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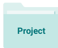

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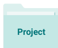

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Religion and Culture: Individualism and Collectivism in the East and West

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Abstract

Religion is an important topic to understand in cross-cultural psychology. More theorizing and empirical work has gone into Western religions than Eastern religions. We briefly review work on cultural differences among Western religious groups, using the framework of individualism and collectivism. Such work raises questions on how religions and cultures affect each other, how diverse cultural groups are, and how confounded country and religious identities are. We then ask some of the same questions about Eastern religions and propose new questions for a cross-cultural psychology of religion, such as what counts as a religion, and whether there are nonreligious parallels of religious constructs that serve similar functions (e.g., belief in a just world [BJW], or social axiom of reward for human application). In all, we propose that a greater attention to both Western and Eastern religions in cross-cultural psychology can be illuminating regarding religion and culture.

Keywords

culture, religion, individualism, collectivism

Religion is critical in understanding individuals and cultures, and religion is inherently cultural in nature (Belzen, 1999; Cohen, 2015). In this article, we will focus on the idea that religions differ in their individualism and collectivism, and that these differences have been shown in the United States to be reflected in a variety of domains, including what it means to be religious; in moral judgment; in the experiences people consider to be most important in their lives; and in attributions. We will discuss how this work on religion contributes to a broader cross-cultural psychology, in several ways. For one, while cross-cultural psychologists might be quick to point out that many Eastern cultures are collectivistic while many Western cultures are individualistic (e.g., China has an individualism score of 20, and the United States 91; Hofstede, 1980), we will claim that one must be cautious in characterizing large, heterogeneous groups of people (like the United States) as either individualistic or collectivistic. Second, the work we will review points

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to the necessity to think carefully before labeling tendencies as individualistic or collectivistic (here, we will focus on religious or moral tendencies). Third, such work highlights that any cultural system (be it a country or a religion) contains both individualistic and collectivistic features. Fourth, such work can speak to interesting questions about how religions and country-based cultures mutually influence each other. And finally, such work makes us wonder how much cross-cultural psychology has been studying country-based cultures, versus has not fully deconfounded country influences from religious influences (or even other cultural influences). The specific cultural variables at work also need to be specified and deconfounded as, for example, collectivism also often co-occurs with religiousness and tightness of social norms and other factors (Gelfand et al., 2011).

With these ideas and work having mostly been situated with Western contexts, we then discuss some exciting new directions to extend such work, including Eastern contexts broadly, and within the culturally diverse country of China. With some of the same driving issues in mind, we can similarly consider whether it is fair to call entire cultural systems (e.g., Confucianism) collectivistic or individualistic, and how country-level cultures and religious cultures combine and influence each other, as when Christianity comes into Eastern cultures. An additional advantage of studying both Eastern religions and Western religions in the context of cross-cultural psychology is that it suggests new domains of interest which might not have been of interest if we only think about and work in Western religions. A good example is how many Eastern religions value certain emotions in different ways than many Western religions. Given our perspective that studying Eastern as well as Western religions can be enriching for cross-cultural psychology, we will close by mentioning that cross-cultural psychology and religion needs to be broader still, and study other cultural contexts such as Latin America.

Before beginning, we want to situate this work in the broader field of the intersections between cross-cultural psychology and religion.

Cross-Cultural Psychology and Religion

We will discuss the notion, proposed before (Cohen, Hall, Koenig, & Meador, 2005; Cohen & Hill, 2007) the idea that some Western religions (like Judaism) are more collectivist than others (like Protestant Christianity in America), and attempts to broaden the cross-cultural psychology of religion by proposing some ways to think about these issues in Eastern contexts. In doing so, we wish to note that there is a variety of viewpoints regarding the relations between religion and culture (Johnson & Cohen, 2013). Religions can be thought of as cultures (e.g., Judaism is a culture; Cohen, 2009; Cohen & Varnum, 2016), national contexts can influence religions (e.g., how the United States has shaped American Christianity; Cohen et al., 2005), religions can influence the cultural development of nations (how Christianity has shaped U.S. culture; Cohen & Hill, 2007), and globalization often blends historically distinct cultures and religions, particularly when religious and cultural norms seem to be in opposition (e.g., when a Christian church operates in South Korea; Sasaki & Kim, 2011).

