Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity

Publications arising from the

Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit's project

Books

Arweck, E., & Jackson, R. (Eds.) (2013). *Religion, education and society: Young people, religious identity, socialisation and diversity*. London: Routledge.

Arweck, E. (Ed.) (2017). *Young people's attitudes to religious diversity*. London: Routledge.

Arweck, E., Halafoff, A., & Boisvert, D. (Eds.) (forthcoming). *Education about religions and worldviews: Promoting intercultural and interreligious understanding in secular societies*. London: Routledge.

Chapters in books 2013

Arweck, E. (2013). I've been christened, but I don't really believe in it: How young people articulate their (non-)religious identities and perceptions of (non-)belief. In A. Day, C. R. Cotter, & G. Vincett (Eds), *Social identities between the scared and the secular* (pp. 103-125). Farnham: Ashgate. ISBN 978 1 409 45677 3.

Abstract

A three-year project (2009–2012) in the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU) at the University of Warwick, funded by the ESRC/AHRC Religion and Society Programme, is exploring the attitudes of 13–16 year-old pupils across the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland, London). Despite increasing religious diversity in the UK, we know little about young people' attitudes to religious diversity and the factors that shape such attitudes. The chapter will be based on data arising from focus groups discussions with young people in British schools, drawing out how they define their (non-)religious identities and understand (non-)belief, in relation to the social contexts in which they are embedded.

Chapters in books 2014

Francis, L. J., Croft, J. S., Pyke, A. (2014). Religious diversity, empathy, and God images: Perspectives from the psychology of religion shaping a study among adolescents in the UK. In E. Arweck & R. Jackson (Eds.), *Religion, education and society* (pp. 45-59). London: Routledge. ISBN 978 0 415 82472 9.

Abstract

Major religious traditions agree in advocating and promoting love of neighbour as well as love of God. Love of neighbour is reflected in altruistic behaviour and empathy stands as a key motivational factor underpinning altruism. This study employs the empathy scale from the Junior Eysenck Impulsiveness Questionnaire to assess the association between empathy and God images among a sample of 5,993 religiously diverse adolescents (between the ages of 13- and 15-years) attending state-maintained schools in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and London. They key psychological theory being tested by these data concerns the linkage between God images and individual differences in empathy. The data demonstrate that religious identity (e.g. whether Christian or Muslim) and religious attendance is less important than the God images held by young people. The image of God as a God of mercy is associated with higher empathy scores; and the image of God as a God of justice is associated with lower empathy scores.

Keywords: psychology of religion, empirical theology, youth, empathy, survey.

Chapters in books 2014

Francis, L. J., Croft, J. S., Pyke, A., & Robbins, M. (2014). Young people's attitudes to religious diversity: Quantitative approaches from social psychology and empirical theology. In E. Arweck & R. Jackson (Eds.), *Religion, education and society* (pp. 31-44). London: Routledge. ISBN 978 0 415 82472 9.

Abstract

This paper discusses the design of the quantitative component of the Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity Project, conceived by Professor Robert Jackson within the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit, and presents some preliminary findings from the data. The quantitative component followed and built on the qualitative component within a mixed method design. The argument is advanced in seven steps: introducing the major sources of theory on which the quantitative approach builds from the psychology of religion and from empirical theology; locating the empirical traditions of research among young people that have shaped the study; clarifying the notions and levels of measurement employed in the study anticipating the potential for various forms of data analysis; discussing some of the established measures incorporated in the survey; defining the ways in which the sample was structured to reflect the four nations of the UK and London; illustrating the potential within largely descriptive cross tabulation forms of analysis; and illustrating the potential within more sophisticated multivariate analytic models.

Keywords: psychology of religion, empirical theology, religious diversity, adolescents, quantitative research.

Chapters in books 2016

Arweck, E. (2016). Religious diversity in the UK: Do 13–16-year-old pupils perceive it as a site of multiple intersections? In L. J. Francis & J. Astley (Eds.), *Diversity and intersectionality: Studies in religion, education and values* (pp. 49–66). Oxford: Peter Lang. ISBN 978 3 034 32252 2.

Abstract

A three-year study (2009–2012) in the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU) at the University of Warwick, UK, funded by the ESRC/AHRC Religion and Society Programme, sought to investigate the attitudes of 13–16 year-old pupils towards religious diversity across the United Kingdom. Comprising both qualitative and quantitative research methods, the project aimed to capture the factors which influence young people's views and perceptions of the different religious traditions around them as well as non-religious stances. While the first phase of the project was qualitative in nature, using ethnographic research methods (focus group discussions with young people in British schools), the second phase comprised a national survey of young people across the four nations of the UK and London. The questions in the focus group discussions and the survey questionnaire were framed by a range of academic approaches, including sociological, pedagogical, theological, and psychological aspects. Drawing on the data gathered during the qualitative phase of the project, the chapter addresses the question whether and to which extent young people perceive religious diversity as a site of multiple intersections—that is whether they made connections between different religions and non-religious stances, Religious Education (RE), and ethnicity. The responses of the young people are presented in the light of the different school and community contexts in which they are embedded. They are also presented in the light of general discussions of Religious Education's role as educating for diversity, religious literacy, tolerance, and inter-religious dialogue.

