

## Chapter 2

# FOUNDATIONS FOR AN EMPIRICAL PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION



Without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God.

That's God's signature. God's signature is never a forgery.

... like most Americans, my faith consists in believing in every religion, including my own, but without ill-will toward anybody, no matter what he believes or disbelieves.

Religion is different from everything else; because in religion seeking is finding.

Man without religion is the creature of circumstances.<sup>1</sup>

### EXAMINING RELIGION EMPIRICALLY

Since its earliest days, psychology has examined religion. In 1902, William James—a U.S. philosopher and one of the founders of our field—gave his famous Gifford Lectures at the University of Edinburgh. These were soon published in book form as *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (James, 1902/1985; see also Gorsuch & Spilka, 1987). This work is a candidate for the most successful book in the history of psychology, since it has been continuously in print for over 100 years!

The success of James's *Varieties* lies in several features that guide our discussions in this book. First is the question of the nature of religion, compared to such concepts as psychic phenomena and superstition. For instance, James wrote books and papers on both religion and psychic phenomena; what distinguishes them? Second is the question of whether religion is a help or a hindrance; that is, does the good it brings outweigh the harm that can be associated with it? These questions are as much a part of the scientific study of religion today as they were in 1902.

Each of these issues is discussed throughout this text. For example, the nature of religion has been touched on already in Chapter 1, especially in regard to the recent emergence of a preference for the term “spirituality.” The second question—that of whether religion improves human relationships or creates prejudices and other problems that harm rela-

1. These quotations come, respectively, from the following sources: John Calvin, quoted in Kunkel, Cook, Meshel, Daughtry, and Hauenstein (1999, p. 193); Eddie Joe Lloyd, quoted in the online version of *The New York Times* (August 26, 2002); Saroyan (1937, p. 130); Cather (1926/1990, p. 94); and Julian Charles Hare and Augustus William Hare, quoted in *The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations* (1959, p. 237, No. 19).

tionships—is considered in a number of the chapters that follow. In the present chapter, however, we focus first on separating religion from other concepts that are often considered similar. We then examine dimensional and social-psychological approaches to the study of religion, and consider some other issues that are basic to establishing the foundations for an empirical psychology of religion.

## DISTINGUISHING RELIGION FROM OTHER CONCEPTS

In Chapter 1, we have avoided defining religion. Still, it needs to be distinguished from other, possibly overlapping concepts. Such distinctions allow us to deal in a more focused fashion with theory and empirical research in the psychology of religion. James's *The Varieties of Religious Experience* provides us with an entrée into this realm. He viewed religion as most laypeople might, without possessing any special information about it. As James saw it, religion mainly involves beliefs about “ultimate reality” and our relationship to it. “Ultimate” has been popularly and commonly defined in terms of a final referent—a God or gods—or the realm of religious institutions and their representatives.

Although James's *Varieties* works from traditional descriptions of religion, James did not confine himself to studying religion as thus defined. He also investigated, and published work on, psychic phenomena. In this portion of the chapter, both psychic phenomena and superstition are considered in relation to religion.

### Psychic Phenomena

James's researches in psychic phenomena (e.g., foretelling the future, reading cards, numerology, astrology, psychokinesis, etc.) culminated in a collection of letters, essays, and book reviews on reports of such non-natural behaviors and occurrences (Schmeidler, 1992). He also discussed extrasensory perception, dissociation (e.g., automatic writing, in which one hand writes while the person apparently does not know what is being written), and communication with spirits (see Murphy & Ballou, 1960). In these essays, James's strong commitments to data are evident. He sought facts instead of speculation, and was highly critical of scientists who simply assume that psychic phenomena do not occur. He was equally skeptical of those who believe that they do occur because someone claims they do. Based on his lifelong search for evidence of psychic phenomena, he concluded that almost all such events have naturalistic explanations. Nevertheless, he continued to feel that, given the number of people who claim to have had psychic experiences, there must be some degree of truth in these reports. In other words, consensual agreement—an unscientific and nonempirical criterion—was accepted by James.

One of the areas for which James felt some explanations could be proposed was dissociation. As noted above, dissociation includes automatic writing; it also includes posthypnotic suggestion and other acts and words that a person performs or says without conscious awareness. Central to his thinking about these phenomena was the importance of the subconscious (which he suggested causes them), along with a cosmic consciousness, a reflection of a universal mind over all people (which may also be involved).

James did consistently note the problem of duplicity. That is, he found that psychic mediums and similar individuals distorted their experiences and cheated extensively. What James eventually accepted, however, was thin evidence based upon equally thin assertions that there may have been an occasional valid event in so much material.

In this framework, religion appears distinct from psychic phenomena. Extrasensory perception, dissociative events, and communication with spirits via mediums are rare in religion. Despite an undeniably overlapping border between psychic claims and religious experiences, a number of differences are evident. The psychic realm is totally individualistic, highly transitory, magically loose in its structure, antithetical to reason, and lacking in historical-cultural foundation. In addition, psychic claims are usually considered morally irrelevant and unalterably opposed to scientific investigation. Their nature makes them unreliable and hence invalid in the sense discussed in Chapter 1. James's own belief was that religion is valid because it changes people's lives, whereas psychic phenomena, if they exist at all, have dubious effects and therefore remain of questionable validity.

### Superstition

A superstition has been defined as "any belief or attitude, based on fear or ignorance, that is inconsistent with the known laws of science or with what is generally considered in the particular society as true and rational; esp., such a belief in charms, omens, the supernatural, etc." (Guralnik, 1986, p. 1430). A superstitious person is one who acts on such beliefs. Examples of superstitious actions include walking under a ladder, avoiding the number 13, and tugging on one's cap before throwing a pitch in a ball game.

These examples of superstition contain nothing that is called religious or spiritual. But does the "superstition" label properly extend to religion as studied by psychology? *The Oxford Universal Dictionary on Historical Principles* (Onions, 1955) includes in its definition: "esp. in connection with religion" (p. 2084). This definition explicitly links the two concepts, but it also distinguishes between superstition and religion, since the two realms are not equated with each other.

One basis of superstition can be found in learning research. Though this type of research was originally conducted on animals by the noted psychologist B. F. Skinner (1948, 1969), superstition is obviously present in humans and may occur in one-trial learning, particularly with strong negative reinforcement (Morris & Maisto, 1998). Primarily when threat, pain, or much emotion is present, and is then resolved, irrelevant stimuli present in the situation become meaningful. For example, let us suppose that an athlete was wearing a specific pair of socks when a problem was alleviated; hence they become his "lucky socks," which he wears just in case they might make a difference in future similar circumstances. The athlete knows full well that there is no rational basis for the lucky socks to affect the game, but he just feels better when wearing them. Of course, if success occurs, the incident will be cited as proof of the superstition's truth.

It is not surprising that some religious behaviors are also superstitious for a particular person. They meet the twin conditions of being nonrational and of avoiding a major negative outcome (i.e., being based in fear). We must, however, ask whether religion is superstition.

Most religion does not meet the conditions of superstition. Whether right or wrong, religions usually have well-developed theologies that make religious behaviors rational, at least to those who hold them. The threat of avoiding a major negative outcome also seldom enters into daily religious behavior. Furthermore, the promise of hell is unlikely to take hold after one-trial learning. The idea of hell requires much complex social learning, plus both cognitive and motivational inputs. Later it will be shown that the subculture in which one is raised is a major determinant of religious behavior in general. Although religion includes conditioned responses, it is far more than just these responses, in that much social learning

may be involved and may even be influenced indirectly by genetic and evolutionary factors. These factors are detailed in Chapter 3.

### Research Comparing Psychic Phenomena and Superstition to Religion

As a science, the psychology of religion is quite interested in data comparing psychic phenomena and superstition to religion itself. If religion involves the same psychological processes as the other two concepts, then either of two conditions must be met. First, those who believe most strongly in psychic manifestations or who are most superstitious should also be the most religious. In other words, positive correlations would be predicted between measures of religion on the one hand, and measures of superstition and psychic beliefs on the other. The second condition under which psychic phenomena, superstition, and religion can be psychologically theorized to be identical is if they answer the same needs. Perhaps fears of the future can be lessened through consulting a psychic, through superstition, or through religion. Theoretically, then, if one had superstitions, one would not need religion. This view predicts a negative correlation between religion and these other phenomena. Of course, if different needs are met by these phenomena or if different psychological processes are involved, then negative correlations should also be observed among them.

Research has included questions and statements about beliefs in all three areas. An entire pool of items reflecting belief in psychic phenomena, superstitions, and religion is factored (see Chapter 1). There are three possible outcomes. If items from two or more areas load on the same factor, then the data support the contention that these two areas are “functionally the same.” If the items from two of the areas load in the opposite direction on the same factor or form two separate factors that are negatively correlated, then the “substitution” theory cannot be rejected. (It is not, however, directly supported, because religion may prevent the development of psychic or superstitious beliefs, just as we hope a good college education will decrease irrational beliefs.) If the religious items load on a separate, uncorrelated factor, the “functionally the same” and “substitution” theories would both be unsupported.

Studies are few in this area, and further work is necessary. Johnston, de Groot, and Spanos (1995) have factored a set of items representing the constructs discussed above. They found separate factors for the paranormal, superstition, extraordinary life forms, and religion; these results counter the “functionally the same” hypothesis. Sparks’s (2001) review of work in this area confirms the distinctiveness noted by Johnston et al. (1995). Goode (2000), however, claims that there may be paranormal elements in certain religious concepts (e.g., creationism, angels, the Devil), and provides data to this effect.

Contrary to the “substitution” hypothesis is Hynam’s (1970) finding that superstition correlated positively with a lack of clear social norms or rules, while both religiousness and scientific training were negatively related.

These data suggest three conclusions. First, a definition of superstition that does not mention religion is more accurate than a definition that does. Second, James was correct in writing separately on religious and psychic phenomena. Third, psychologists of religion in general, and we authors of this book in particular, are investigating neither psychic phenomena nor superstition *per se*. Of course, superstition and psychic reports occur in almost all areas of life, and occur among religious people as well. They are, however, peripheral to the psychology of religion.