Also as background to the discussion below, we wish to emphasize that not all individuals or societies in the Western context, or not all individuals or societies in the Eastern context, can be lumped together. Indeed, as Gebauer and colleagues (Gebauer, Paulhus, & Neberich, 2013; Gebauer, Sedikides, & Neberich, 2011) have shown, psychological tendencies to conform or rebel can manifest themselves in pro- or anti-religious sentiment, depending on whether people live in a religious or nonreligious cultural context.

Along with the Johnson and Cohen (2013) chapter just mentioned, if one wishes a background in broader issues in culture and religion, it is helpful to turn to prior discussions of culture and religion, including those by Saroglou and Cohen (2013), Saroglou (2003), and Tarakeshwar, Stanton, and Pargament (2003). In the most recent example, the Saroglou and Cohen (2013) review provided a theoretically informed review of theory and research in the psychological study

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of culture and religion. They reviewed similarities and differences in a broad array of domains (like cognition, emotion, and morality between religions, including how such similarities and differences might parallel or interact with other cultural factors, like socioeconomic ones), and considered interactions between ethnicity and religion, including work on acculturation and immigration. Saroglou and Cohen (2013) also paid close attention to important methodological issues and called attention to important, understudied questions. For example, while religions may universally help to address needs for order, security, belonging, and self-transcendence, religions do these in sometimes similar and sometimes different ways, and sometimes in concert with the overall culture, and sometimes the effects are more distinguishable or even contradictory.

With these backgrounds in mind, we now will provide a brief overview of what we mean by individualism and collectivism and how they might relate to religion.

Collectivism and Individualism and Religion

Cultural differences in individualism and collectivism, which promote and are constituted by independent and interdependent views of the self (Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995), are almost certainly the most well-studied dimensions of culture in psychology (Cohen, 2009). Collectivistic cultures encourage people to develop interdependent selves, in which people fundamentally see themselves as interconnected in important ways with close others, and to prioritize good relationship functioning over their own, idiosyncratic goals. In individualistic cultures, people are encouraged to develop independent senses of self, in which it is normative to think of oneself as relatively distinct even from close others, and to develop one's own goals, motivations, and personality (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). This cultural distinction is a fruitful domain in which to think about and study religion, because of the large theoretical and empirical platforms with which to start.

We will mention four areas in which there is empirical evidence that members of different Western religions are relatively individualistic or collectivistic—in what it means to be religious, in moral judgments, in the kinds of experiences that change one's life, and in attribution. These will be brief reviews because several recent articles and chapters have already reviewed this work (Cohen & Varnum, 2016; Johnson & Cohen, 2013; Saroglou & Cohen, 2013). However, we do want to touch on how the findings can be subsumed under the banner of individualism and collectivism, and mention some of the broader issues such findings raise for religion and cross-cultural psychology, before attempting to provide some ideas about how the study of Eastern religions could be thought of in similar as well as different ways.

Religiousness

Are some religions more individualistic or collectivist than others? Cohen and colleagues (2005) theorized that in the United States, American Jews and Catholics as well as other groups are relatively more likely to subscribe to collectivistic instantiations of religion, while American Protestants, and perhaps other groups as well, were particularly likely to subscribe to individualistic forms of religion. While collectivistic Western religionists might focus on tradition and community-based religious practice, individualistic Western religionists were seen as subscribing to a cultural view that religion is a personal matter, and that religion is supposed to express one's personal faith and personal relationship with God. In an individualistic Western religious framework, the practice of religion for the sake of social interaction cheapens the much more significant and meaningful personal experiences that occur between an individual and God.

Empirical work looking at the meanings and structure of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity scales (Allport & Ross, 1967; Cohen, Mazza, Johnson, Enders, & Warner, 2016), people's descriptions of life-changing experiences, and the differing predictors of people's self-ratings of their religiosity or spirituality all converged to suggest a more personal, identity (individualistic)

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religiosity for Protestants, and a more community and tradition and practice based religiosity for Catholics and Jews (Cohen & Hill, 2007; Cohen, Siegel, & Rozin, 2003).