Chapters in books 2016

Arweck, E. (2016). Religious diversity in the UK: Young people's attitudes and views. In H. Winkel & K. Sammet (Eds.), *Soziologisch Denken*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Abstract

Like other countries in Europe and elsewhere, the United Kingdom has experienced increasing religious diversity in recent years. This presents both challenges and opportunities for the relationships between social and religious communities and institutions. In one public sphere—in the media—differences and divisions in local and national contexts are highlighted, while in another—at the level of government—there is recognition that religion cannot be relegated to the private sphere. Also, it is acknowledged that education in school (through religious education and citizenship education) can further community cohesion by teaching young people about religious diversity. However, not much research is available on young people's attitudes to religious diversity or the factors that shape their attitudes. A three-year study (2009–2012) in the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU) at the University of Warwick, UK, funded by the ESRC/AHRC Religion and Society Programme, has sought to investigate the attitudes of 13–16 year-old pupils towards religious diversity across the United Kingdom. Comprising both qualitative and quantitative research methods, the chapter reports findings from the first phase of the project, which was qualitative in nature, using ethnographic research methods, in this case focus group discussions with young people in British schools. The questions in these discussions were framed by a range of academic approaches, including sociological, pedagogical, theological and psychological aspects. The views of and the comments on religious diversity as expressed by the young people are presented in the light of the different school and community contexts in which their lives are embedded.

Chapters in books 2016

Arweck, E., (2016). Religion materialized in the everyday: Young people's attitudes towards

    material expressions of religion. In T. Hutchings & J. McKenzie (Eds.), *Materiality*

    and the study of religion: The stuff of the sacred (pp. 185-202). London: Routledge.

    ISBN 978 1 472 47783 5.

Abstract

The chapter draws on data arising from the three-year project (2009–2012) on "Young

People's Attitudes towards Religious Diversity", which was based in the Warwick Religions

and Education Research Unit (WRERU) at the University of Warwick and funded by the

ESRC/AHRC Religion and Society Programme. The project sought to explore the attitudes of

13–16-year-old pupils across the United Kingdom (England, Wales, Northern Ireland,

Scotland, London) towards religious diversity. Using data collected in focus groups

discussions with young people in British schools, the chapter reports their perceptions and

attitudes towards material expressions of religious belonging or adherence. How do young

people relate to the way individuals' clothes suggest religious belonging? What do they think

about individuals wearing religious symbols, for example, in school? What are their stances

towards observance of particular religious disciplines, such as Ramadan? How do they deal

with different dietary requirements? These are questions which the chapter addresses in

examining the discussions with the young people.

Chapters in books 2017

Arweck, E. (2017). The matter of context: The case of two community schools in Wales. In

E. Arweck (Ed.), *Young people's attitudes to religious diversity* (pp. 97-124). London:

Routledge. ISBN 978 1 4724 4430 1.

Abstract

This chapter will compare and contrast young people's attitudes to religious diversity in two

different locations in Wales: one a sub-urban context in the south of Wales, the other a rural

context in mid-Wales. The schools the young people attended are community schools, one

fairly large and multi-cultural, the other fairly small and mono-cultural. Although the views

of the young people in the two schools overlapped in a number of respects, the discussions

with them also revealed that their attitudes and outlooks were shaped by the geographical and

social contexts in which they were growing up. The chapter seeks to show the extent to which

context influences young people's perceptions of their own and other people's religion or

lack of religion.

Chapters in books 2017

Arweck, E. (2017). Religious diversity as a personal and social value: Impressions from a

multicultural school in London. In E. Arweck (Ed.), *Young people's attitudes to*

religious diversity (pp. 125-149). London: Routledge. ISBN 978 1 4724 4430 1.

Abstract

This chapter will report data from focus group discussions with young people attending a community school in inner London. The school was characterised by a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic pupil body, with over three quarters of pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school's ethos was one which celebrated the presence of the wide range of cultural groups. The chapter will explore whether the school's ethos was reflected in the young people's views of and attitudes to the multi-cultural composition of their school and whether they attached any value to growing up in this kind of context—in short whether they considered religious diversity as being of personal and social value.

Chapters in books 2017

Arweck, E., & Ipgrave, J. (2017). The qualitative strand: Listening in depth. In E. Arweck

(Ed.), *Young people's attitudes to religious diversity* (pp. 19-30). London: Routledge.

ISBN 978 1 4724 4430 1.

Abstract

This chapter will discuss the way in which theory and method have been approached in the

project so that one can inform the other. The emphasis will be on the qualitative part of the

project—the focus groups discussions (both the method and data arising from them), with

references to the quantitative phase of the project—and the ways in which the data arising

from the research can be brought in dialogue with theory.

Chapters in books 2017

Francis, L. J., & Penny, G. (2017). The personal and social significance of diverse religious affiliation in multi-faith London. In E. Arweck (Ed.), *Young people's attitudes to religious diversity* (pp. 222-241). London: Routledge. ISBN 978 1 4724 4430 1.

Abstract

This chapter tests the thesis that self-assigned religious affiliation is an effective predictor of personal and social values among young people living in a multi-cultural environment. The thesis is shaped against the background of the business case prepared for the inclusion of a question concerning self-assigned religious affiliation in the census for England and Wales for the first time in 2001 and retained in the 2011 census, and challenges the views of commentators who question the validity and utility of this question. This thesis is examined against data provided by 1,708 students attending schools with a religious character and schools without a religious foundation in London who claimed self-assigned religious affiliation with one of three faith traditions (1250 Christians, 231 Hindus, and 227 Muslims) alongside data provided by 407 students attending the same schools but claiming no self-assigned religious affiliation. The data demonstrate key ways in which self-assigned religious affiliation predicts differences in areas of personal and social values relevant both to the wellbeing of young people themselves and to the wellbeing of society as a whole.