## HOW IS RELIGIOUSNESS DEFINED IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION?

If superstition and psychic phenomena are not part of the psychology of religion, then what is included in this discipline? To answer this question, we first discuss several dimensional approaches that have been used in past research to provide both broad and narrow definitions of various areas of religion. Logical, logical-empirical, and factor-analytic approaches are all discussed. Another method of defining the psychology of religion is to consider it in relation to the major areas of psychology. How do social psychology, abnormal psychology, or developmental psychology treat religion? In this chapter, we concentrate on the social-psychological approach.

### DIMENSIONAL APPROACHES TO RELIGIOUSNESS

The human passion to be efficient, to summarize the complex, to wrap it all up in "25 words or less," is often an enemy to real understanding. Words are symbols that place many things under one heading, and the term "religion" is an excellent example of this tendency. When psychologists first began research in this area, they simply constructed measures of religiousness or religiosity. Sophisticated thinkers, however, soon put aside notions that people simply vary along a single dimension with antireligious sentiments at one end and orthodox views at the other end. These proved unsatisfactory, and many new sets of dimensions—some covering a broad range, some narrower in their focus—began to appear in the research literature.

When we examine the many dimensional schemes that have been proposed, we see that some stress the purpose of faith, whereas others look to the possible personal and social origins of religion. Although some appear to mix psychology and religion, there are also those that take their cues exclusively from psychology and focus on motivation or cognition. However, the real problem is twofold: the presence of a "hidden" value agenda that implies "good" and "bad" religion, and a lack of conceptual and theoretical clarity. There is also great overlap among the various proposals, with essentially the same idea being phrased in different words—testimony to the excellent vocabularies of some social scientists. There is, however, one point on which all agree: namely, that even though there is only one word for "religion," there may be a hundred possible ways of being "religious."

#### Logical Approaches

Some dimensional approaches to religiousness are logically derived; that is, they are based on concepts and ideas derived from induction. In other words, some theorists have observed and thought logically about religion, and from their many observations, they suggest what its multifaceted essence is. One particularly wide-ranging, comprehensive logical system of understanding religion is that proposed by Glock (1962), a well-known sociologist of religion. This system identifies and measures the following areas of religion (all quotes are from Glock, 1962, p. S99):

- *Experiential dimension*: "Religious people will . . . achieve direct knowledge of ultimate reality or will experience religious emotion."

- *Ideological dimension*: “The religious person will hold to certain beliefs.”
- *Ritualistic dimension*: “Specifically religious practices [are] expected of religious adherents.”
- *Intellectual dimension*: “The religious person will be informed and knowledgeable about the basic tenets of his faith and its sacred scriptures.”
- *Consequential dimension*: This covers “what people ought to do and the attitudes they ought to hold as a consequence of their religion.”

The inclusion of ritual ties Glock’s system to anthropology and psychology, as well as sociology. Also, the Ideological dimension is separated from the Intellectual, since religious adherents always hold a set of beliefs but may or may not be knowledgeable about the details of the faith.

In addition to Glock’s dimensions, it is possible to develop sets of logically derived psychological categories for understanding religion. One system for doing so would separate the personal from the interpersonal. This system is narrower in its focus than that of Glock, but it can be highly useful when detail on religious practices is desired. Because religion is at the same time unique to each person and yet part of a community, religion can be subdivided within each of these two areas. Here is one possible breakdown of religious practices:

- **Personal**
  - Prayer
  - Reading of scriptures
  - Meditation
- **Interpersonal**
  - Worshiping with others
  - Committee participation
  - Receiving and providing social support

### Examining Logical Systems Empirically

Logical systems such as Glock’s (1962) and our categories of religious practices (see above) help to organize our thinking and research. Although they are obviously useful, how they relate to each other is an empirical question. Proponents of a more empirical approach note that logical approaches to understanding religion may have poor psychometric properties. Glock’s dimensions as described above are a good example. Although the logic distinguishing Experiential from Consequential is clear, *empirically* the two are strongly related (Faulkner & DeJong, 1966; Weigert & Thomas, 1969). This is true of all the categories—they correlate highly with each other. Statistically, then, one only needs to measure one or two, because the same conclusions will be reached regardless of which dimension is used. For instance, a person who has a religious experience is therefore likely to be concerned with the consequences of adhering to the faith.

Similar objections can be raised to the logically derived system of religious practices we have described. If a person engages in one personal category of religious behavior, it is quite likely that this person utilizes the other personal practices. And if the person engages in an interpersonal category of religious behavior, he or she probably also employs other interpersonal practices.

### Logical–Empirical Approaches

Logical approaches can evolve into systems that blend the logical and the empirical. This is what happened to a system proposed by Gordon Allport (1959, 1966). In attempting to understand prejudice, he noted that some Christians, in keeping with the Christian tenets of love toward all, are less prejudiced than non-Christians. He also noted, however, that some Christians are more prejudiced than other Christians, even though this is in violation of Christian doctrines of love. To explain this difference, Allport suggested that some are Christian for the sake of the faith itself, and thus are “intrinsically” committed. They try to live in accordance with Christian doctrines. Others are Christian for what they can personally get out of it; these “extrinsically” committed Christians pick what they need and ignore the rest, such as the teachings on loving others. Allport called these “religious orientations” and saw them as opposite ends of an Intrinsic–Extrinsic (abbreviated here as I–E) continuum. Others developed similar constructs, including Allen and Spilka’s (1967) Committed versus Consensual scales, and Batson’s Internal versus External scales (Batson & Ventis, 1982).

Christians and others do have an immediate question about Allport’s placing I and E as opposites. For example, one item on a scale of religiousness may state that God answers prayers; another item may state that prayer is for communion with God. The former item is E, in the sense that an extrinsic benefit is gained from being Christian (e.g., the answered prayer might provide a higher income, a desire extrinsic to the prayer itself). The wish for communion is I, since there is no benefit extrinsic to the prayer experience itself. Christians have always held that both E and I experiences are benefits—a point also made by Pargament (1992). Allport recognized this, but he was not interested in multiple benefits. He was concerned with what people saw as the main goal. So each item of Allport’s I–E scales contains a phrase such as “the only reason” or “the main reason.” This permits investigation of what is most central to a person’s religiousness. Without such qualifiers, we would not be able to identify those who report receiving intrinsic benefits, and who also feel they are privy to extrinsic benefits as well (Gorsuch, Mylvaganan, Gorsuch, & Johnson, 1997). With verbal qualifiers such as Allport’s, people choose what they consider to be the central reason for being religious.

Empirical research develops constructs in ways that are not always predictable. In research on I versus E as opposite ends of a continuum, a problem soon arose: E items did not correlate strongly negatively with I items, which they should do if I and E are opposites. Even the wording “the only reason” was not sufficient for people to treat I and E as mutually exclusive (people are not bound by logic). The wording did keep the scales from correlating positively. Allport and Ross (1967) then modified their stance from I versus E as the ends of a single dimension, to I and E as two distinct dimensions, each with its own separate set of items. Although I and E were clearly distinct, there was, and generally continues to be, a low negative correlation between the I and E scales.

Batson and Ventis (1982) still felt that the I–E distinction was insufficient, as it did not fulfill the requirements for which it was originally proposed. Allport suggested that even intrinsically religious people would be prejudiced if they felt that religion was closed and exclusionary, but that they would be less judgmental if they saw religion as an open quest. So he added a Quest dimension, which is empirically distinct from both I and E (Batson & Ventis, 1982). People who are intrinsically committed to their faith should be as likely as not to view it as an ongoing quest. To date, this has been shown to be true.

In 1989, Kirkpatrick discovered one reason why the original E scale had low internal-consistency reliability: It was composed of two different ways of being religious for extrinsic

reasons. One is that of receiving a *personal* benefit, such as comfort in times of stress for an answered prayer. This has been labeled Extrinsic Personal (Ep). The other form is *social* and focuses on the people with whom one associates when participating in the religion. This might further mean making them friends, and has been termed Extrinsic Social (Es).

By the 1980s and 1990s, it was evident that the widely used 1967 versions of the Allport–Ross I-E scales needed revisions. The E dimension was shown to be complex, and the reliability of the original scale was low. The thoroughness of the E scale was also questioned. Gorsuch et al. (1997) asked students in Hawaii, a multicultural and multireligious setting, to suggest reasons for being religious. The items were then statistically analyzed in several cultures, and the I, Ep, and Es factors were replicated. They also found suggestions of other extrinsic factors, primarily one for Extrinsic Morality (Em), in which one is moral because it is utilitarian to be moral. Em describes a facet of one's religious motivations as stemming from religion's decision-making moral basis. A common moral base for a culture is also a part of this construct, and supports a religious–moral stance.

Obviously the concepts of I and E have developed considerably since Allport's original formulation, which is now primarily of historical interest. Not only have the concepts changed; we also know more about what other variables I and E relate to and what they do not relate to (see later chapters). This is typical of the cumulative nature of science.

Many researchers besides Allport and his colleagues have taken combined logical–empirical approaches to defining dimensions of religion. A sampling of the results is given in Table 2.1.

### Factor-Analytic Approaches

One method of identifying the dimensions that are needed is to employ factor analysis. As noted in Chapter 1, factor analysis distinguishes the basic dimensions within a set of variables, with “basic” being defined by high correlations among the variables within dimensions, and low correlations between dimensions.

Factor analysis has several critical points that we need to note. First, the variables must be assessed systematically with a clearly defined sample. They must also be pertinent and relevant to the issue studied; sampling of a hodge-podge of variables results in a hodge-podge of factors. Moreover, factor analysis provides a view of the variables that is solely determined by the correlations among them. In particular, the factors themselves may or may not be correlated. This is important for religion, because so many of the constructs within religion are related to each other. Clearly, one must determine whether the factors are correlated.