Moral Judgment

The emphasis in Western individualistic religions, such as American Protestant religions, on one's internal, personal beliefs may be related to another cultural difference among religions, which is whether one's thoughts have moral status. To a Protestant, we would expect that thoughts would be just as morally important as actions. In the book of Matthew in the New Testament, Jesus claims that lusting after a woman in your heart is equal to committing adultery. But, in contrast to this point of view, Judaism seems to care more about how an individual acts, rather than how an individual thinks and feels, which could be considered a more collectivistic view of morality because it looks to the social consequences of one's behavior. Cohen and colleagues have done several studies looking at the morality of mental states and actions in Jews and Protestants (Cohen, 2003; Cohen & Rankin, 2004; Cohen & Rozin, 2001).

These studies converge to indicate that Protestants pay more attention to thoughts about immoral actions than Jews, who instead feel (perhaps in a more collectivistic way) that your actions, not your internal thoughts, determine your moral standing. Of importance, these effects seem quite nuanced in accord with both Protestant and Jewish theology, suggesting a causal influence of religious theology or more general cultural attitudes and norms, as we will discuss below.

Life-Changing Experiences

The idea that, for many American Protestants, religion is personal, while for Catholics and Jews, it is relatively more embedded in a social context, has also been theorized to affect reported life-changing experiences (Cohen & Hill, 2007). In the prototypical born-again experience, people change their outlook on their lives by virtue of being saved, evident in a sudden, highly emotional experience of personal connection with God (James, 1902/1997; Starbuck, 1900). Cohen and Hill (2007) hypothesized that this is the kind of life-changing, religious experience an individualistic, American Protestant is most likely to have. But for certain other religious groups, like Catholics and Jews, religion is often also collectivistically experienced in a social context, such as being embedded in a religious community and the carrying on of centuries of religious tradition. Catholics were expected to have features of both. Cohen and Hill indeed found that Catholics and Protestants reported more personal, God-centered experiences than Jews did, while Jews reported more social religious experiences than Catholics and Protestants did. As such Catholicism may carry features of both individualistic religions and collectivistic religions.

Attributions

The final topic we would like to briefly review on individualistic and collectivistic religions in the West is attributions. While the effects of culture on attribution are relatively well-documented (e.g., Morris & Peng, 1994), little work has been done to understand how religions might affect attributions depending on individualistic or collectivistic leanings. Attributions are explanations as to why a person behaved the way that they behaved during a specific event. Most often, attributions are classified as being related to the person (internal attributions: a person behaved the way they did because of their traits or dispositions), or to the social context (external attributions: a person behaved the way they did because of the social context, or the situation demanded it).

Li and colleagues hypothesized that Protestants, even more so than Catholics, are likely to believe in a personal soul. Because the soul in Western Christianity is seen as an internal driver of behavior, Li and colleagues hypothesized that Protestants would prefer internal attributions

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more so than Catholics would. Empirically, Catholics and Protestants did not vary in their disfavoring of external attributions. Both groups were much higher in internal attributions than external attributions. Furthermore, Protestants showed higher internal attributions than Catholics did. A second study showed that Protestants displayed greater belief in a soul than Catholics, and that belief in a soul significantly mediated the Catholic–Protestant difference in internal attributions. Finally, experimentally priming belief in a soul in Protestants significantly increased their internal attributions (Li et al., 2012).

Broader Importance of Linking Individualism and Collectivism and Religion

With findings like these as a background, we propose that thinking about religions with a lens of individualism and collectivism could have a number of advantages for integrating the study of religion and culture.

One point is a reminder about the diversity of cultural groups. Any culture (surely including religion) is in fact a broad category and set of diverse subcultures which may vary in individualistic and collectivistic facets and tendencies (Brewer & Chen, 2007; Fiske, 2002). For example, Fiske (2002) pointed out that we often treat "Asian American" as a meaningful category, despite the fact that this label applies to people from thousands of cultures (and so too for terms like Latino American, African American). Of course this is equally true of any broad region or country of the world, such as within China, there are dozens of ethnicities and many religious subgroups.

A second point is related to the necessity to think carefully about assigning the labels of individualistic or collectivistic tendencies to psychological traits or behaviors. Prototypically, individualism refers to the privileging of personal identities and goals over those of the ingroup, while the converse characterizes collectivism (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). However, some scholars have criticized the robust tendency of psychologists to over-apply these terms to an overly broad set of tendencies and behaviors exhibited by groups that are known to be individualistic or collectivistic, even tendencies that do not have a completely clear connection to individualism or collectivism (Cohen, 2009).