Keywords: London, multi-cultural, multi-faith, psychology, religion.

Chapters in books 2017

Abstract

This chapter set out to test the thesis, proposed by the report of the Runnymede Trust *Right to divide?*, that schools with a religious character in Wales fail to prepare students for life in a religiously and ethnically diverse society and so fail to promote community cohesion. This thesis is operationalised by suggesting that, if it were true, then we would expect to find that students attending schools with a religious character would hold significantly less positive attitudes toward religious diversity in comparison with students attending schools without a religious foundation. This thesis examined against data provided by 1,087 students attending schools with a religious character alongside 1,241 students attending schools without a religious foundation. The analysis examines three broad topics: the religious worldview of the students, the students' attitudes toward religion and religious diversity, and the students' perceptions of the influences shaping their attitudes toward religion and religious diversity. The key finding is that comparison made between students in the two types of school offers no support for the thesis that schools with a religious character in Wales prepare students less adequately for life in a religiously and ethnically diverse society in comparison with schools without a religious foundation.

Keywords: Wales, community cohesion, church schools, religious diversity.

Chapters in books 2017

Abstract

This chapter draws on the 'worlds apart' thesis, reflecting the title of Murray's study, published in the 1980s, comparing neighbouring Catholic and Protestant primary schools in Northern Ireland. The present chapter tests the persistence of the 'worlds part' thesis in respect of attitudes toward religion and religious diversity among 888 13- to 15-year-old male students attending Catholic schools (N = 452) and Protestant schools (N = 436) in Northern Ireland. The data demonstrate that important differences that can still support the 'worlds apart' thesis arise in four areas. Catholic students and Protestant students see themselves in a significantly different way from the way in which they are perceived by the other group of students. School plays a more important part in shaping the views of Catholic students concerning both Catholics and Protestants than is the case for Protestant students. Catholic students feel that their schools have a greater influence, compared with Protestant students on shaping their views not only on Christianity, but also on the other Abrahamic religions, Islam and Judaism. Catholic students are significantly more positive than Protestant students, in accepting outward signs of religious clothing in schools, including not only the Christian Cross but also the Hindu Bindi, the Jewish Kippah/Yamalke, the Muslim Burka, and the Sikh Turban.

Keywords: Northern Ireland, Catholic schools, Protestant schools, student attitudes.

Chapters in books 2017

Francis, L. J., Penny, G., & McKenna, U. (2017). Does RE work and contribute to the

common good in England? In E. Arweck (Ed.), *Young people's attitudes to religious*

diversity (pp. 153-165). London: Routledge. ISBN 978 1 4724 4430 1.

Abstract

This chapter tests the thesis that religious education offered in schools in England is largely

irrelevant to the personal and social development of the students. This thesis has been

influenced by Jim Conroy's provocative challenge from the Glasgow project. This thesis is

addressed from the perspective of ethos theory that compares the overall ethos generated by

one group of students (in this case those taking RE classes) with the overall ethos generated

by a second group of students (those not taking RE classes). The thesis is examined among

two groups of 528 male students attending schools without a religious foundation in England:

279 taking RE classes and 249 not taking RE classes. The data demonstrate significant and

consistent differences between the two groups of students. The students in the RE class of

2011 display more positive attitudes and more pro-social attitudes toward a range of personal

and social issues that contribute to the common good of society in general. In particular the

students in the RE class of 2011 display more positive and open attitudes towards living in a

religiously diverse, multi-faith and multi-ethnic society, thereby making a significant

contribution to community cohesion.

Keywords: England, Religious Education, community cohesion, pro-social attitude.

Chapters in books 2017

Francis, L. J., Penny, G., & Neil, P. (2017). Growing up Catholic in Scotland: Not one Catholic community but three. In E. Arweck (Ed.), *Young people's attitudes to religious diversity* (pp. 186-203). London: Routledge. ISBN 978 1 4724 4430 1.

Abstract

This chapter examines the thesis proposed by Egan and by Gibson that the Catholic community in Great Britain generally and in Scotland in particular needs to be conceptualised not as one homogenous community (united around one common set of values) but as three overlapping communities, all of which are differentiated from the religiously unaffiliated, but in varying degrees. This thesis is operationalised by taking seriously self-assigned religious affiliation as identifying the Catholic community and then by distinguishing within this community according to three levels of religious practice. In earlier studies, those who never attend church have been characterised as lapsed Catholics, those who attend weekly as practising Catholics and those who attend less than weekly as sliding Catholics. This thesis is tested among 985 female students attending schools with a religious character or schools without religious foundation in Scotland: 510 identified themselves as having no religious affiliation and 475 as Catholics, among whom 95 were lapsed Catholics, 219 sliding Catholics and 161 practising Catholics. The data confirmed significant differences between the worldviews of lapsed Catholics and the religiously unaffiliated. The data also confirmed significant differences between the worldview of the three distinct Catholic communities.

Keywords: Scotland, Roman Catholic, church attendance, religious diversity.

