

in the associations and representations of personal values and meanings, the similarities and differences of personal secular and non-secular belief formations and their components are discussed.

The second paper investigates the relationships between personal beliefs and other psychological variables. Reza Nasser's empirical study in the United Kingdom focusses on the role of locus of control and religious faith in the development of paranormal beliefs. 'Locus of control' stands for the belief in individual capacities to control events (internal) vs. the belief in chance and external elements to govern events and outcomes. It appears to be the case that—for the studied religious affiliations (Muslim, Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Atheist/Agnostic)—an external locus of control is associated with stronger paranormal beliefs. However, the relationship between basic religious beliefs, self-reported devotion, and strength of religious faith, as well as the border between paranormal and religious beliefs seem to be more complex and in need of multi-disciplinary revisions in definitions and measuring instruments.

Gholamreza Sohrabpour, Shiva Khalili and Javid Takjoo further investigate the associations of religious beliefs with personal values, moral foundations, and identity styles among Iranian adolescents. His results highlight the role of contextual factors in the formation of all the investigated variables. Adolescents with what the author describes as normative and informative identity styles in the collectivist religious society of Iran exhibit religious beliefs that include transcendence, whereas the more sceptic beliefs (disaffirmation of religious beliefs) are related to an avoidant/diffuse identity style.

Mohammed Sanaa and Abdulsattar Mohanad from Iraq touch upon the sensitive issue of youth's effort for finding their place in a crisis

environment filled with insecurity and instability, violent ideologies, and promises of utopia. The available collective and group identities provide inclusion and support and cover the feelings of uncertainty for the adolescents. Extremist groups in the region seem to benefit from this need and vulnerability of adolescents.

Thomas Benesch's research offered psychometric evidence from a study of Austrian youth with different religious affiliations. The intensity of their religious affiliation was examined using a modified religious socialization index that measured, among others, "centrality" of religion for the personality of youth. The study confirmed the validity of the measurement approach for the three Abrahamic religions Jewry, Christianity, and Islam.

Fatma Tuba Aydin explores the psychotherapy experience of multicultural therapists with their diverse Muslim clients in Austria. In the last two decades the culture and value sensitive approach has established itself in the curriculums and training programs of mental health practitioners in their academic education. Psychologists and psychotherapists are paying more attention to the person's cultural context and religious beliefs. Hence the necessity of developing specific ethical codes for using spiritual or religious elements in the therapeutic setting and/or while applying a culture/religion sensitive approach is quite obvious for mental health practitioners.

The six papers in this special issue provide a good sample of the range of issues that are currently being discussed on the interface of psychology, psychotherapy and religion. As these papers show, according to our changing environment in 21st century we can look forward to the development of better measuring instruments and multi-disciplinary investigations to contribute to our understanding of the complex

meaning of beliefs, their formation and function, changes and relationships with other profound psychological concepts and processes.

Authors

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