

PERSONALITY AND RELIGION AMONG LOW ABILITY CHILDREN IN RESIDENTIAL SPECIAL SCHOOLS

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INTRODUCTION

In a series of papers Francis *et al.* have explored the relationship between Eysenck's personality factors and attitudes towards religion among large samples of children in state maintained secondary schools in England. Their four main conclusions are that introverts tend to be more religious (Francis, Pearson, Carter and Kay 1981a; Francis, Pearson and Kay, 1983a); that neurotics are neither nor more less religious (Francis, Pearson, Carter and Kay, 1981b; Francis, Pearson and Kay, 1983b); that neuroticism does not interact with introversion to promote religiosity (Francis, Pearson and Kay, 1982); that religious children also tend to be bigger liars (Francis, Pearson and Kay, 1983c).

The positive relationship between introversion and religiosity is accounted for in terms of Eysenck's theory of conditionability into tender minded social attitudes (Eysenck 1954, 1961) on the grounds that introverts condition more readily (Eysenck, 1967). The lack of relationship between neuroticism and religiosity lends support neither to the theory that religion fosters or is an expression of instability (Vine, 1978) nor to the theory that religion fosters stability (Allport, 1957).

The lack of interaction between neuroticism and introversion in promoting religiosity lends support neither to the theory that neuroticism, as a state of heightened emotionality, acts as a form of drive (Eysenck, 1966) able to potentiate the effect both of introversion in facilitating conditioning into tender minded attitudes and of extraversion in resisting such conditioning, nor to the theory that neuroticism, as an indication of anxiety (Crookes and Pearson, 1970), acts to encourage both neurotic introverts and neurotic extraverts to conform more to the social norm and adopt tender minded attitudes as an ego defensive function.

The positive relationship between lie scores and religiosity is accounted for in terms of the theory that lie scores indicate a lack of insight (Crookes and Buckley, 1976; Kirton, 1977), that lack of insight is a sign of immaturity (Eysenck, Nias and Eysenck, 1971) and that this is consistent with Pohier's (1965) notion of religiosity as an expression of immaturity.

Whilst these findings have held good on two large samples of 1,088 and 1,715 children drawn across the wide ability level in state maintained secondary schools, it would, perhaps, be unwise to generalise these findings to children from different backgrounds and educated in a different school system. A particularly interesting group of children on which to test the generalisability of these findings are those of limited ability who are institutionalised within a children's home of a church foundation. The relationship between the personality variables and religiosity in this population may be influenced in a unique way both by their ability level and by the distinct social pressures of living within a church run institution.

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METHOD

290 children, between the ages of nine and sixteen years, from residential homes operated by a church based organisation, completed a scale of attitude towards religion, form ASC4B (Francis, 1976, 1978) and the Junior Eysenck Personality Inventory (Eysenck, 1965). The mean age of the children is 13.3 years; the mean IQ is 78. The data were analysed by the SPSS computer package (Nie *et al.*, 1975).

RESULTS

Table 1
Mean Personality Scores

	Male			Female		
	mean	std	N	mean	std	N
Extraversion						
sample	17.44	3.49	208	15.81	3.44	82
norms	18.16	3.85	557	17.41	3.94	608
Neuroticism						
sample	14.28	4.71	208	16.06	5.05	82
norms	10.74	5.03	557	12.91	5.19	608
Lie Scale						
sample	3.98	2.20	208	4.19	2.41	82
norms	3.06	2.18	175	3.49	2.45	186

Note

The norms are taken from Eysenck (1965), for age 13 years.

Table 1 presents the mean scale scores for the three personality variables and compares them with the norms established in the manual of the Junior Personality Inventory (Eysenck, 1965). Table 2 presents the correlation matrix between the three personality

Table 2
Correlation Matrix

	Attitude	E	N	L	Sex	Age
IQ	-.1295 .05	+.1917 .001	-.0654 NS	-.2165 .001	-.1289 .05	-.1160 .05
Age	-.1184 .05	-.0841 NS	+.1310 .05	-.2521 .001	+.1488 .01	
Sex	+.1576 .01	-.2072 .001	+.1655 .01	+.0428 NS		
Lie	+.1719 .01	-.0478 NS	-.3797 .001			
N	+.1583 .01	-.0859 NS				
E	+.0061 NS					

variables, age, sex and IQ. The three salient correlations confirm one previous finding by reporting a significant positive correlation between religiosity and the lie scale, but contradict two other previous findings by reporting no significant correlation between religiosity and introversion, but a significant positive correlation between religiosity and neuroticism.