Chapters in books 2017

Francis, L. J., Penny, G., & Robbins, M. (2017). The quantitative strand: An individual differences approach. In E. Arweck (Ed.), *Young people's attitudes to religious diversity* (pp. 31-42). London: Routledge. ISBN 978 1 4724 4430 1.

Abstract

This chapter discusses the design of the quantitative component of the Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity Project, and illustrates the variety of ways in which these data have already been used and can be used in further analyses. The quantitative component followed and built on the qualitative component within a mixed method design. The argument is advanced in seven steps: introducing the major sources of theory on which the quantitative approach builds from the psychology of religion and from empirical theology; locating the empirical traditions of research among young people that have shaped the study; clarifying the notions and levels of measurement employed in the study anticipating the potential for various forms of data analysis; discussing some of the established measures incorporated in the survey; defining the ways in which the sample was structured to reflect the four nations of the UK and London; illustrating the potential within largely descriptive crosstabulation forms of analysis; and illustrating the potential within more sophisticated multivariate analytic models. Attention is drawn to some of the papers already published from these data.

Keywords: psychology of religion, empirical theology, religious diversity, adolescents, quantitative research.

Chapters in books 2017

Ipgrave, J. (2017). Sources of knowledge and authority: Religious education for young

    Muslims in a Birmingham comprehensive school. In E. Arweck (Ed.), *Young people's*

    attitudes to religious diversity (pp. 45-60). London: Routledge. ISBN 978 1 4724

    4430 1.

Abstract

This chapter reports the views on religious learning of Muslim students in a comprehensive school in a predominantly Muslim area of Birmingham. These students did not view their religious learning as a question of choice about what they could or could not believe but rather as an obligation to seek the truth in accordance with their Islamic faith. Their interest was in right knowledge and authority. In research interviews they discussed the value and validity of different sources of learning (parents, sheikhs, religious education, school RE teachers, other religions). Between them they expressed a variety of views on these questions. The most obvious line of difference was age with the younger students (aged 13) identifying more closely with their parents' teaching on Islam and the older students (aged 17) questioning it. The students were more comfortable with learning about other religions in RE when this activity was understood in terms of the Qur'anic injunction to seek knowledge, but less sure about the value for their own religious development.

Chapters in books 2017

Ipgrave, J. (2017). Uniting two communities or creating a third community? Research in a Northern Irish integrated school. In E. Arweck (Ed.), *Young people's attitudes to religious diversity* (pp. 61-76). London: Routledge. ISBN 978 1 4724 4430 1.

Abstract

It has become commonplace, particularly outside Northern Ireland, to view the religiously segregated system of education in the province as contributing to sectarian tensions. The integrated school movement bringing together Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils within the same educational institution has been seen as a way to address this problem. Findings from qualitative research in an integrated secondary school found that education here was not simply a question of bringing together Roman Catholic and Protestant students in a way that enables mutual understanding, it also supported another polarised understanding of religion either as privatised and relativised or as uncompromising and conflictual. Another division is set up in the students' minds between those people, schools and 'rough' areas of the city for whom religious identity and religious commitment are proclaimed and serious, and those for whom they are not. This is contrasted with views from some students in other schools in the province for whom religion provided a resource for and impetus towards understanding the religiously other.

Chapters in books 2017

Ipgrave, J. (2017). Cradling Catholics in secular Scotland: Research in a Scottish Roman

Catholic High School. In E. Arweck (Ed.), *Young people's attitudes to religious*

diversity (pp. 77-96). London: Routledge. ISBN 978 1 4724 4430 1.

Abstract

This chapter reports on findings from a Roman Catholic School with a high reputation in a Scottish City. In a school where almost all the young people have a faith (most of these are Roman Catholic) students were able to relate their own religious beliefs and practices to the school's Catholic ethos and values. Their theologised experiences and perspectives were then turned to the society in which their school is situated, and positioned against the secularity and religious plurality they observed there. The way the character of the school is both distinct from this outside world and has something to contribute to it will be explored through the eyes of the students.

Chapters in books 2017

Jackson, R., & McKenna, U. (2017). The Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity project in the context of the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit (WRERU) research. In E. Arweck (Ed.), *Young people's attitudes to religious diversity* (pp. 3-18). London: Routledge. ISBN 978 1 4724 4430 1.

Abstract

The idea for a research project on 'Young people's attitudes towards religious diversity in the UK' emerged from a European Commission Framework 6 research project entitled 'Religion in education a contribution to dialogue or a factor of conflict in transforming societies of European countries (REDCo)'. The REDCo project's main aim was to establish and compare the potentials and limitations of religion in the educational systems of 8 European nations, including England. The findings of REDCo showed the need for more detailed studies across a wider range of countries. Thus the Warwick team designed a large scale mixed methods study, including a substantial quantitative study, covering the four nations of the United Kingdom (instead of just England, as in the REDCo study), but including London as a special and distinctive case. The chapter shows how the Religion and Society project 'Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity' emerged from the REDCo Project and from cognate WRERU research conducted for the UK Government, and details the development of inter-related research questions addressed by a mixed methods research approach. Generic findings of the Religion and Society project are compared with generic REDCo findings and English REDCo findings. Some final comments are added about the research findings in relation to policy developments in Europe and potential policy developments in the nations of the UK.