In the case of religion, it is interesting to consider whether an emphasis on personal faith, the moralization of internal thoughts, having born-again experiences, or a tendency toward internal attributions is meaningfully labeled individualistic, or if a tendency to emphasize community and tradition, or to consider behavior more morally relevant than thoughts, is fairly labeled collectivistic. The answer is not so clear. In the case of the moral judgment of thoughts and behaviors, for example, one could make the case that moralizing thoughts is individualistic because it looks at the private and internal states of a person, or that moralizing behavior is collectivistic because one's immoral behavior presumably has consequences beyond the self, to close others or to one's community. Nonetheless, this seems to be a bit of an interpretive leap. Indeed, in the Cohen and Rozin's (2001) paper on morality of mentality, Jews and Protestants actually did not differ in independence or interdependence, as measured by Singelis's (1994) scales. In another example, if an American Protestant prizes his or her *personal* relationship with God, we might label this individualistic. But if an American Protestant prizes his or her personal *relationship* with God, or their membership in the "body of Christ" (the Church), might we now call these tendencies collectivistic? We would recommend that cross-cultural psychologists devote explicit thought to the psychological tendencies and behaviors they label as individualistic or collectivistic, so these terms are used precisely and appropriately.

Third, in a not too unrelated point, the work reviewed above highlights that any cultural system (be it a country or a religious culture) contains both individualistic and collectivistic features. In doing this, we think it is interesting and important to remember that religions (like any other

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form of culture) are complex, and a given religion might have certain individualistic characteristics and certain collectivistic characteristics. For example, as we have said, many Christians not only prize their personal faith in God (perhaps an individualistic feature) but also prize participation in a religious community (a collectivistic feature). Both Hinduism and Buddhism (usually considered collectivistic, though we will return to this below) have theories of an "inner-self" (ātman) and do pay much attention to the cultivation of certain internal mind-sets. Indeed, religions and cultures are complex systems with multiple features, and it is unlikely to be the case that any culture is entirely collectivistic or individualistic (Fiske, 2002). Rather than dubbing American Protestants as individualistic, researchers would do well to articulate the individualistic as well as collectivistic features of American Protestantism, and the same for any other religious group. Rather collectivistic American Jews, for example, might also prize their faith in one Almighty God, which is clearly at the theological core of Judaism, even as many Jews might disagree as to what exactly that faith might look like (Cohen, Gorvine, & Gorvine, 2013; Silverman, Johnson, & Cohen, 2016).

Fourth, the work reviewed above can suggestively speak to interesting questions about how religions and country-based cultures mutually influence each other. There are many reasons why any given culture might end up relatively collectivist or individualist. The form of subsistence in a culture (Talhelm et al., 2014), a philosophical tradition favoring Aristotle versus Confucius (Markus & Kitayama, 1991), and any number of other factors could play roles. In addition to such factors, religion may be one influence on cultural individualism or collectivism, in complex ways. Religions might promote individualism or collectivism in broader cultures; religions might also be shaped by a predominant, cultural level individualistic or collectivistic focus. Cross-cultural psychologists might ask quite rich questions about the relations between religion and culture. What shapes religions and what shapes cultures to have the features that they do? We believe that, among many factors to keep in mind, religions and cultures shape each other. Specifically, we think there is probably a bidirectional influence between religion and other forms of culture (like national cultures). The United States is individualistic partly because of its Protestant history and majority Protestant make-up, and Protestantism in the United States is at the same time probably particularly individualistic (even more so than Protestantism in other countries) because of the United States's emphasis on individualism, and the notion of the government being prohibited from establishing or interfering in religion.

Finally, the work reviewed above prompts us to ask if, as cross-cultural psychologists, we can confidently study country influences apart from religious influences. When a researcher recruits a set of U.S. participants and a set of Chinese participants, they might end up publishing a paper claiming that Americans do X, while Chinese do Y. Nonetheless, these participants surely do not vary only on whether they are American or Chinese. They might also differ in religion, or indeed any number of other characteristics (e.g., social class). All too often, little or no consideration is given in the psychology literature as to whether country is the most psychologically relevant variable on which samples of participants differ. Provocatively, in their paper on religion and attributions, Li and colleagues speculated that much research comparing people from different countries might be just as well thought of as having been comparing members of different religions.

With guiding big picture issues like these, we can turn to Eastern religions and likewise think about some of these bigger issues.