Even though some of the dimensions listed in Table 2.1 were finally established via factor analysis, factor-analytic approaches were more fully undertaken in three attempts to understand the way people conceptualize God. Table 2.2 illustrates these attempts.

The three patterns of concepts/images of God shown in Table 2.2 suggest the variation that can result when different methods of analysis and different content are used to describe God. The statistical complexity of these advanced procedures might convince unsophisticated people of their total objectivity; however, subjectivity is always present and can affect such methods (Horn, 1967). For example, one has to decide on criteria for stopping the extraction of factors or select a minimum size for a factor loading to be meaningful. In sum, there are few simple answers to the problem of describing God or any other religious concept to which these analyses are applied.



TABLE 2.1. Some Logically and Empirically Derived Dimensional Approaches to the Study of Individual Religion

	<u>Allen and Spilka (1967)</u>
Committed religion	"Utilizes an abstract philosophical perspective: multiplex religious ideas are relatively clear in meaning and an open and flexible framework of commitment relates religion to daily activities" (p. 205).
Consensual religion <i>Simple</i>	"Vague, nondifferentiated, bifurcated, neutralized" (p. 205). A cognitively simplified and personally convenient faith.
	<u>Batson and Ventis (1982)</u>
Means religion	"Religion is a means to other self-serving ends than religion itself" (p. 151).
End religion	"Religion is an ultimate end in itself" (p. 151).
	<u>Clark (1958)</u>
Primary religious behavior	"An authentic inner experience of the divine combined with whatever efforts the individual may make to harmonize his life with the divine" (p. 23).
Secondary religious behavior	"A very routine and uninspired carrying out . . . of an obligation" (p. 24).
Tertiary religious behavior	"A matter of religious routine or convention accepted on the authority of someone else" (p. 25).
	<u>Fromm (1950)</u>
Authoritarian religion	"The main virtue of this type of religion is obedience, its cardinal sin is disobedience" (p. 35).
Humanistic religion	"This type of religion is centered around man and his strength . . . virtue is self-realization, not obedience" (p. 37).
	<u>Hunt (1972)</u>
Literal religion	Taking "at face value any religious statement without in any way questioning it" (p. 43).
Antiliteral religion	A simple rejection of literalist religious statements.
Mythological religion	A reinterpretation of religious statements to seek their deeper symbolic meanings.
	<u>James (1902/1985)</u>
Healthy-mindedness	An optimistic, happy, extroverted, social faith: "the tendency that looks on all things and sees that they are good" (p. 78).
Sick souls	"The way that takes all this experience of evil as something essential" (p. 36). A faith of pessimism, sorrow, suffering, and introverted reflection.
	<u>Lenski (1961)</u>
Doctrinal orthodoxy	"Stresses intellectual assent [to] prescribed doctrines" (p. 23).
Devotionalism	"Emphasizes the importance of private, or personal communion with God" (p. 23).
	<u>McConahay &amp; Hough (1973)</u>
Guilt-oriented, extrapunitive	"Religious belief . . . centered on the wrath of God as it is related to other people . . . emphasizes punishment for wrong-doers" (p. 55).
Guilt-oriented, intropunitive	"A sense of one's own unworthiness and badness . . . a manifest need for punishment and a conviction that it will inevitably come" (p. 56).
Love-oriented, self-centered	"Oriented toward the forgiveness of one's own sins" (p. 56).
Love-oriented, other-centered	"Emphasizes the common humanity of all persons as creatures of God, and God's love . . . related to the redemption of the whole world" (p. 56).
Culture-oriented, conventional	"Values . . . are more culturally than theologically oriented" (p. 56).

**TABLE 2.2. Factorial Conceptualizations of God from Adjective Ratings**

<u>Spilka, Armatas, and Nussbaum (1964): Factor analysis</u>		
<i>Positive God<sup>a</sup></i>	<i>Harsh God</i>	<i>Omni-God</i>
Considerate	Damning	Omnipotent
Comforting	Punishing	Omnipresent
Helpful	Avenging	Omniscient
Warm	Jealous	All-wise
<i>Benevolent Ruler</i>	<i>Impersonal God</i>	<i>Formal Ruler</i>
Just	Impersonal	Formal
Blessed	Distant	Democratic
Kind	Inaccessible	Firm
Sovereign	Mythical	Unchanging
<i>Timeless Father</i>	<i>Supreme Ruler</i>	<i>Psalmist's God</i>
Eternal	Kingly	Gentle
Everlasting	Majestic	Guiding
Holy	Glorious	Forgiving
Redeeming	Divine	Loving
<u>Gorsuch (1968): Hierarchical factor analysis</u>		
Third-order factor:		
<i>Traditional Christian</i> (a very large factor) Glorious, Strong, Matchless, Majestic, etc.		
Second-order factors:		
<i>Benevolent Deity</i>	<i>Companionable</i>	
All-wise	Warm	
Forgiving	Fair	
Loving	Faithful	
Redeeming	Considerate	
Primary factors: <sup>b</sup>		
<i>Kindliness</i>	<i>Wrathfulness</i>	<i>Deisticness</i>
Kind	Severe	Inaccessible
Merciful	Wrathful	Impersonal
Gentle	Hard	Distant
Forgiving	Avenging	Mythical
<i>Omni-ness</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>	<i>Eternality</i>
Omnipresent	Valuable	Everlasting
Omniscient	Timely	Eternal
Omnipotent	Vigorous	Divine
Infinite	Important	Holy
<u>Kunkel et al. (1999): Concept analysis, multidimensional scaling, and cluster analysis<sup>c</sup></u>		
Dimensions:		
<i>Nurturant vs. Punitive</i>		
<i>Mystical vs. Anthropomorphic</i>		
Concept clusters: <sup>d</sup>		
<i>Vengeful</i>	<i>Human Roles</i>	<i>Regulating</i>
Life-taking	Family members	Ruler
Unfair	Judge	Lawmaker
Punishing	Teacher	Guide
Hates evil	Man/Woman	Messiah

continued

TABLE 2.2. *continued*

<i>Mysterious</i>	<i>Powerful</i>	<i>Inspirational</i>
Mysterious	Superior	Inspirational
Logical	Powerful	Exciting
Simple	Strong	Amazing
Spiritual	Everlasting	Charming
<i>Benevolent</i>		
Forgiving		
Wonderful		
Unselfish		
Welcoming		

<sup>a</sup>The top four loaded adjectives are presented for all factors in all studies. This selection was used in later test construction.

<sup>b</sup>Eleven factors are given, but only the six most pertinent and comparable are given here.

<sup>c</sup>Cluster analysis may use any of a wide number of measures of similarity among variables. These measures are "clustered" or grouped by the researcher, and criteria are selected that maximize the relationships among the variables within a cluster and minimize those between the clusters. Factor analysis, as described in Chapter 1, starts with correlations, measures of relationships among the variables. It has been called "a refined cluster analysis" (Guertin & Bailey, 1970, p. 14).

<sup>d</sup>These descriptive terms are simply selected from a number within each cluster to illustrate the concept as well as possible.

## A PERSPECTIVE FROM PSYCHOLOGY: SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

The structure of psychology is not as logically organized as introductory psychology texts often imply. Although there are specific subfields within psychology, psychologists from different subfields are often concerned with what turn out to be the same processes. Though we look at areas such as developmental psychology and abnormal psychology (among others) later in this volume, here we concentrate on social psychology.

The psychology of religion falls primarily within social psychology in general, and within the domain of individual differences in particular (Dittes, 1969). Social psychology studies the person in the social context. Because religiousness varies from one person to another, the psychology of religion stresses the individual-variability aspect of social psychology. The person's own attitudes and behavior are studied as dependent and independent variables. Social psychology further examines how independent variables, such as religiousness, affect people and their relationships with others. Much of this research is devoted to social-cognitive processes, particularly attributions. In Chapter 1, we have discussed the making of attributions as an important part of the search for meaning—a core theme in our framework for the psychology of religion. The attribution process is described in further detail, following the discussion of individual differences.

### Individual Differences

Traditionally, social psychology sees the domain of individual differences as having three subdomains within it; these are the realms of "cognition," "affect," and "behavior." To these three, we add "habit." Cognition is primarily concerned with beliefs and how they are learned—in other words, how the ideological aspect of religion is conceptualized. The

affective realm emphasizes feelings and attitudes—the emotional, “like–dislike” facet of belief or behavior. Behavior, of course, consists of what people do, how they act. Finally, habit stresses what one does regularly and consistently. These brief descriptions are expanded upon below. The psychology of religion looks at individual religious differences within each of these areas. Items representing these subdomains are exemplified in Table 2.3. The first illustration in the cognitive area uses a response format that emphasizes the definition of the subdomain, mostly here belief. The second illustration uses a common response format that emphasizes belief but includes an element of affect—namely, value, which we discuss below. This distinction is not made for the other subdomains.

The concept of “attitude” is ambiguous. Standard social psychology texts use “attitudes” to refer to a domain that unites cognition and affect with the potential of producing behav-

TABLE 2.3. Illustrations of Items Assessing Aspects of Cognition, Affect, Habit, and Behavior

<u>Cognition</u>	
<i>Belief</i>	
1. Rate what you feel are the “odds” (%) that God exists.	There is no God 0 25 50 75 100 God definitely exists
<i>Value</i>	
2. God exists.	Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree
<i>Belief</i>	
3. Rate how important attending church weekly is.	Unimportant 1 2 3 4 5 Important
<i>Value</i>	
4. Everyone should attend church each week.	Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree
<u>Affect (attitudes)</u>	
<i>Belief</i>	
5. Rate how much you enjoy worship services.	Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 Very much
<i>Value</i>	
6. I enjoy worship services.	Strongly disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree
<u>Habit</u>	
7. How long have you had your current pattern of church attendance?	
a.	1 year or less
b.	1–2 years
c.	3–4 years
d.	5 years or more
<u>Behavior</u>	
8. How often do you attend church?	
a.	Never
b.	A couple of times a year
c.	Once a month
d.	Several times a month
e.	Once a week
f.	More than once a week

ior. Research often uses the term in reference to affect or emotion toward an object, as in “positive attitude” to mean that a person likes something and “negative attitude” to mean that a person doesn’t like it. “Value” is a more involved and somewhat conflicted concept, as it deals with the importance or worth to a person of an object, situation, or event. Rokeach (1968) called values “abstract ideals, positive or negative . . . representing a person’s beliefs about ideal modes of conduct and ideal terminal goals” (p. 124). When we measure a person’s orientation toward religion, beliefs, values, attitudes, behavior, and habits are all part of the total picture.