Chapters in books 2018

Francis, L. J., Village, A., McKenna, U., & Penny, G. (2018). Freedom of religion and

    freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school: Exploring the impact of church

    schools in a religiously diverse society. In H.-G. Ziebertz & C. Serkens (Eds.),

    Religion and civil human rights in empirical perspective (pp. 157-175). Dordrecht:

    Springer. ISBN 978 3 319 59285 5.

Abstract

The Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity Project was established to compare the attitudes of students (13- to 15-years of age) educated within the state-maintained sector in church schools (Catholic, Anglican, joint Anglican and Catholic) and in schools without a religious foundation. Data provided by 2,385 students recruited from England, Wales and London who self-identified as either 'no religion' or as Christian demonstrated that personal factors (especially sex), psychological factors (especially psychoticism) and religious factors (especially personal prayer) were all significantly related to attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school. After controlling for sex and for individual differences in personality and in religiosity, students attending church schools hold neither a more positive nor a less positive attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school (according to various religious traditions), compared with students attending schools without a religious foundation.

Keywords: Church schools, religious diversity, freedom of religion, school effectiveness, multi-level analysis.

Articles 2012

Abstract

Major religious traditions agree in advocating and promoting love of neighbour as well as love of God. Love of neighbour is reflected in altruistic behaviour and empathy stands as a key motivational factor underpinning altruism. This study employs the empathy scale from the Junior Eysenck Impulsiveness Questionnaire to assess the association between empathy and God images among a sample of 5,993 religiously diverse adolescents (between the ages of 13- and 15-years) attending state-maintained schools in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and London. They key psychological theory being tested by these data concerns the linkage between God images and individual differences in empathy. The data demonstrate that religious identity (e.g. whether Christian or Muslim) and religious attendance is less important than the God images held by young people. The image of God as a God of mercy is associated with higher empathy scores; and the image of God as a God of justice is associated with lower empathy scores.

Keywords: psychology of religion, empirical theology, youth, empathy, survey.

Articles 2012

Abstract

This paper discusses the design of the quantitative component of the Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity Project, conceived by Professor Robert Jackson within the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit, and presents some preliminary findings from the data. The quantitative component followed and built on the qualitative component within a mixed method design. The argument is advanced in seven steps: introducing the major sources of theory on which the quantitative approach builds from the psychology of religion and from empirical theology; locating the empirical traditions of research among young people that have shaped the study; clarifying the notions and levels of measurement employed in the study anticipating the potential for various forms of data analysis; discussing some of the established measures incorporated in the survey; defining the ways in which the sample was structured to reflect the four nations of the UK and London; illustrating the potential within largely descriptive cross tabulation forms of analysis; and illustrating the potential within more sophisticated multivariate analytic models.

Keywords: psychology of religion, empirical theology, religious diversity, adolescents, quantitative research.

Articles 2012

Abstract

This contribution reports research into young people's attitudes to religion and religious

diversity in secondary schools across the UK. The data indicate that students' respect for the

religiosity of their peers, or their lack of it, is due less to the influence of classroom RE

(multi-faith or otherwise) than to the experience of religion in the neighbourhood and the

degree to which being 'religious' is viewed as 'normal' there. The essay contrasts negativity

experienced in schools by young people of strong practising religious faith in neighbourhoods

where religious practice is not the norm with the greater tolerance and respect accorded to

religious young people in schools serving neighbourhoods where religious practice is

common and prominent. It considers the implications for religious education of this uneven

experience.

Articles 2013

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the social phenomenon of religious diversity through the eyes of young male atheists living in the UK. The responses of 1,761 atheists are compared with the responses of 2,421 theists across nine issues relevant to religious diversity. Overall the data demonstrate that young atheists are not only less interested in the challenges and opportunities offered by life in religiously diverse societies, but also less tolerant of the life styles and expectations or rights of religious people living in these societies. The implications of these findings are discussed in terms of community cohesion in which both religious diversity is becoming more visible and atheism may be increasing.
Key words: psychology, religion, adolescence, atheism, religious plurality.

Articles 2014

Abstract

This study traces the changing face of religious diversity in Wales from the conceptualisation of diversity in denominational attendance, in the exercise undertaken alongside the 1851 census, to the conceptualisation of diversity in self-assigned religious affiliation included in the 2001 census. An alternative conceptualisation of religious diversity is proposed in terms of belief rather than in terms of attendance or affiliation. This alternative conceptualisation is tested among a survey of 1,124 male students (13- to 15-years of age) attending state-maintained schools in Wales. The data demonstrate significant differences between the worldviews of young theists and the worldviews of young atheists. The young theists espouse a more positive view of pluralism in contemporary Wales, including both cultural diversity and religious diversity. The conclusion is drawn that religious belief promotes, rather than detracts from, social cohesion. In this sense, religious belief may be construed as a matter of public concern in contemporary Wales.

Keywords: religious diversity, Wales, student attitudes, psychology of religion.

Articles 2014

Abstract

The Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity Project was established to compare the attitudes of students (13- to 15-years of age) educated within the state-maintained sector in church schools (Catholic, Anglican, joint Anglican and Catholic) and in schools without a religious foundation. Data provided by 5,402 students recruited from England, Wales *and* London who self-identified as either 'no religion' or as Christian demonstrated that, after controlling for individual differences in personality and in religiosity, students attending church schools hold neither a more positive nor a less positive attitude toward religious diversity, compared with students attending schools without a religious foundation.

Keywords: Church schools, religious diversity, school effectiveness, multi-level analysis.