Eastern Religions, Individualism, and Collectivism

One of the first big issues we want to begin to tackle is one that might not even be raised of the study of religion in cross-cultural psychology were confined to the West—namely, what counts as a religion? There is often debate about whether certain Eastern religions count as religions. To the extent that a religion must have, or is even defined by, belief in supernatural agents (e.g.,

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Atran & Norenzayan, 2004), scholars could disagree as to whether Buddhism or Daoism or Confucianism should be considered religions, versus philosophies.

Our own perspective is to be a bit liberal in terms of what groups count as religions. We think it is a bit unfortunate that the definition of a religion is often seen by Western scholars to rise and fall on only one important dimension of religion, belief in supernatural agents (e.g., Campany, 2003). Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism have many of the hallmarks of religion, such as community structures, rituals, and moral codes. Moreover, they sometimes treat venerated figures (like the Buddha) as Gods or at least as quasi-Gods, such as when people burn incense or make sacrifices to them. Even if people do not answer the question "What is your religious faith?" with "Buddhism" (along with Taoism or other local religions and philosophies), very often in China, they still might often engage in Buddhist practices by seeking to accrue karmic merit, chanting from sacred scrolls, burning incense sticks to venerate a deity or spirit, and so forth (Chau, 2011; Yang, 2012).

Lest this seem a view on religion that is totally alien in a Western context, it should be pointed out that there are parallels even in the West. Plenty of atheists still consider themselves to be Catholic or Jewish because their religious identities are not solely based on their faith but also on their community involvement, sense of ethnicity, and tradition. We hold that it is not accurate to entirely discount that someone has a religion merely because they do not have a cut and dried belief in God or explicitly identify themselves as a believer in that religion (for a discussion of this in a Jewish context, see Cohen et al., 2013; Silverman et al., 2016).

Taking the liberty to consider cultural systems like Confucianism or Buddhism to be religion, one of the major issues we discussed above was in how countries and religions shape each other. We can also consider that complex issue in Eastern contexts. Of importance, the causes of individualism and collectivism on the cultural level are almost certainly multifaceted, even including ecological factors such as greater pathogen threat (Fincher & Thornhill, 2008; Fincher, Thornhill, Murray, & Schaller, 2008), and subsistence system, as when cultivating rice versus wheat seems to predict greater collectivism (Talhelm et al., 2014). However, we might further theorize that Eastern collectivism shapes and has shaped the development of Eastern religions. For example, it might be theorized that Buddhism is collectivistic because of a broader collectivistic cultural backdrop. We might also hypothesize that many East and Southwest Asian cultures today are collectivistic because of religious influences.

As cultures and religions affect each other, we might also think about how religions and cultures can combine in novel ways, perhaps occurring more so today than even before (Johnson & Cohen, 2013). One interesting issue to consider is what happens, for example, when Western religions are imported into the East, such as the rise of Christianity in South Korea and China. While this is an ongoing and growing trend, this is not entirely a new phenomenon. Historical literatures revealed that some Chinese pioneering elites, like Sun Yat-Sen (who established the first Republic in Modern China), converted to Christianity (Smith, 1985/2005). In the 19th century, Hong Xiuquan (the leader of the religious civic war in modern China) was baptized by a Chinese Protestant missionary and reinterpreted himself as Christ's younger brother, having received a revelation from God (Palmer, 2011; Spence, 1996). Then, he found a "God-worshipping society" and established the "Taiping Heavenly Kingdom" (1851-1864), advocating for a puritan paradise on earth and advocating for social reforms such as the equality of men and women. More recently, many educated young people in urban China, who are seeking a perceived progressive and modern life, are converting to Christianity. Mass conversion to Christianity among Chinese suggests that Christianity can be seen to provide peace and certainty in a sometimes stifling broader political atmosphere (Yang, 2005, 2012). The longer term, broader societal effects of this remain to be seen.