Because each subdomain has a different purpose, it is important to keep them distinct. Research can then identify the conditions under which they relate to each other. For example, Allport (1959) was interested in total religiousness based on both the I and E scores (Allport & Ross, 1967). He stressed affect or motivation in these orientations, and ignored cognition. Later versions of the I and E scales also dropped the behavioral items.

### **Cognition**

The cognitive realm consists of the two subareas mentioned above, beliefs and values. Since these are a function of experience, usually with others (e.g., parents, friends, etc.), they imply that learning theory is the basis for psychological models of how one acquires religious beliefs. A major emphasis is on social learning theory—that is, how a person learns from others. This can range from watching someone model a particular belief to accepting a belief on the basis of another person’s authority.

Cognitions are organized into “schemas,” which are sets of interrelated beliefs and values. Because schemas are interrelated, people want the constructs to be consistent with one another. If they are not consistent, a person may compartmentalize them so that the inconsistency is no longer apparent. The person may, however, change one or more constructs to make them consistent.

*Beliefs.* To make sense of people’s personal experiences, we need to know what they consider true—that is, their beliefs. Examples of beliefs include accepting the ideas that God did (or did not) create the world, that the Bible was dictated by God, or that one’s fellow believers would be proud if they knew what one did.

Beliefs provide information about the physical and psychological surroundings to which people must adapt. They are “cognitive maps” of the reality through which individuals navigate to reach a goal. As cognitive maps, they do not in themselves provide motivation. Rather, beliefs are used as people become motivated to achieve some goal.

The concepts of God listed in Table 2.2 are beliefs. For example, people who agree with Gorsuch’s (1968) Traditional Christian concept hold that God is primarily glorious, strong, matchless, majestic, and so on.

Beliefs are defined here solely as cognitive constructs. They do not contain emotions such as liking or disliking. The saying “the Devil believes in God [i.e., the Traditional Christian God] and shudders” shows the distinction between a belief and understanding the implication of that belief. It also suggests possible approval of that belief.

This is, of course, a narrow definition of “belief.” Elsewhere in this text, the term is used more broadly. The phrase “believe in” includes thoughts as to what is true and implies a commitment as well. In the United States, to “believe in God” suggests to many

people that one both believes God exists and is a follower—probably a joyful follower—of God.

This extends the idea of belief to the notion of assent. Belief as cognition is supplemented by motivation, implying commitment to the system of which individual beliefs are one aspect. Believers now become followers of a faith.

One can also believe in a variety of spirits, and do what is necessary to placate the spirits. We must keep in mind that beliefs plus assents are key components of attitudes. In other words, attitudes are composites of beliefs plus motivations to act in a certain way.

**Values.** Values are cognitive constructs of the good, and consist of the ideals, principles, and moral obligations held by an individual or group. Though values are not a central focus in social psychology, most social psychologists assume that they reflect beliefs with an element of affect, as noted earlier. To consider values broadens the definition of beliefs beyond the criterion of apparent truth. In this model, values are not a part of affect per se; however, they add to prediction over and above classical attitude scales in a wide range of situations (Gorsuch & Ortberg, 1983).

Values differ from beliefs in that they are motivational, which beliefs, in and of themselves, are not. Values acquire motivation when the observed belief describing “what is” differs from the valued situation of “what should be.” In Table 2.3, the belief that God exists is treated as a probability, a likelihood. When value alone is considered, there is no doubt: “God exists.” This follows from God’s existence being regarded as the ideal state of affairs. Again, note that values are also part of attitude scales (see Table 2.2).

### *Affect*

Affect is the emotional response to an object or situation. “Object or situation” is defined broadly here; it may be a particular place of worship or a contemplated action. We are concerned with how the person feels about the independent and objective “object or situation.” We are also concerned with operationalizing that element of emotion by checking how a person responds to it (see Table 2.2). The presence of feeling implies that values are involved. This kind of affect is what most attitude scales measure. Affect is developed by classical conditioning. If a neutral object is associated with something that is very pleasant, then the neutral object is also judged to be pleasant. For example, a person may associate a particular religious setting with a reassuring feeling of being close to God; the setting then comes to provide a reassuring feeling by itself.

Technically, affect includes the whole range of emotions (fear, delight, awe, disgust, etc.). So far, research on human emotions has had little impact on the psychology of religion, and vice versa. A disproportionate emphasis has been placed on cognition, but slowly social psychology is increasingly stressing the association of belief with affect. Although future research will round out the area, affect is currently just measured as positive and negative.

### *Habit*

Beliefs, values, and affect all have an impact on a decision. When the same choice/question arises several times, a person remembers the decision that was previously made. Unless the person perceives that something has changed, he or she can just use the prior decision and

do the same thing again. Instead of “reinventing the wheel” every time people encounter familiar situations, they develop habits. This is very effective, for if they did not develop habits, every act would need to be consciously evaluated.

**Habits extend over a long time.** They can be developed in childhood and carried into adulthood. They can lie dormant because the situation calling them forth does not occur, only to be activated once again when the same situation recurs. Much religious behavior is habitual.

**One important and unique aspect of a habit is its relationship to beliefs, values, and affects.** Whereas the original behavior leading to a habit may be based on an explicit decision based on a person’s beliefs, values, and affects, the habit itself replaces thinking. In the early stages of a habit, reasoning remains accessible. As time passes, the rationale for the habit tends to be forgotten, and the reasoning becomes increasingly inaccessible. This means that the behavior may be carried on even if the situation changes in ways the person does not perceive. The original reasoning may not apply in new circumstances.

People are born into social orders in which religion already exists and is both formally and informally learned. Religious behavior can be reinforced by parents, friends, and society, so many people express their faith habitually and mechanically. Parents teach it to their children, and these lessons are further reinforced by society through the fact that births, marriages, deaths, and most other noteworthy personal and cultural/societal/communal events are solemnized by religious institutions, rituals, language, and concepts.

### **Behavior**

Behavior results from multiple variables. These include cognitive (belief and value) and affective components. In utility and reasoned-action models, behavior is a function of both. In reasoned-action models (e.g., Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), belief pertains to the consequences that follow actions. As we have mentioned in Chapter 1, the local religion in Thailand teaches that there is a spirit associated with a piece of land. If the spirit is somehow offended, the building on that land or the people in it will have bad luck. To prevent this, a Thai person builds a spirit house on the property. This behavior depends on a belief that such action will appease the spirit, and that it is valuable to do so. Positive affect will also result from erecting a spirit house, ranging from relief of fear to pride from building an attractive spirit house. The following equation is a typical way of including the elements just noted:

$$\text{Behavior} = (\text{Belief} \times \text{Value}) + (\text{Belief} \times \text{Affect}) + \text{Habit}$$

**This assumes that belief, value, and affect are all measured with a true zero.** When any one of the elements in the equation is zero, then that part of the equation drops out, regardless of the other values. If a person does not believe that a spirit house will appease the spirits of the land, then it makes no difference to build one, regardless of whether appeasing the spirits is seen as valuable or generates positive affect. In like manner, if value, affect, or habit is zero, this will eliminate it from the equation.

In addition to beliefs, values, and affect, behaviors are influenced by a host of other variables, including situational constraints. For example, an adolescent’s church attendance may be more a function of that adolescent’s parents’ beliefs, values, and affect toward the church than of the adolescent’s. If the whole family attends church, then the adolescent goes. The teenager’s presence at services is an example of situational constraints that affect religious behavior.

### **Advantages of the Multivariate Individual-Differences Model**

The overall individual-differences model just proposed is helpful because each of the areas (e.g., beliefs, affects, etc.) functions by different psychological means. Beliefs are developed by the principles of cognition and learning theory; different places of worship provide information for a variety of beliefs. These include a whole host of data, including the congregants' degree of liberalism or conservatism, their style of worship, and a variety of demographic characteristics. We would be able to build a cognitive map of these places of worship.

Religious affects either result from direct emotion that is immediately elicited, or are learned through classical conditioning. Direct emotions often occur in worship services and become components of religious experience. These can include awe, forgiveness, a feeling of belonging, and the warmth of being accepted by those with the same beliefs and values. Other emotions become associated with specific situations and behaviors through classical conditioning. For instance, particular songs may later bring back pleasant memories, as the desirable emotions associated with those songs in past situations are attached to the songs themselves.

Value and affect should be positively related. One normally enjoys maximizing a value, and this distinction permits exploration of intrapsychic conflicts about religion. Those who place a high value on religious behavior but do not personally enjoy it could be under special stress.

The Intrinsic (I)–Extrinsic (E)–Quest line of research has yet to be broken down into constituent components. I and E are considered motivations and appear to comprise affect and value items (Gorsuch, 1994). Quest is more difficult to understand; it may be a personality- and conflict-based orientation toward religion (Gorsuch, 1994; Kojetin, McIntosh, Bridges, & Spilka, 1987).

Habits, as already noted, may be founded on beliefs, values, and affects that are accessible or inaccessible. If they are accessible, it is easy to evaluate whether the habit is still reasonable. When beliefs, values, or affects are inaccessible, assessing habit applicability may be quite difficult.

Because each of the areas functions differently, it is often important to distinguish among them. Still, at other times we may wish to investigate some overriding concern, and measure across several of these areas. As noted earlier, Allport (1959) introduced I and E as “orientations” that assessed both attitudes and behaviors. Further development of the topic has shown that the primary element in these concepts is religious motivation. Newer versions of the I-E scales have eliminated religious behavior in order to make the constructs more exacting and useful.