Articles 2014

Abstract

Recognition that the United Kingdom has increasingly become a multi-cultural and multi-faith society has raised questions about the place of church schools or schools with a religious character within the state-maintained sector. The issue was given particular focus by the Runnymede Trusts report *Right to divide? Faith schools and community cohesion* published in 2008. In response to this challenge, the present study examines attitudes toward religious diversity among 1,012 students attending Catholic schools and 1,518 students attending schools without a religious foundation in Scotland (13- to 15-years of age). Employing a multilevel linear model to allow for the fact that students were nested within schools and after controlling for individual differences in personality and religiosity, the data demonstrated that students attending Catholic schools held a more positive attitude toward religious diversity, compared with students attending schools without a religious foundation.

Keywords: Catholic schools, church schools, religious diversity, school effectiveness, multi-level analysis.

Articles 2015

Arweck, E., & Penny, G. (2015). Young people's attitudes to religious diversity: Socialising

agents and factors emerging from qualitative and quantitative data of a nation-wide

project in the UK. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, *36*, 255-273. ISSN 0725 6868.

Abstract

This article is based on data arising from focus group discussions with young people in British schools, to draw out socialising influences and factors that shape their approaches to religious diversity. It explores questions such as: is religious socialisation taking place in the home, with active participation in religious communities, or is religious socialisation weakening from generation to generation? How does religious socialisation (or its lack) differ between and within religions and between particular localities? Which factors facilitate or impede socialising processes? These questions are addressed in the light of discussions with young people and survey results. The data arise from a project (2009–2012) in the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit at the University of Warwick, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council/Arts and Humanities Research Council Religion and Society Programme, which applied a mixed methods approach to explore the attitudes of 13–16-year-old pupils across the UK towards religious diversity.

Articles 2015

Abstract

Within the context of the Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity Project at the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit, this study examines the association between self-assigned Christian affiliation, self-reported Christian practice and attitudes toward religious diversity among a sample of 5,748 13- to 15-year-old female students attending schools in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. The two hypotheses being tested are that among female students nominal Christians do not differ in their attitudes toward religious diversity from unaffiliated students, and that church attendance leads to less tolerance of other religious groups. The data partly support the first hypothesis but not the second. Churchgoing Christian female students are more interested in and more tolerant of other religious groups. The data also draw attention to the perceived importance of religious education in schools for shaping views on religion and on religious diversity among unaffiliated students, nominal Christians and practising Christians. Both the Christian churches and religious education in school seem to have an important part to play in nurturing a tolerant and inclusive religiously diverse society in the UK.

Keywords: Religious diversity, Christian affiliation, churchgoing adolescents.

Articles 2015

Abstract

Northern Ireland has been and remains a religiously divided community. This study sets out to examine outgroup prejudice among a sample of 1,799 13- to 15-year-old students attending Catholic or Protestant schools and employs both bivariate analyses and hierarchical modelling to chart the associations between outgroup prejudice and personal factors (sex and age), psychological factors (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism) and religious factors (affiliation, church attendance, and personal prayer). After taking personal, psychological and religious factors into account, little variance in levels of outgroup prejudice between students could be attributed to the type of school they attended.

Keywords: Northern Ireland, secondary schools, outgroup, prejudice, Protestants, Catholics.

Articles 2016

Abstract

The 'theology of religions' is concerned with the interpretation and evaluation of the
divergent truth-claims and views of salvation that are asserted or implied by different
religious traditions. This study proposes a new multi-choice index that distinguishes between
six current positions within the theology of religions, characterised as Atheism, Agnosticism,
Exclusionism, Inclusivism, Pluralism, and Interreligious perspective, with a further
subdivision between two expressions of the pluralism perspective. The construct validity of
this new measure is supported by the performance of the instrument in respect of a network
of theories (regarding how these different positions may relate to the factors of sex, age,
personal religiosity and attitude toward religious diversity) among a sample of 10,754 13- to
15-year-old students from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Keywords: empirical theology, theology of religions, construct validity, psychology of
religion.

Articles 2016

Abstract

The Astley-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Theistic Faith was designed to access the attitudinal dimension of religion across the major theistic faith traditions. This study examined the psychometric properties of the Astley-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Theistic Faith among a sample of 10,678 13- to 15-year-old students from across the United Kingdom, exploring the performance of the scale independently among three groups: religiously unaffiliated students (N = 3,711), Christian students (N = 6,649), and Muslim students (N = 318). The data support the internal consistency reliability and the construct validity of this instrument among all three groups and commend it for application in further studies.
Keywords: attitude, theistic faith, psychometrics, religion.

Articles 2017

Abstract

The quantitative strand of the Young People's Attitudes towards Religious Diversity Project, conducted by the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit, set out to capture data from over 2,000 students living in each of the four nations of the United Kingdom (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales) and from London as a special case. While participation was voluntary, all students attending participating schools were invited to take part. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured. In total, nearly 12,000 students submitted thoroughly completed questionnaires. The project concentrated on schools within the state-maintained sector, but sought to obtain roughly equal numbers of students within each of the five areas attending schools with a religious character and without a religious foundation. The aim of the present paper is to collate, present and assess the findings from this survey that are relevant to the theme of this Special Issue, concerned with examining how a religion shapes the way of seeing the world and seeing other religious traditions. Highlights from the research include: students who are themselves religiously motivated hold more positive attitudes towards religious diversity; there is no evidence that schools with a religious character produce students who are less accepting of people from other religious faiths; religious education does work in the sense of leading to attitudes that promote community cohesion, lessen religious conflict, and promote the common good.