It is intriguing to consider this interplay between culture and religion given that China is a mainly secular and atheistic society. There are many possibilities. One possibility is that

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Christianity could be conserved, in the sense that it could look in some regard the same as it does in the West (even while recognizing that Christianity is hardly a homogeneous category in the West). Alternatively, culture could win out, and Christianity could die out, or could be somehow subsumed into Chinese culture, such as the worship of Jesus being seen as a form of ancestor worship which is common in China. A third possibility is that religion and culture come together via a syncretistic process in some wholly new way. As an instructive example, Sasaki and Kim (2011) found that the online church mission statements in Korean websites contained more themes of social affiliation, but less themes of secondary control, than those in American websites. This one finding suggests the possibility that a religion could adapt itself to fit in to the overall cultural context. We recommend further psychological research to begin understanding the interplay between Christianity and East Asian cultures.

Two other major issues we discussed above, which we would like to briefly apply in more Eastern contexts, are the complexity of labeling certain religious tendencies to be individualistic or collectivistic, and that any cultural system will contain both individualistic and collectivistic tendencies. In fact, some Chinese scholars would consider Chinese culture to be increasingly individualistic in certain ways, especially after the May Fourth Movement in 1919 (Yu, 1987/2006) and the Reform and Opening-Up policy (Zeng & Greenfield, 2015).

As a matter of fact, recent research has demonstrated the presence of the fundamental attribution error among East Asians, particularly for norm violations (Wu, Cohen, Ma-Kellams, & Li, 2016). This argument is informed by the teachings of traditional East Asian philosophies and religions (e.g., Confucianism, Zen, and pre-Qin Taoism), which continue to exert an influence on many East Asian cultures today. According to these teachings, the most important life goal of a person is to pursue inward transcendence, through cultivating one's heart nature (*xin-xing*; Mencius, 372 B.C.–289 B.C.), seeking merit and virtue (*gong-de*) within one's own mind and body (Huineng, 638-713), and emphasizing individuality and freedom (Laozi, 604 B.C.-531 B.C.), while not discussing anything outside the limits of the world (Zhuangzi, 369 B.C.-286 B.C.) or external forces, such as God and the ideal republic (Ho, 1995; Yu, 2003; Zhao, 2009). In some senses, these aspects of Chinese philosophy and religion can be seen to have some individualistic elements.

Taking into consideration the modern history of China, Mao Zedong (or Mao Tse-Dong; 1937/1952) and Liu Shaoqi (or Liu Shao-Chi), two of most powerful figures in China, appropriated these perhaps individualistic, traditional teachings to their revolutionary philosophies. Mao argued that "internal causes are the basis of change, and external causes become operative through internal causes." Emphasizing internal natures, Mao famously pointed out that "in a suitable temperature an egg changes into a chicken, but no temperature can change a stone into a chicken, because each has a different basis." Moreover, Liu (1939/1965) said, "self-cultivation is the kind essential to proletarian revolutionaries . . . very hard work and very earnest self-cultivation are essential if one is to make progress." These teachings about internal causes and self-cultivation are recommended as the official ideology in almost every textbook of the required civic education in China.

As Munro (1985) and Osnos (2014) suggested, the individualistic elements of modern Chinese culture and religions should be taken seriously in future research, rather than considering Chinese contexts to be exclusively collectivist. In the context of our current discussion on culture and religion, we would recommend attempting to delineate the individualistic and the collectivistic elements of Eastern cultures and religions, thinking about how they might have influenced each other, and asking when they might be at odds. One might ask, for example, if Mao's emphasis on internal factors was a consequence of, or a rebellion against, broader cultural or religious influences. We cautiously expect that some aspects of individualism may be emphasized or elaborated by religious revivals in the ongoing social and cultural changes in China.

But the promise to be realized in studying Eastern religions might not lie solely in asking the same questions as Western scholars have about Western religions and cultures. There might be questions

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which are only likely to be raised in considering Eastern religions and cultures. One important topic seems to lie in the universalism of several Eastern religions. Clobert, Saroglou, Hwang, and Soong (2014) found that in East Asian societies (e.g., Taiwan China, South Korea, and Japan), Buddhists' and Daoists' religiosity was negatively related to inter-religious prejudice, while Western European Catholics' and Protestants' religiosity was positively related to inter-religious prejudice. Even though at least some forms of religiosity are robustly related to more prejudice (Hall, Matz, & Wood, 2010), such relations may not generalize across the globe or across religions.