### **Attribution in the Psychology of Religion**

A major theoretical position in social psychology has been termed “attribution theory.” As indicated in Chapter 1, it is a core element in our framework, particularly in understanding how religion helps people make sense out of the world.

Over 40 years ago, the noted psychologist Fritz Heider (1958) theorized that people often explain social situations in terms of both the characteristics of those who interact within these settings and the nature of the environment itself. The relationship of someone with his or her God might also be conceptualized in interpersonal terms. A process of organization, in-



terpretation, and explanation takes place. Heider stated that “this ordering and classifying can be considered a process of attribution” (p. 296). In other words, as we have noted in Chapter 1, attribution is primarily concerned with causal explanations about people, things, and events. Such explanations are couched in ideas and statements that assign certain powers and positions to various situational and dispositional factors. By examining such meanings and their ramifications, attributional research became a major cornerstone of cognitive social psychology, and it was soon extended to explain how people understand their emotional states and many of the things that happen to them and to others (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Hewstone, 1983a).

### *Motivational Bases of Attributions: Needs for Meaning, Control, and Esteem*

The question of why people make attributions returns us to some basic motivational themes that underlie much religious thinking and behavior—namely, to needs for meaning, control, and esteem. Here we define “esteem” as a personal sense of capability and adequacy, which is a central part of sociality (as defined in Chapter 1) and is reflected in our relationships with others. Though other activating elements will be important, depending on the topic and situation, we see meaning, control, and esteem as central concerns for the psychology of religion.

Forms of personal faith—for example, Allport’s I, E, and Quest orientations—can be viewed as motivationally concerned with meaning, control, and esteem. Allport’s (1966) idea of I faith as a sentiment flooding “the whole life with motivation and meaning” (p. 455), and as a search for truth, is explicitly directed toward the attainment of ultimate meaning. Quest is a similar effort to attain answers to basic questions. Further analyses of these religious orientations easily yield connections with these motivations.

In addition to being activated by a “need to know,” a “need for mastery and control” enters the picture, as Kelley (1967) and other central figures in attribution theory and research have noted. Bulman and Wortman (1977) suggested yet another motivational source of attributions, which has been buttressed by much research—namely, that “people assign causality in order to maintain or enhance their self-esteem” (p. 351). Self-esteem is also likely to be a consequence of the presence of meaning and a sense of control.

Our theoretical position asserts that attributions are triggered when meanings are unclear, control is in doubt, and self-esteem is challenged. There is, as suggested, much evidence that these three factors are interrelated.

### *Naturalistic and Religious Attributions*

Given these three sources of motivations for attributions, the individual may attribute the causes of events to a wide variety of possible referents (oneself, others, chance, God, etc.). These referents may be classified into two broad categories: “naturalistic” and “religious.” The evidence is that most people in most circumstances initially employ naturalistic explanations and attributions (e.g., references to people, natural events, accidents, chance, etc.) (Lupfer, Brock, & DePaola, 1992). Depending on a wide variety of situational and personal characteristics, there is a good likelihood of shifting to religious attributions when naturalistic ones do not satisfactorily meet the needs for meaning, control, and esteem (Hewstone, 1983b; Spilka, Shaver, & Kirkpatrick, 1985). The task is to identify and comprehend those influences that contribute to the making of religious attributions. For example, we already

know that the attributions of intrinsically religious individuals differ from those who are extrinsically oriented (Watson, Morris, & Hood, 1990a). In addition, Gorsuch and Smith (1983) have examined the bases of attributions to God. Spilka and Schmidt (1983a) and Lupfer et al. (1992) have also looked at a number of personal and situational possibilities that affect religious and secular attributions. Hunsberger (1983c) has focused on biases that enter this process. Even though there is much potential in this theoretical framework, it has only been applied in a few areas.

### *Extending Attribution Theory*

Theories usually become more useful when they are combined with other theoretical speculations, and Wikstrom (1987) has joined our attributional framework with Sundén's role theory of religion. Sundén's theory proposes that religion "psychologically speaking, seem[s] to provide models and roles for a certain kind of perceptual 'set'" (Wikstrom, 1987, p. 391). A frame of reference is established in which the person's actions and cognitions are now structured by a religious role. Wikstrom further tells us that "when the frame of reference is activated, stimuli which would otherwise be left unnoticed are not only observed but also combined and attributed to a living and acting 'other,' to God" (1987, p. 393). Moreover, "as a condition and as a result of the feedback from the role-taking experience . . . [the self-perception] . . . can be seen as something that provides meaning and a feeling of identity, and strengthens self-esteem" (1987, p. 396). Control is also brought into the picture, showing how role and attribution approaches seem to parallel each other. There is unexplored potential here: van der Lans (1987) shows how this kind of role theory predicts various aspects of religious experience. Unfortunately, this approach has not stimulated much research.

Our contention is that these two cornerstones of social psychology—the attributional process and role taking—are products of interactions between external situational factors and internal dispositional factors (Magnusson, 1981). In other words, all thinking and behavior takes place in an interpersonal and sociocultural context in which situations are elements. We now identify some of these influences that contribute to the making of religious attributions.

### *Situational Influences*

For many years, social psychology in general and attribution research in particular have emphasized the role of immediate environmental factors in the determination of thinking and behavior (Ross & Nisbett, 1991). This implies that much religious experience, belief, and behavior are subject to the vagaries of current circumstances. In other words, the information we researchers obtain may largely be a function of the settings in which people are studied and data collected. There is evidence to support this approach. Schachter (1964) claims that an individual "will label his feelings in terms of his knowledge of the immediate situation" (p. 54). Dienstbier (1979) has referred to this labeling as "emotion attribution theory," in order to explain how people define the causes of emotional states when ambiguity exists. Proudfoot and Shaver (1975) use the same basic idea to denote the bases of religious experience. Research suggests that up to three-quarters of intense religious experiences occur when individuals are engaged in religious activities or are in religious settings (Spilka & Schmidt, 1983a). Still, one must be cautious, for some studies have not shown the influence of religious situations on religious attributions (Lupfer et al., 1992). There is also reason to

believe that personal factors need to be considered (Epstein & O'Brien, 1985). Since we want to understand attributions in general, rather than those that involve only emotion or ambiguity, we have called our approach "general attribution theory" (Spilka et al., 1985).

We perceive situational influences as falling into two broad categories: "contextual factors" and "event character factors." The first category is concerned with the degree to which situations are religiously structured, while the latter stresses the nature of the event being explained.

*Contextual Factors.* Situations may be religiously structured by the locale in which activities or their evaluation take place (e.g., church or nonchurch surroundings; the presence of others who are known to be religious, such as clergy; or participation in religious activities, such as prayer or worship). The presence of such circumstances should elicit religious attributions, and, as noted above, this is obviously true when religious mystical or intense religious experiences occur. Certainly if other people are present and are religiously involved, their actions should aid in the selection of a religious interpretation. We might say that the likelihood of religious explanations is heightened by such factors. Work by Hood (1977) has further demonstrated the importance of situational influences in the creation of nature and spiritual experiences. Contextual elements apparently increase the chances that those affected will attribute what occurs to the intervention of God. The *salience* of religion seems to be the key influence here. That is, the more important, noticeable, or conspicuous religion is in a situation, the more probable it is that religious attributions will be offered. This suggests what has been called the "availability hypothesis" or "availability heuristic." Religious influences in situations increase the probability of making religious associations or arousing religious ideas (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). One may argue that church settings in which religious attributions are not made may not be salient for religion. For example, research has shown that simply being present in a religious institution may not be enough (Spilka & Schmidt, 1983a).

*Event Character Factors.* Religious attributions may also be affected by the nature or character of the event being explained. A number of such influences are possible: (1) the importance of what takes place; (2) whether the event is positive or negative; (3) the domain of the event (social, political, economic, medical, etc.); and (4) whether the event occurs to the attributing person or to someone else. These factors have been shown to affect the intensity and frequency of religious attributions, and we feel that they are influential to the extent that they enhance meaning, control, and esteem.

Lupfer et al. (1992) speak of "meaning belief systems" (p. 491). This concept emphasizes the adequacy of naturalistic versus religious explanations. As one set proves to be satisfactory, the alternative set may be ignored, at least in terms of what the relative availability of explanations suggests. Another possibility that reintroduces questions of meaning and control concerns the degree of ambiguity and threat that events convey. For example, medical problems may be least understood and have the greatest potential for threatening life. In contrast, as serious as economic disasters are, they seem to be understood more easily; they also leave the individual the possibility of starting over again. In other words, we hypothesize that situations involving high ambiguity and high threat may have the greatest likelihood of calling forth religious explanations. One problem is to determine the relative degrees of threat for the different domains.

**Event Importance.** Considering the awe with which the power of God is regarded, one might perceive a role for the deity only when events of the greatest significance are involved. A disaster takes place, and the insurance company defines it as an “act of God.” A young person unexpectedly dies, and it is said to be an expression of “God’s will.” People who win millions of dollars in lotteries commonly see the “hand of God” in their success. The unanticipated is often explained by such phrases as “God works in mysterious ways.” Despite the fact that science has provided detailed naturalistic interpretations of birth and death, as well as reasons for good fortune and victory or failure and defeat, for most people there still remains a sense of the miraculous about the rare and unique events that can greatly change their lives. From a personal perspective, science and common sense often do not satisfactorily answer such questions as “Why now?”, “Why me?”, or “Why here?” If someone is suffering from a severe illness or a terminal condition, attributions and pleas to God seem quite appropriate. Instances of remission when all appeared hopeless are frequently regarded as signs of God’s mercy, compassion, favor, or forgiveness. Research confirms this view that God becomes part of the “big picture” for the significant things that happen (Spilka & Schmidt, 1983a). Defining what is important has a very individual quality: Sports teams may pray for extra achievement in the “big” game, or gamblers may plead for divine intervention on a roll of the dice (Hoffman, 1992). Attributions therefore are a function of event importance—a subjectively determined concept.