Multiple regression was used to check these findings after controlling for possible contaminating influence. Table 3 demonstrates that, even after controlling for sex, age and

Table 3
Multiple Regression Significance Tests

Predictor	R ²	Increase in R ²	Beta	F ratio	d.f.	p<
Sex	.02173	.02173	+.1238	4.136	1,262	.05
Age	.04810	.02637	-.1342	4.754	1,262	.05
IQ	.05704	.00894	-.0477	0.602	1,262	NS
Neuroticism	.08468	.02764	+.2562	15.851	1,262	.01
Lie Scale	.11951	.03483	+.2209	10.713	1,262	.01
Extraversion	.12378	.00427	+.0676	1.276	1,262	NS

intelligence, the conclusion remains that in this population neurotics are more religious (Beta = + .2562), introverts are not more religious (Beta = + .0676, NS) and religious children score higher on the lie scale (Beta = + .2209).

DISCUSSION

The mean extraversion scores of the present sample depart from the established norms in the direction predicted by Anthony's (1973) theory for a low intelligence group. Anthony's theory is given further support by the small but positive correlation between extraversion and IQ within the sample, indicating that within this age group children with a higher mental age also tend to be more extraverted.

The mean lie scale scores for the present sample also depart from the established norms in the direction predicted for a low intelligence group by the theory that the lie scale measures lack of maturity or insight (Crookes and Buckley, 1976). This theory is given further support by the significant negative correlation between IQ and the lie scores within the present sample, indicating that the more intelligent children are less likely to claim socially desirable but unlikely characteristics for themselves (Eysenck, 1969).

The considerably higher mean neuroticism scores for both boys and girls in the sample, compared with the established norms, are the most significant factor, since Eysenck's (1965) norms do not lead us to predict higher neuroticisms scores among children of lower mental age. This indicates that this below average intelligence and institutionalised population is much more neurotic than children in general. The correlation matrix indicates that within the sample neuroticism is significantly positively related to both age and sex, but not to IQ.

The correlations between religiosity and age and between religiosity and sex are both in the predicted directions of girls being more religious than boys (Hyde, 1965; Povall, 1971) and older children being less religious (Francis, 1977; Mark, 1979). The negative correlation between religiosity and IQ is consistent with the review of studies among adults reported by Argyle and Beit-Hallahmi (1975), but contradicts the studies among children by Glassey

(1943), Garrity (1960), Povall (1971) and Francis (1979) who all report no significant relationship between intelligence and attitude towards religion.

The major clue to the peculiar characteristics of this sample is to be found in the pattern of correlations between the personality variables themselves. First, the absence of a significant correlation between extraversion and neuroticism indicates that the scales are functioning orthogonally and, therefore, correctly in this population. Second, Eysenck, Nias and Eysenck (1971) suggest that the size of the negative correlation between lie scores and extraversion scores can serve as an index of social acquiescence or conformity. Since the correlation in the present data is not significant, this statistic does not support the notion that the lie scale is functioning to measure social acquiescence in the group.

Third, Michaelis and Eysenck (1971) suggest that the size of the negative correlation between lie scale and neuroticism scores can serve as an index of the degree of dissimulation that takes place in a given sample. The present correlation of $-.3797$ supports the notion that the lie scale is functioning to measure actual 'faking good' in the present sample. The extraordinary point is that, although dissimulation is taking place to suppress the neuroticism scores, the neuroticism scores themselves emerge so much above the established norms.

Given the conclusion, from the absence of a significant correlation between lie scale and extraversion scores, that social acquiescence is not high within the group, it is now possible to account for the lack of a significant negative correlation between religiosity and extraversion. In this population, introverts are not more likely to be conditioned into tender minded social attitudes.

Given the conclusion, from both the above average neuroticism scores and a significant negative correlation between neuroticism and lie scale scores, that neuroticism is very high in this group, it is also now possible to account for the significant positive correlation between religiosity and neuroticism in terms of the finding reported by Crookes and Pearson (1970) that high neuroticism scores can be regarded as an indication of anxiety. On this account anxiety would predispose the subjects to conform more to the prevailing social norms of their environment, which in the case of the present sample would mean accepting a higher level of religiosity.

The salient finding of this study, namely the positive relationship between neuroticism and religiosity, bears comparison with Eysenck's reported and unexplained finding of a positive relationship between neuroticism and tender minded social attitudes (Eysenck, 1961). This finding contradicts Eysenck's contention that conditionability was related to introversion- extraversion and not to neuroticism (Eysenck, 1955). Moreover, other subsequent studies have also suggested that the effects of neuroticism within the personality structure are not as independent of other dimensions as was originally proposed (Stelmack, 1981; Gray, 1981). A contemporary reformulation of Eysenck's typology in terms of a continuum of anxiety-impulsivity (Gray, 1982) has reopened the question of the contribution of neuroticism to attitude formation and, in the light of the present study, provides a stimulus to re-examine the significance of anxiety in the acquisition of religious attitudes.

SUMMARY

Previous research indicates that, among pupils in English state maintained secondary schools, religiosity is associated with introversion but not with neuroticism. The present study demonstrates that among low ability children institutionalised within a children's home of a church foundation it is neurotic rather than introverted subjects who tend to report higher levels of religiosity.

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