Keywords: Religious diversity, community cohesion, religious education, faith schools.

Articles 2017

Abstract

This study begins by examining the way in which, in both England and Wales, Religious Education has become implicated in political discussion regarding the role of education in promoting community cohesion. The relationship between taking Religious Education as an examination subject and attitude toward religious diversity (as an affective indicator of community cohesion) is then explored among 3,052 14- to 15-year-old students. After controlling for contextual factors (school type and geographical location), personal factors (sex and age), psychological factors (psychoticism, neuroticism and extraversion), and religious factors (Christian affiliation, worship attendance, personal prayer, and belief in God), a small but significant positive association was found between taking Religious Education as an examination subject and attitude toward religious diversity. This finding may be interpreted as supporting the view that Religious Education works to promote community cohesion, although the wider debate that the community cohesion agenda has generated among religious educators needs further exploration.

Keywords: community cohesion, social integration, Religious Education, school examination, religious diversity.

Articles 2017

Abstract

A number of research studies, like Heelas and Woodhead's book *The Spiritual Revolution: Why Religion Is Giving Way to Spirituality* have been advocating the argument that within Australia, the UK, and the USA spirituality has been taking the placing of religion, especially within the lives of young people. This claim raises a core conceptual question and two core empirical questions. The conceptual question concerns clarity regarding what is spirituality. The first empirical question concerns mapping the extent to which spirituality is indeed a recognised construct among religiously unaffiliated young people. The second empirical question concerns testing whether spirituality in fact fulfils the same function as religion in the life of young people. The present study explores these three issues, drawing on data provided by 3,860 adolescents (aged 13 to -15 years) drawn from the four nations of the UK who identified themselves as having no religious affiliation. These adolescents completed the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised (abbreviated) together with measures of spirituality and empathy. The data demonstrated a positive correlation between spirituality and empathy after controlling for personality, sex, and age. This finding suggests that in regard to enhancing empathy within the lives of young people, spirituality is fulfilling the same function as religion has traditionally, which has been established by earlier studies.

Keywords: psychology of religion, empathy, spirituality, personality

Articles 2017

Abstract

Understanding variations in public attitudes toward religious diversity is a matter of concern

within both the social scientific study of religion (concerned with *religious* factors) and

empirical theology (concerned with *theological* factors). Drawing on data provided by 335

13- to 15-year-old Muslim students from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, this

study tests the power of religious factors and theological factors to explain variance within

the Muslim Attitude toward Religious Diversity Index (MARDI). Regression analyses

demonstrate that theological factors account for much more variance than religious factors in

explaining individual differences in Muslim students' attitudes toward religious diversity. In

this regard understanding Muslim students' theological identity is more important than

understanding their religious practice.

Keywords: social scientific study of religion, empirical theology, religious diversity, social

inclusivity.

Articles 2017

Abstract

For the first time in 2001 the Census for England and Wales included a question on religious identity. The assumption was that religious identity predicts distinctiveness of social and public significance. This paper tests that thesis among male adolescents (13- to 15- years of age) who participated in a survey conducted across the four nations of the United Kingdom. From the 11,870 participants in the survey the present analyses compares the responses of 158 male students who self-identified as Muslim with the responses of 1,932 male students who self-identified as religiously unaffiliated. Comparisons are drawn across two domains defined as religiosity and as social values. The data demonstrated that for these male adolescents self-identification as Muslim encased a distinctive profile in terms both of religiosity and social values.

Keywords: Religious identity, Muslim identity, religiosity, social values.

Articles 2017

Abstract

Understanding variations in public attitudes toward freedom of religious clothing and

symbols in school is a matter of concern within both the social scientific study of religion

(concerned with *religious* factors) and empirical theology (concerned with *theological*

factors). Drawing on data provided by 335 13- to 15-year-old Muslim students from England,

Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, this study tests the power of religious factors and

theological factors to explain variance within the Scale of Attitude toward Freedom of

Religious Clothing and Symbols in School (SAFORCS). Regression analyses demonstrate

that theological factors account for significant additional variance, after religious factors have

been taken into account. In this regard understanding Muslim students' theological

understanding is as important as understanding their religious practice.

Keywords: social scientific study of religion, empirical theology, religious diversity, social

inclusivity.

Articles 2018

Abstract

This study set out to explore the levels of victimisation experienced by Muslim adolescents in the UK, the extent to which victimisation is conceptualised in religious terms, and the extent to which individual differences in the experience of victimisation is related to personal factors, psychological factors and religious factors. Data provided by 335 13- to 15-year-old Muslim students from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales demonstrated that one in four Muslim students (25%) reported being bullied because of their religion. These students saw their religious identity as being a more important cause of their victimisation than their ethnicity, their colour, or their name. Male and female Muslim students were equally vulnerable to victimisation. Psychological and religious variables predicted individual differences in vulnerability to victimisation among Muslim students.

Keywords: Muslims, victimisation, bullying, psychology of religion, empirical theology.