**The Valence (Positivity–Negativity) of an Event.** If there is one tendency in making attributions to God, it is that people rarely blame God for the bad things that happen to them. Attributions to God are overwhelmingly positive (Bulman & Wortman, 1977; Johnson & Spilka, 1991; Lupfer et al., 1992). Bulman and Wortman (1977) studied the reasons given by young people who became paraplegic because of serious accidents. They saw a benevolent divine purpose in what happened to them. As one such youth put it, “God’s trying to put me in situations, help me learn about Him and myself and also how I can help other people” (quoted in Bulman & Wortman, 1977, p. 358). In another study, a patient with cancer told one of the authors, “God does not cause cancer . . . illness and grief do not come from God. God does give me the strength to cope with any and all problems” (quoted in Johnson & Spilka, 1991, p. 30). Rabbi Harold Kushner’s (1981) well-known book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* supports this idea that bad things should not be attributed to God.

Even though positive attributions to God prevail, some people feel that they are being punished for their sins and may make negative attributions, but this is relatively rare. Clearly, the valence of events influences religious attributions, but we need to know more about why and under what circumstances positive or negative attributions are made to the deity.

**Event Domain.** Certain domains appear “ready-made” for the application of secular understandings, while others seem more appropriate for invoking religious possibilities. We know that medical situations elicit more religious attributions than either social or economic circumstances, and it may be that, historically and culturally, the latter realms have largely been associated with naturalistic explanations (Spilka & Schmidt, 1983a). In addition, religious institutions have been quite averse to glorifying money and wealth. References in the Bible to “filthy lucre” and the difficulty the rich will encounter in attempting to enter heaven leave little doubt that economic and spiritual matters are not regarded as harmonious.

Without question, when people are in dire straits in any domain, it is not uncommon to seek divine help. The issue may, however, revolve around the clarity of meanings and the sense of control a person has in various situations. Religion may best fill the void when the person cannot understand why things are as they are, and control is lacking. In other words, when ambiguity is great and threat is high.

\* *The Personal Relevance of Events.* Personal relevance is one of those variables that overlaps the broad categories of situational and dispositional (see "Dispositional Influences," below). It shares both realms. There is little doubt that when events occur to us, they are much more personally important than when they happen to others. We can be deeply moved when we hear about a friend or relative's serious illness, but when we suffer from such a condition ourselves, the question "Why me?" is suddenly of the greatest significance, and attributions to God are commonly made. If something particularly good happens to someone else, such as the winning of a great deal of money, we might say "That's luck for you," and feel happy for that person. The one benefited is more likely to claim that "God was looking out for me." The idea that personal relevance may elicit more religious attributions has gained support, but not consistently. It does seem to be involved in interactions with other variables, so additional research is called for to resolve these ambiguities (Lupfer et al., 1992; Spilka & Schmidt, 1983a).

*Situational Complexity and Event Significance.* Reality tells us not only that any particular event includes all of the dimensions described above—importance, valence, domain, and personal relevance—but also that event contexts vary greatly. It is also quite probable that event characteristics interact differently in different settings. It may be contended that each situation is a unique, one-time occurrence, and without question this is true. Still, there are commonalities across events and situations that need to be abstracted and categorized. Even within-situation dimensions remain to be discovered. An empirical scientific approach must keep these considerations in mind when theories such as the one proposed here are employed to direct research.

Though we somewhat arbitrarily distinguish situations and people, in life this really makes little sense. There are no situations or events that are meaningful without people to create such meanings. In the last analysis, person and situation are in "transaction." It is a conceptual convenience to separate the two with the word "interaction" when in actuality they are inseparable. To many psychologists, the ultimate purpose of our discipline is to develop a psychology that treats the situation and the individual as a unit (Magnusson, 1981; Rowe, 1987). Though this is a goal to which we may aspire, we are forced to consider the individual in the same way that we look at the situation.

### ***Dispositional Influences***

*The Individual in Context.* The strong emphasis on individualism in North American society causes us to look at people as if they act independently of their surroundings. Just as events take place in contexts, persons always exist in their individual life spaces, which vary with time and place. It may make a big difference if someone reacts in the morning before breakfast, or in the evening after supper. A religious experience that takes place in a church may have different repercussions than one that occurs when the individual is alone on a mountain top. Personal response is surprisingly situationally dependent.

**Personal Factors.** Individual characteristics may be termed “dispositional,” and these fall into three overlapping categories: “background,” “cognitive/linguistic,” and for lack of a better word, “personality.” Since we are not in a position to denote constitutional and genetic influences or their effects, these three realms imply that people pattern their attributions regarding the causes and nature of events so that some explanations are much more congenial (meaning more “available” and/or “better-fitting”) than other possibilities. This would hold true for the selection of naturalistic as opposed to religious referents. Specifically, it would be true for their decisions as to whether positive or negative event outcomes are a result of their own actions or those of others; are due to fate, luck, or chance; or are attributable to the involvement of God. Research in this area is still needed, and slowly the challenge is being taken up (Bains, 1983; Lupfer et al., 1992; Schaefer & Gorsuch, 1991).

**Background Factors.** It is a psychological truism to state that people are largely products of their environment as far as most behavior is concerned. The overwhelming majority of us are exposed early in life to religious teachings at home and by our peers and adults in schools, churches, and communities. These childhood lessons often follow us throughout life, and are expressed by the use of religious concepts in a wide variety of circumstances. A common observation suggests that the stronger a person’s spiritual background, the greater the chance that the person will report intense religious experiences and undergo conversion (Clark, 1929; Coe, 1900). Frequency of church attendance, knowledge of one’s faith, importance of religious beliefs, and the persistence of religious ideas over many decades are correlates of early religious socialization (McGuire, 1992; Shand, 1990). In other words, the more conservatively religious or orthodox the home and family in which a person was reared, the greater the person’s likelihood of using religious attributions later in life.

**Cognitive/Linguistic Factors.** Attributions depend on having available a language that both permits and supports thinking along certain lines. Bernstein (1964) tells us that “Language marks out what is relevant, affectively, cognitively, and socially, and experience is transformed by what is made relevant” (quoted in Bourque & Back, 1971, p. 3).

Such relevance is well demonstrated by studies showing that religious persons possess a religious language and use it to describe their experience. There is reason to believe that the presence of such a language designates an experience as religious instead of aesthetic or some other possibility (Bourque, 1969; Bourque & Back, 1971). Meaning to the experiencing individual appears in part to be a function of the language and vocabulary available to the person, and this clearly relates to the individual’s background and interests. There is much in the idea that thought is a slave of language, and the thoughts that breed attributions are clearly influenced by the language the attributor is set to use (Carroll, 1956).

**Personality/Attitudinal Factors.** The broad heading of “personality/attitudinal factors” includes a wide variety of dispositional factors that almost seem to defy classification. The language of personality is both difficult and complex, and different thinkers often employ different concepts to cover the same psychological territory. Schaefer and Gorsuch (1991) propose a “multivariate belief–motivation theory of religiousness” in an effort to integrate the often scattered ideas and research notions that associate traits and attitudes with religion. These scholars first recognize what they term a “superordinate domain” of religiousness, which comprises a number of subdomains. Their intention is to define the components of

these latter spheres. The three they select for study are religious motivation, religious beliefs, and religious problem-solving style. Depending on the variables chosen to represent these subdomains, there may be room for argument as to whether one is looking at a cognitive or a motivational factor. Unhappily, most workers in the field have not been as rigorous as Gorsuch and his students where definition of variables is concerned. For example, many "personality" factors have been examined in relation to religiousness. Among these are self-esteem, locus of control, the concept of a just world, and form of personal faith. All four seem to possess a motivational quality, yet the last two strongly involve belief systems. The Schaefer–Gorsuch theory implies a need to distinguish motivational from belief components, or to identify a third, overlapping domain (Schaefer & Gorsuch, 1991). This has been discussed earlier in this chapter. Obviously, this work is in its infancy, but it suggests a potentially fruitful way of organizing a mass of piecemeal findings into a coherent framework.

To illustrate the meanings of personality/attitudinal dispositions relative to the making of religious attributions, let us look briefly at what we know about two well-researched factors: self-esteem and locus of control.

*Self-esteem.* Research on self-conceptions has been conducted for almost 60 years. For more than 30 years, many psychologists have focused on self-esteem—the regard people have for themselves (Wylie, 1979). The evidence suggests that this variable is quite basic to personality. One view is that attributions are often made to validate and enhance self-esteem; they perform a self-protective function (Hewstone, 1983b).

Needless to say, a fair number of researchers have examined self-esteem relative to religiosity. In general, high self-esteem relates to positive and loving images of God, and similarly to Allport's I religious orientation (Benson & Spilka, 1972; Hood, 1992; Masters & Bergin, 1992). There may be a need here for consistency; this suggests that those who have negative self-views perceive God as unloving and punitive (Benson & Spilka, 1972). In other words, the person with a negative opinion of the self may think "I am unlovable; hence God can't love me." Consistency further implies that favorable attributions to God ought to be associated with positive event outcomes as opposed to negative occurrences. This hypothesis has been supported (Lupfer et al., 1992; Spilka & Schmidt, 1983a).

Self-esteem does not stand by itself. It is enmeshed in a complex of overlapping personality traits and religious concepts and measures, such as sin and guilt, as well as the nature of the religious tradition with which one is identified (Hood, 1992). This work indicates that different patterns of self-esteem and God attributions may be a function of one's religious heritage and its doctrines. If a prime role of attributions is to buttress self-esteem, we need to ask how religion performs such a function—especially in traditions such as fundamentalism, which may seem quite harsh on an individual's effort to express positive self-regard.