In the context of a discussion of the causal interconnections of religion and culture, we feel that Clobert's results are particularly important. It is certainly very plausible that Buddhism and Daoism helped to promote broader collectivism in the East. Nonetheless, we note that collectivism, as it is usually understood in cross-cultural psychology, is often rather circumscribed to one's ingroup. One does not typically see oneself as interdependent with the whole world, but with one's family, close friends, and so on. This circumscribed collectivism seems a bit different in character from the more universal collectivism that Buddhism and Daoism seem to promulgate (and, we note, that many Western religions like Christianity preach—loving thy neighbor and whatnot—though apparently not as successfully given that religiosity among Christians is mostly associated with more, not less, prejudice against outgroups).

Another important feature of East Asian religions to consider could be emotions, and again research on Eastern religions seems to have raised some new questions. While Western religions promote intense, individuating emotions, Eastern religions promote emotions that help to maintain group harmony. Tsai (2007) theorized that East Asian religions, like Buddhism, may encourage low-arousal-positive (LAP) emotions, whereas Western religions, like Christianity, may encourage high-arousal-positive (HAP) emotions. As expected, the affective content of Christian (i.e., the Gospels of the Bible) and Buddhist (i.e., the Dhammapada, Lotus Sutra, Diamond Sutra, and Heart Sutra) classics revealed that Christian texts encouraged HAP states (e.g., enthusiastic, excited, elated) more and LAP states (e.g., calm, relaxed, peaceful) less than did Buddhist texts. These differences were even more pronounced in the affective content of contemporary bestselling Christian and Buddhist self-help books (Tsai, Miao, & Seppala, 2007). This East–West difference in ideal affect value was replicated in religious practices. Buddhist-inspired meditation made participants want to feel calm more and excited less, over the course of meditation classes (Koopmann-Holm, Sze, Ochs, & Tsai, 2013). These findings suggest that exposure to different religions may be one way in which cultural values regarding ideal affect are transmitted to individuals in the East versus the West, in ways that undergird and reflect collectivistic or individualistic tendencies.

Future Research on Culture and Religion

We feel there are several large theoretical issues raised above which suggest the need for future research on culture and religion. One important issue in need of further theoretical development is what counts as a religion, with full appreciation for the cultural diversity across religions and cultures. We have argued that religion should be construed broadly, particularly in Eastern contexts in which people may not even consider themselves to have religions, and scholars may not agree whether a particular system (e.g., Daoism) is a religion at all. Scholars have argued that East Asians do not value religion as much as Westerners do, and one might question if, for example, the fact that a Chinese person may negotiate with an impersonal fate, but not with Gods (Au et al., 2012), legitimately qualifies as religious tendencies.

A twist on this issue is in whether societies, including East Asian societies, might not be considered religious per se, but might have features or processes that serve some of the same functions as religions. One example could be belief in a just world (BJW), or the social axiom of *reward for human application* (Leung & Bond, 2004), in which good deeds are rewarded and bad deeds are punished (Lerner, 1980). Both of these are ways in which people believe that people get the

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outcomes they deserve, through a secular and orderly world. Although a few researchers argued that Chinese could have similar concepts as Western monotheistic religions, like the apparent belief in God in Pre-Qin China (Clark & Winslett, 2011), such theistic beliefs do not seem to be necessary for Chinese to achieve a sense of meaning and control. BJW could help Chinese individuals to maintain a meaning system, particularly in a Confucianism-dominated culture in which there is not a focus on achieving control through belief in God (Kay, Whitson, Gaucher, & Galinsky, 2009; Wu et al., 2013; Wu et al., 2011).

We note that, in the West, BJW is usually regarded as an illusion (Lerner, 1980), and that adults would be expected to hold a more sophisticated worldview that many people do suffer from injustice and do not live in a just world at all (Hafer & Gosse, 2010; Oppenheimer, 2006). While BJW in Western contexts may derive from a religious worldview, a religious person may believe in ultimate justice determined by God, and even people suffering from an unjust world may hold the hope of salvation (Lerner, 1991). BJW may also come from more secular underpinnings, like belief in the Protestant Work Ethic (Hafer & Sutton, 2016)—a concept which, though it may have religious roots, is now an almost entirely nonreligious point of view concerning the value and rewards of hard work and the comeuppance that results from indolence.