Articles 2018

Abstract

What does it mean to be a Muslim young woman in Britain today and with which religious and social values do these young women identify? This paper tests the thesis that Muslim identity predicts distinctive values of public and social significance among female adolescents (13- to 15-years of age) who participated in a survey conducted across the four nations of the United Kingdom. From the 11,809 participants in the survey, the present analyses compares the responses of 177 female students who self-identified as Muslim with the responses of 1,183 female students who self-identified as religiously unaffiliated. Comparisons are drawn across two domains defined as religiosity and as social values. The data demonstrated that for these female adolescents self-identification as Muslim encased a distinctive profile in terms of both religiosity and social values.

Keywords: Religious identity, Muslim identity, religiosity, social values

Articles 2019

Abstract

Drawing on data from a survey conducted among 9,810 young people in England, Scotland, and Wales, this study examines parental and peer influence on church attendance among 2,146 13- to 15-year-old students who identified themselves as Catholics. The data suggested that young Catholics who practise their Catholic identity by attending church do so largely because their parents are Catholic churchgoers. Moreover, young Catholic churchgoers are most likely to keep going if both mother *and* father are Catholic churchgoers. Among this age group of young Catholics both peer support and attending a church school are also significant, but account for little additional variance after taking parental churchgoing into account. The implication from these findings for a Catholic Church strategy for ministry among children and young people within England, Scotland and Wales is that it may be wise to invest in the education and formation of Catholic parents.

Keywords: Catholic, churchgoing, young people, parents, peers

Articles 2019

Abstract

This study drew on data provided by 11,809 13- to 15-year-old students drawn from the four

nations of the United Kingdom to explore the level of agreement with the view that science

disproves the biblical account of creation, and to explore the power of five sets of variables to

predict individual differences in responses to that opinion. The five sets of variables were

personal factors (sex and age), psychological factors (exploring the role of personality in shaping

individual differences in religiosity), religious factors (distinguishing between worship attendance

and personal prayer), attitudinal factors (drawing on the psychology of religion to measure

rejection of religion, religious affect, religious fundamentalism, and 'scientific fundamentalism'

understood as an exaggerated, uncritical, and unqualified belief in the inerrancy of science), and

theological factors (drawing on empirical theology to distinguish between differing implied

theologies of religion). Blockwise multiple regression demonstrated that personal, psychological,

religious, and theological factors all held significant power, but that the greatest variance was

explained by the attitudinal variables. When the five sets of variables were assessed within the

model, 25% of the variance was accounted for. Greater incompatibility between science and

religion was associated with scientific fundamentalism ($ß = .37$, $p < .001$), with anti-religious

attitude ($ß = .16$, $p < .001$), and with atheism ($ß = .07$, $p < .001$). These findings suggest that

young people who believe in science in an unqualified way are more distrustful of religion.

Keywords: science, religion, creation, creationism, quantitative survey, psychology of religion,

empirical theology, scientific fundamentalism.

In press

Abstract

Bailey's notion of implicit religion suggests that in contemporary societies the functions served by formal or explicit religions may be assumed by other systems of beliefs. The present paper tests this thesis in respect of the effect of an exaggerated, uncritical, and unqualified belief in the inerrancy of science, which we label 'scientific fundamentalism', among a sample of 11,809 13- to 15-year-old students drawn from the four nations of the UK. Previously established research has shown that, after controlling for personal and psychological factors, explicit religion has a positive effect on both self-esteem and empathy. These established findings have been confirmed in the present study employing the Astley-Francis Scale of Attitude toward Theistic Faith as a measure of explicit religion. Moreover, the new data also demonstrate that scientific fundamentalism conceptualised as implicit religion has a positive effect on both self-esteem and empathy, although this effect is somewhat smaller. These new data provide some support for Bailey's conceptualisation of implicit religion, by indicating that scientific fundamentalism is functioning in relation to self-esteem and empathy in the same way as explicit religion.

Keywords: implicit religion, belief in science, psychology of religion, scientific fundamentalism, self-esteem, empathy

Francis, L. J., Penny, G., & Astley, J. Christian identities, theologies of religion, and attitude toward religious diversity: A study among 13- to 15-year-old students in the UK. In H. S. Shipley and E. Arweck (Eds.), *Young people and the diversity of (non) religious identities in international perspective*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Abstract

Understanding variations in public attitudes toward religious diversity is a matter of concern within both the social scientific study of religion (concerned with *religious* factors) and empirical theology (concerned with *theological* factors). Drawing on data provided by 10,734 13- to 15-year-old students from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, this study tests the power of religious factors and theological factors to explain variance within the Attitude toward Religious Diversity Index (ARDI). Regression analyses demonstrate that theological factors account for additional variance after the inclusion of seven religious factors. The insights of the social scientific study of religion and empirical theology are complementary in this regard.

Keywords: social scientific study of religion, empirical theology, religious diversity, psychology.

Under Review

Abstract

Drawing on data from a survey conducted among 7,059 13- to 15-year-old students in England and Wales, this study examines parental and peer influence on church attendance among 645 students who identified themselves as Anglicans (Church of England or Church in Wales). The data demonstrated that young Anglicans who practised their Anglican identity by attending church did so primarily because their parents were Anglican churchgoers. Moreover, young Anglican churchgoers were most likely to keep going to church if their churchgoing parents also talked with them about their faith. Among this age group of Anglicans peer support seemed insignificant in comparison with parental support. The implication from these findings for an Anglican Church strategy for ministry among children and young people is that it may be wise to invest in the education and formation of churchgoing Anglican parents.

Keywords: Anglican, churchgoing, young people, parents, peers