*Locus of control.* **Locus of control** was initially conceptualized as a tendency to see events as either internally determined by the person or externally produced by factors beyond the control of the individual. This formulation has been extended and refined a number of times. External control was originally viewed as fate, luck, and chance until Levenson (1973) added control by powerful others, and Kopplin (1976) brought in control by God. Pargament et al. (1988) recognized the complexity of control relationships relative to the deity, and developed measures to assess what they termed a "deferring" mode (an active God and a passive person), a "collaborative" mode (both an active God and an active person), and a "self-directive" mode (an active person and a passive God). These notions illustrate

different patterns of attribution for control to the self and God. In the deferring mode, individuals may pray and, having done that, attribute all the power to God: "It's in the hands of God." Those with a collaborative style are basically saying that both they and God have control: "God helps those who help themselves." Utilizing these coping styles relates to further attributions to the nature of God. Though the associations are stronger with the collaborative than with the deferring mode, the tendency for persons who adopt such control perspectives is to attribute generally positive qualities to the deity, along with their recognition of God's power (Schaefer & Gorsuch, 1991).

Although belief in supernaturalism affiliates with external control, Shrauger and Silverman (1971) found that "people who are more involved in religious activities perceive themselves as having more control over what happens to them" (p. 15; see also Randall & Desrosiers, 1980). This sounds like intrinsic religion, or at least orthodoxy, for this relationship is strongest among fundamentalists (Furnham, 1982; Silvestri, 1979; Tipton, Harrison, & Mahoney, 1980). Studying highly religious people, Hunsberger and Watson (1986) found that attributions of control and responsibility are made to God when outcomes are positive—a well-confirmed finding—but that when the result is negative, the tendency is to attribute the blame to Satan ("The Devil made me do it"). Issues of control, and questions of to whom or what control is attributed, have been extensively studied both within and outside the psychology of religion. These are concerns that should be kept in mind throughout this book.

### The Social-Psychological Perspective: A Brief Summary

In this portion of the chapter, we have looked at a few major aspects of the psychology of religion that derive from mainstream social psychology. Our intent is to keep the psychological study of religion within the overall field of psychology per se; still, as already noted, the psychology of religion is primarily regarded as a subfield of social psychology. Here we have looked at some central aspects of the latter—namely, beliefs, values, attitudes, religious habits, and behavior—as well as the broad realm of attribution theory. Keeping these considerations in mind, we now turn to some very basic issues for psychology, social psychology, and the psychology of religion.

## REDUCTIONISM IN CONCEPTUALIZING RELIGIOUS ISSUES

In addition to **distinguishing** between cognitive and affective aspects of religiousness, the present social-psychological model allows for **nonreductionistic** understandings of religiousness. Conceptually, "reductionism" occurs **when** a topic is explained by variables independent of the topic itself. Sometimes this is appropriate, such as reducing a preschool child's church attendance to parental religiousness.

Three traditions in the psychology of religion illustrate reductionism: those of Sigmund Freud, R. B. Cattell, and William James. In each of these traditions, many of the reasons people give for being religious—primarily, beliefs—are ignored.

In the introduction to *The Future of an Illusion*, Freud (1927/1961) makes an important point:

... in past ages in spite of their incontrovertible lack of authenticity, religious ideas have exercised the strongest possible influence on mankind. This is a fresh psychological problem. We must



ask where the inner force of those doctrines lies and to what they owe their efficacy, independent as it is, of the acknowledgement of reason. (p. 51)

Clearly, Freud assumed that religion is false. He therefore asked why people are religious when it is irrational to be so; since they believe in nothing that is real, there must be other foundations for these beliefs. In his theory, religion is reduced to infantile projection of the parental figure, a form of neuroticism. Other psychologists endorsed variants of this theme (e.g., Faber, 1972; Suttie, 1952; Symonds, 1946). If this is so, there can be nothing of importance to religious beliefs—so why measure them?

R. B. Cattell represents another tradition of reductionistic research. It starts with the fact that Cattell himself was a behaviorist who literally could not think in terms of beliefs. His stance ends with his personal view of religion as just “silly superstition” (Gorsuch, 2002). Like Freud, Cattell (1938, 1950) did give credit to religion for being a powerful force in people’s lives. Given this beginning, Cattell posited motivational bases for being religious. Cattell and Child (1975) reported that religion is a function of strong needs to avoid fear, to be nurtured, and to nurture others. Others working in this tradition explained religion as a result of being deprived and therefore turning to a belief in life after death to meet currently unmet needs (Dewey, 1929). Beliefs are thus created by the person to resolve various problems. Again, since there can be nothing of importance to religious beliefs per se, why measure them?

William James, a founder of the psychology of religion, treated religion with great respect (James, 1902/1985). Why people hold religious beliefs to be true was not an issue for James, since he approached religion pragmatically: Does it help people live? To this he resoundingly answered, “Yes.” Others have continued in this mode, and a major part of the increased attention given to spirituality (see below) stems from religion’s having been shown to be beneficial (e.g., Gorsuch, 1976, 1988; Larson et al., 1989; Pargament, 1997).

James’s form of reductionism is more subtle than that of Freud or Cattell, since James did not clearly take an atheistic position. In his view, nothing religionists claim as a basis for their religious faith needs to be examined; all such beliefs can be reduced to other variables. Religious beliefs become irrelevant.

The social-psychological model we have presented in this chapter has an explicit place in its category of beliefs for the claims of truth made by religion. To include beliefs in the model does not require that investigators hold such views themselves—only that they respect the fact that beliefs are a factor in religiousness. An example is Shermer’s (2000) book *How We Believe*. Shermer is an explicit agnostic and an active leader of the Skeptics Society, a group in which 67% of the members are skeptical about the existence of God. The questions asked by Shermer for his book included why people do or do not believe in God. The most important reasons his respondents offered were arguments for the existence of God; another popular category was having had a personal experience with God (e.g., “I believe he exists because I met Him”). Both types of reasons clearly involve beliefs by our social-psychological definition.

Another example of measuring beliefs is the study of Christian attitudes toward homosexuals, which are described at length in Chapter 7. In sum, conservative Christians claim that God has stated in several places in the Bible that homosexuality is a sin. Hence they feel that the question of whether homosexuality is an acceptable behavior has been answered: God has said “No.” It turns out that a belief in the Bible as the explicit word of God is a major predictor of rejecting homosexual behavior (Fulton, Gorsuch, & Maynard, 1999). This analy-

sis suggests that Christians with this outlook can only be understood if their view of the Bible is known. Change in their values about homosexuality could occur **only** if their beliefs about the Bible were modified. This is a nonreductionistic analysis, because it takes seriously what religious people themselves say is important—namely, their beliefs.

In addition to beliefs, motivations found in affect and values may be important bases of religiosity. Proponents of faiths such as Christianity have always held that these faiths are helpful because they encourage people to come to them for extrinsic gratifications, such as solving personal problems or developing a clear set of moral values. These are very important reasons why people turn to religion and are included in our model. The point here is that any model can only be reductionistic unless beliefs are added to that model.

Note that the nonreductionistic approach based in social psychology does not suggest that all beliefs are based on rational arguments. Instead, by separating beliefs, values, and attitudes, it makes the question of the source and role of beliefs an empirical question. Advocates of reductionistic approaches eliminate beliefs by making assumptions, not by presenting data.

### Reductionism as an Aspect of the Idiographic–Nomothetic Controversy

Reductionism is an attempt at explanation; however, the phenomenon to be clarified is usually considered a unit—a totality in itself, whether it be a belief, a value, or a behavior. Reductionism may or may not preserve that complex unity. This brings us to an awareness of one of the great classical problems in psychology, which is of considerable importance in the psychology of religion (Allport, 1937, 1942). It was originally termed the “idiographic–nomothetic” distinction, but Brand (1954), in relation to the broad realm of personality, utilized the more easily understood terms “individual-behavioral” and “general-behavioral.” The major characteristics of these concepts are briefly presented in Table 2.4.

In essence, the idiographic (individual-behavioral) approach relies largely on the judgment of an expert, invariably one steeped in clinical or pastoral methods—possibly a cleric, pastoral counselor, or therapist. The bases for expert judgment are covert and not readily available for analysis or understanding. In contrast, the nomothetic (general-behavioral) orientation seeks to obtain information that is empirical, public, reproducible, and reliable. It is the main traditional scientific avenue to demonstrating valid knowledge. Gordon Allport, who was a great advocate of the idiographic method in both personality and religion, recog-

TABLE 2.4. Two Major Approaches to the Psychological Study of Religion

Idiographic	Nomothetic
Individual-behavioral	General-behavioral
Qualitative	Quantitative
Concern with depth	Attention to the surface
European origin	American origin
Clinical	Experimental
Intuitive (subjective)	Objective
Holistic	Atomistic
Phenomenological	Positivistic
Source: Medicine	Source: Physical science

nized that much of his own work utilized nomothetic procedures (Marceil, 1977). It should be evident that the approach espoused in this text is essentially nomothetic. Harsh as it may sound to advocates of an idiographic approach, for those seeking scientific answers there is validity in the judgment of Paul Meehl (1954): "Always . . . the shadow of the statistician hovers in the background. Always the actuary will have the final word" (p. 138). We do believe that those who utilize holistic, idiographic techniques should be taken seriously; their applied contributions cannot be overestimated. However, they may often be best conceived and utilized as a source of hypotheses for assessment by nomothetic methods.

The holistic–atomistic distinction is not a sharp dichotomy; many levels exist between these endpoints. The human being, conceptualized as a holistic entity, is commonly fractionated into traits, attitudes, beliefs, values, habits, responses, and underlying physiology. Regardless of the level of analysis, it is highly likely that the human entity is amenable to some form of quantitative treatment. When behaviorism ruled psychology, there were psychologists who felt that human actions should eventually be reduced to the level of physics and chemistry (Weiss, 1929). Though that time has largely passed, some observers now argue that each of these concepts, when abstracted by an "objective" analysis, can only give a false and incomplete picture of the person—a partial interpretation with a grain of truth to it. Instead, a holistic, phenomenological, clinical approach is considered best. We are saying that this approach has serious shortcomings. Let us now examine these issues in action with a major concern in the psychology of religion–spirituality.