While there may thus be religious or nonreligious reasons to believe in a just world in the West, Eastern religions may hold BJW to be a fundamental feature of the universe, which occurs via nonagentic processes (i.e., not determined by Gods). Wu and colleagues have dubbed this a human- and mind-focused form of control, in contrast to the God-centered way of achieving control in Western religions. Empirically, Chinese reported greater BJW but lower belief in God compared with North Americans, and Chinese participants' well-being was predicted by their BJW (but not belief in God) while North Americans' subjective well-being was predicted by their belief in God (but not BJW; Wu, Cohen, & Han, 2015). This raises the interesting issue of whether a human and mind-centered belief system, such as those common in Confucian societies, could function similarly as a God-centered belief system in monotheistic societies (Yu, 1987/2006). This possibility is important because it shows that there are multiple religious or cultural routes to a feeling that good deeds get rewarded and bad deeds get punished (Hafer & Sutton, 2016).

As a final future direction, we note that most of our focus here has been on Western individualistic religions, compared with Eastern collectivistic religions. Nonetheless, there are many interesting societies and religions to consider at the intersection of culture and religion. Latin America, a region with many collectivistic countries and collectivistic religions, may nonetheless have different intersections of culture and religion than East Asian. Collectivist Latin American Catholicism might be a more ecstatic and high energy confluence of culture and religion compared with collectivistic religions (like Buddhism) in the East. Indeed, the rise of Afro-Caribbean religions and evangelical Christianity could partly reflect a desire on the part of Latin American former Catholics for a more personal and effusive connection with God (http://www.pewforum.org/2014/11/13/religion-in-latin-america/).

While we mentioned a few examples above of how country and religious cultural influences might interact, more systematically examining multiple religions in multiple countries could be very illuminating as to how religion and national cultures interact. Are the individualist or collectivist tendencies embodied in different religions conserved across countries, or influenced by the overall, national cultural context? Cohen et al. (2013) considered how there are different possibilities. One possibility is that such religious tendencies show up regardless of which country the religious group is in; Buddhists could be Buddhists if they are in China or the United States; Jews could be Jews regardless if they live in the United States or Israel. A second possibility is that religious groups are affected by the overall cultural context, so Jews in the United States might be more individualistic than Jews in Israel, or Buddhists in the United States might be more individualistic than Buddhists in Thailand. A third possibility is that people cling to or

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accentuate those parts of their religions that dissociate themselves from the majority. Jews in the United States might be more Jewishly collectivist than Jews in Israel, to distinguish themselves from the individualistic Protestant majority. We thus feel that examining the same religion in multiple countries could be theoretically novel and illuminating.

Concluding Remarks

Cross-cultural psychologists can only learn so much by examining Western religions. Studying Eastern religions could substantially enrich our understanding of many broad issues in culture and religion. While thinking about the place of psychology of religion now and in the future, we think it will be critical to pay attention to some of Belzen's (1999) cautions about how the field of psychology of religion, and even more particularly a cross-cultural psychology of religion, have developed. First of all, the psychology of religion is as old as psychology, as all founding parents of psychology wrote about religion, even extensively; and one can even date psychology of religion to be older, given that theologians, anthropologists, and so on took psychological approaches to religion even before the field of psychology was officially born.

However, Belzen (1999) importantly points out that much theory and empirical work on religion in psychology has valorized the personal viewpoints of the writer, as when Freud considered religion a collective neurosis, or when the more religious Gordon Allport linked religion to value and meaning in life. Relevant to our undertaking here, European psychologists have debated if psychology of religion can best advance as a field by emulating work done in the West. Our own opinion is that Eastern and Western psychologists of religion have much to learn from each other in terms of theory and method and we should all take care, as Belzen cautions, to be mindful of our implicit assumptions and the philosophical roots embedded in our culture. One important example of this is when we are loath to see religion in Eastern contexts because the features of Eastern religions are different from those of Western religions.

Given that much work in the cross-cultural psychology of religion has been done in individualistic North America and Western Europe, there is a great deal of theory to build and work to do. In doing this research, it should be remembered that quantitative, experimental methods are just one way of understanding culture and religion; others, like hermeneutical approaches, interviews, and observation, will also be very valuable in future research (Belzen, 2010). Religion centrally involves stories, and understanding narratives and symbols will be key (Belzen, 1999; Cohen, Ruston, Corman, Blais, & Brewer, 2016).

While bringing religion into cross-cultural psychology has a lot of opportunities, we close by noting that theorists and researchers will have to proceed thoughtfully to help us more fully understand religions and cultures, and how they interact.

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