### Spirituality: From a Holistic/Idiographic Concept to an Atomistic/Nomothetic One

In Chapter 1, we have attempted to circumscribe the concept of "spirituality"; now we confront it as an issue in the idiographic–nomothetic controversy. As noted in the preceding chapter, we have to be careful in dealing with spirituality. It is not a word to be easily substituted for "religiosity"; nor is it really meaningful when those who have left an organized, formal religious body define themselves as "spiritual." This essentially tells us nothing, as we don't know specifically what they are talking about.

#### *Preparing to Assess Spirituality*

**Holistic versus Atomistic Considerations.** Even though there are problems with understanding what spirituality is, most commonly it is viewed holistically/idiographically—that is, as a characteristic of a person *in toto*. As soon as we question its nature within the individual, we start to move away from that idiographic ideal. Initially, many efforts have been made to distinguish between religiosity and spirituality (Hood, 2000b; Pargament, 1999; Zinnbauer, Pargament, & Scott, 1999). Next, a variety of spiritualities are described, such as "world-oriented," "people-oriented," "God-oriented," and "nature-oriented" spiritualities, among other possibilities (Spilka, 1993). One controversial issue is whether spirituality can be separated from religion. Each side of this debate has presented its views without resolving the matter (Emmons & Crumpler, 1999; Hill et al., 2000; Pargament, 1999; Zinnbauer et al., 1997). Hood (2000b) further points out that there is evident overlap between religion and spirituality. This problem holds for the various other forms of spirituality noted above: They may overlap with each other or with religion *per se*.

A holistic, personal approach is still possible; however, once the foregoing distinctions are made, attention becomes directed toward the criteria that identify spirituality per se. This again raises the question of whether we are dealing with a feature of the entire person or with some cognitive or motivational aspect of the individual, such as experience.

***Spirituality as a General Characteristic.*** With regard to spirituality as a general characteristic of a person, a number of overlapping systems have been proposed (Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf, & Saunders, 1988; LaPierre, 1994). Table 2.5 illustrates these two schemes. First, these systems are related; LaPierre used the Elkins et al. framework when he developed his own. Second, Elkins et al. attempted a broad stance not exclusively wedded to religion, while LaPierre remained solidly within the religious tradition.

The Elkins et al. (1988) and LaPierre (1994) criteria suggest directions for operationalizing spirituality, but still possess an idyllic quality that remains unclear and ethereal. They also strongly suggest that it will be difficult if not impossible to assess spirituality in a holistic manner. The equation of spirituality with “authenticity” by Helminiak (1996a, 1996b) could holistically subsume these criteria, but authenticity itself needs to be anchored in a defining and assessing methodology—something Helminiak, in a most scholarly manner, has been working on for some time.

***Spirituality as Experience.*** Implying that spiritual experience is at the heart of spirituality, if not almost the whole of spirituality, Hardy (1979) continued the movement from

TABLE 2.5. Some Suggested Dimensions of Spirituality

<u>Elkins et al. (1988)</u>	
Transcendental dimension	“Experientially based belief [in] a transcendent dimension to life” (p. 10).
Meaning and purpose to life	Authentic sense that life has purpose and meaning.
Mission in life	Sense that one has a calling, a mission.
Sacredness of life	Belief that “all of life is holy” (p. 11)
Material values	Sense that material things do not satisfy spiritual needs.
Altruism	Belief that we are all part of humanity.
Idealism	Being committed to ideals and life’s potential.
Awareness of the tragic	Awareness of and sensitivity to pain and tragedy in life.
Spiritual fruits	Sense that life is infused with spiritual benefits and experience.
<u>LaPierre (1994)</u>	
Journey	Belief that life has meaning and purpose.
Transcendent encounters	As above, belief in a higher level of reality.
Community	Belief that personal growth should occur within a loving community.
Religion	Beliefs and practices relating one to a supreme being.
Mystery of creation	Sense of connection to an environment, its creation and creator.
Transformation	Sense of personal change in relation to social involvement—of becoming.

a holistic, phenomenological perspective to an **objective, nomothetic analysis** (see also Chapter 9 on religious experience). Offering “a provisional classification” (p. 25) of reported experiential elements, Hardy grouped the elements into 12 major categories, each with further subdivisions until a total of 90 components were given. An exhaustive questionnaire treatment could undoubtedly result in many more items than this last number suggests.

Following an in-depth review of the religion–spirituality issue, Hood (2000b) focused on a **core component in spirituality**—namely, **mystical experience**. Researching the matter, he found that mystical experience often ties religion and spirituality together. This is detailed in the later chapters on religious experience and mysticism (Chapters 9 and 10).

Sometimes things aren't what they seem to be. After presenting an impressive list of 12 criteria for a spiritually mature faith, Genia (1997) developed what she termed a **Spiritual Experience Index**, as noted in Chapter 1. Even though the instrument yielded good reliability, “support[ing] its use as a unitary measure” (p. 345), she factor-analyzed the items and obtained two factors, which she labeled **Spiritual Support** and **Spiritual Openness**. In terms of our earlier discussion, these scales overwhelmingly assess beliefs and explicitly have little to do with experience. They appear to be useful as preliminary instruments for the assessment of spirituality per se, but not for spiritual experience. Correlations above .80 were obtained between Spiritual Support and Allport's I religious orientation, implying the identity of these two concepts. Much more work is necessary relative to the initial criteria proposed in order to understand what Genia seems to have accomplished with regard to spirituality.

### ***The Current State of Spirituality Assessment***

The last decade has witnessed a flurry of efforts to evaluate spirituality. The term seems to have become more popular than “religion,” as we have noted in Chapter 1. Despite extensive lists of characteristics associated with spirituality, the holistic–atomistic problem remains unresolved. Gorsuch and Miller (1999) indicate the many qualifications researchers should consider in their assessment attempts, but few have been taken seriously. Still, there has been no dearth of efforts to measure spirituality. One survey located 16 scales (Spilka & McIntosh, 1996).

To illustrate the kind of work undertaken by researchers concerned with the measurement of spirituality, a few examples in addition to Genia's work should be noted. Hall and Edwards (1996) have published a **Spiritual Assessment Inventory** that focuses on one's relationship with God. Despite the singular implication of its name, this instrument has been shown to be multidimensional. The Armstrong (1995) **Measure of Spirituality** has four subscales, reduced from an original nine. The latter constitute the criteria for spirituality that Armstrong utilized. Considering the nature of the items in the scales, we suspect that their correlations with standard indices of religiosity might show this approach to be strongly associated with widely used religiosity scales. Such tendencies have been shown above between the Genia instrument and Allport's I religiousness, and have also been reported with the Elkins et al. (1988) **Spiritual Orientation Inventory** (Scioli et al., 1997). The same appears to be true of the most recently developed measure in this area, the **Spiritual Transcendence Index** (Seidlitz et al., 2002). Tightly developed and comprising only eight items, this index seems to overlap with religion, but when a measure is constructed with such care, **there** is need for further study in order to understand what it is actually assessing.

Emphasizing research on African Americans, Taylor and his coworkers have developed a multidimensional framework with supporting scales to assess spirituality. Their higher-

order dimensions are termed Integrative and Disintegrative, each of which possesses three meaningful factorially developed subscales (Taylor, Rogers, Jackson-Lowman, Zhang, & Zhao, 1995). Conceptually, this work is in line with the multiform criteria offered by Genia (1997), Elkins et al. (1988), and LaPierre (1994). Face indications are that the items may be quite useful in a broad range of populations.

Probably the most well-known concept in this area is that of “spiritual well-being.” Originally advanced by Moberg (1971, 1979), and further developed in questionnaire form by Ellison (1983), it is closely affiliated with religion and primarily stresses personal well-being in relationship to one’s deity. This is also termed “transcendence” and includes a search for purpose and meaning in life. A fair amount of research with Ellison’s instrument suggests its utility, though it seems to overlap considerably with indices of religious involvement and commitment (Ellison, 1983; Bufford, Paloutzian, & Ellison, 1991).

The foregoing review of the literature on both the concept of spirituality and its operationalization demonstrates very clearly how a notion that was originally conceived idiosyncratically necessarily found expression nomothetically. As it was analyzed and measured, various beliefs and values of people entered the realm of scientific knowledge, and became useful both for research and for application to real-life problems.

## OVERVIEW

In this chapter, we have first attempted to distinguish what psychologists of religion study from possible overlaps with superstition and psychic phenomena. We have then directed our attention toward the operationalization of religious concepts. To this end we have examined various dimensions of religiousness, both logical and logical–empirical, in order to make our thinking clear about how we construct the instruments we employ. In addition, the notion of factor-analytic models is carried over and expanded from Chapter 1.

Our long-term goal is to keep the psychology of religion integrated with the mainstream of psychology itself. Since the study of personal faith is largely regarded as part of social psychology, we have shown how various basic ideas in social psychology are realized in our work. We must clearly know the details and parameters of what we are talking about; hence our emphasis on attitudes, beliefs, values, habit, and behavior, as well as on attribution theory.

Recognizing that the psychology of religion shares in (and is often plagued by) the same issues that the overall field of psychology continually confronts, we have then looked at questions concerning reductionism and the idiographic–nomothetic controversy, which overlaps with the issue of holistic versus atomistic analysis. Maintaining our inclination toward the scientific, with its concern for making information public, reproducible, reliable, and valid, we have illustrated the idiographic–nomothetic and holistic–atomistic issues by returning to the problem of spirituality, first discussed in Chapter 1. In the last decade, this has become a “hot” topic. Psychologists have heretofore avoided spirituality, because it was (and still is) so much easier to assess religiosity in its various forms. We have shown how spirituality, which has usually been conceptualized as holistic, rapidly becomes multiform in both conceptual and psychometric analyses. We are thus forced to return to Meehl’s (1954) conclusion that “the actuary will have the final word” (p. 138). We see no scientific alternative at the present