

RESEARCH ARTICLE

A motivational framework of religion: Tying together the why and the how of religion

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Abstract

Two lines of research in the psychology of religion have developed independently of each other: why people are religious and how they are religious. Leveraging theories of goal constructs, we propose that these two lines of research are connected, such that religious expressions are the manifestation of religious motivations. In Part I, we build and test a model of relations between religious motivations and religious expressions using data from Christians in the United Kingdom (Study 1; $N = 418$) and Jews in Israel (Study 2; $N = 505$). In Part II, we demonstrate the utility of the model by showing how relations between religiosity and political ideology can be understood by this integrated model. We discuss how this model advances research on the psychology of religion beyond the refinement of typologies and how it can be used to model associations between religiosity and other constructs.

KEYWORDS

ideology, motivation, religion

1 | INTRODUCTION

Two of the foundational research programs in the psychology of religion have concerned why people are religious and how people are religious. The first line of work has been dedicated primarily to identifying and categorizing the different types of religious motivations, such as searching for meaning and affiliating with others (e.g., Gorlow & Schroeder, 1968; Neyrinck et al., 2005; Norenzayan, 2013; Pargament & Park, 1995; van Bruggen, 2019; Welch & Barrish, 1982). The second research program concerns how religiosity is expressed. As with religious motivations, this line of work has been primarily dedicated to identifying the different types of religious expressions (e.g., Layman, 1997, 2001; Saroglou, 2011; Smidt, 2019; Stark & Glock, 1968; Wald & Smidt, 1993). As is common in the early stages of scientific development of a field of research, these two research programs are primarily concerned with developing typologies and categorizations of relevant phenomena independently of each other, without integrating each other's findings and without identifying causal mechanisms (Tooby & Cosmides, 1992).

The purpose of the current investigation is to push forward the scientific study of religion by integrating these two research programs. In Part I, we build a model integrating these lines of research using an inductive method based on samples of religious Christians in the United Kingdom (Study 1) and of religious Jews in Israel (Study 2). This integrative model rests on the notion that religious expressions are instrumental to actualizing religious motivations. In Part II, we demonstrate the model's power in predicting associations with political ideology. Research has long recognized the tight association between religiosity and political ideology (see Ksiazkiewicz & Friesen, 2021), but has not explored which aspects of religiosity drive the association with political ideology.

2 | PART I: LINKS BETWEEN RELIGIOUS MOTIVATIONS AND EXPRESSIONS

We begin with the following premise: although research into religious motivations and religious expressions have proceeded

independently of one another, a scientific account of religion must include an integrated model of the relationship between religious motivations and religious expressions. To do this, we conceptualize motivations as goals and expressions as means to them. Sometimes the relationships between motivations (goals) and expression (means) can be simple. For instance, participating in communal church events will satisfy an individual whose primary religious motivation is to affiliate with others more than will engaging in private meditation. The types of relations between motivations and means of attaining them are best captured by theories of goal constructs.

2.1 | Goal constructs

Theories of goal constructs explicate how pursuit of goals translates into concrete actions (Austin & Vancouver, 1996; Kruglanski et al., 2002). A fundamental distinction in such theories is between the goals that people pursue and the means for pursuing those goals. In a goal-systems architecture, a set of means is instrumental to attaining each goal, and a set of goals is attained by each means. For instance, a student whose goal is to socialize may pursue such a goal by attending a party. In contrast, a student whose goal is to succeed in academics may pursue such a goal by studying in the quiet section in the library. Alternatively, it may be possible to identify a means which is conducive to both goals of socializing and succeeding in academics, such as engaging in group study. Thus, the *mean set* for pursuing a goal of academic success (quiet study, group study) differs from the *mean set* for pursuing a goal of socializing (partying, group study), even if they share certain means (group study). In such an architecture, to the extent that both means are instrumental to the same goal, quiet study and group study are *equifinal* with respect to the goal of academic success, while partying and group study are equifinal with respect to the goal of socializing (Kruglanski et al., 2011). Meanwhile, to the extent that group study is instrumental to attaining both goals, it is *multifinal* with respect to the goals, while quiet study and partying are not (Kruglanski et al., 2013).

We leverage these insights regarding the properties of goal constructs to map associations between religious motivations and religious expressions. According to theories of goal constructs, specific expressions will be instrumental to attaining certain religious motivations, but not to attaining other religious motivations. Before mapping such associations, we elaborate on the different types of religious expressions and religious motivations (see Table 1). Then, we integrate these two typologies to propose that certain religious motivations are linked to certain religious expressions. Finally, we establish a data-driven model of the precise associations between religious motivations and religious expressions.

2.2 | Religious expressions

Several typologies of religious expressions exist, with the most basic distinction being between belief and behavior (Layman, 1997, 2001; Saroglou, 2011; Smidt, 2019; Stark & Glock, 1968; Wald & Smidt,

1993). Such a distinction has proven fruitful in accounting for nuanced associations between religiosity and other constructs, such as attitudes in intergroup relations (Ben-Nun Bloom et al., 2015; Ginges et al., 2009). We utilize this basic distinction to distinguish between aspects of religion related to professed faith and endorsement of religious doctrines such as might pertain to the nature of God and the afterlife on the one hand, and engaging in ritual and collective behavior on the other hand. In addition, following distinctions made in the theoretical and empirical literature (e.g., Ginges et al., 2009; Stark & Glock, 1968), we differentiate between two types of behaviors because they might be conducive to very different motivations: social behavior and private behavior. Social behavior refers to taking part in communal practices, such as communal prayer, or taking part in social events with one's religious community. Private behavior refers to religious practices that occur in isolation, such as individual prayer or meditation (see Table 1). With these religious expressions in hand, we now turn to the different types of religious motivations.

2.3 | Religious motivations

Allport's seminal distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic religious orientation constituted the first major attempt to study religious motivation within the social sciences (Allport & Ross, 1967). Existing typologies of religious motivations refer to a more expansive range of motivations, deriving them either theoretically (e.g., Gorlow & Schroeder, 1968; Neyrinck et al., 2005; Norenzayan, 2013; Pargament & Park, 1995; van Bruggen, 2019) or empirically, via multivariate analyses, such as principal components analyses (e.g., Welch & Barrish, 1982). To develop a model of associations between religious motivations and expressions while capitalizing on the advantage of mapping multiple motivations (Kung & Scholer, 2020, 2021), we sought to identify a set of religious motivations common to various typologies (see Table 1).

We identified and included four motivations to be religious that were mentioned in at least three of four reviews of religious motivations (Gorlow & Schroeder, 1968; Neyrinck et al., 2005; Pargament & Park, 1995; van Bruggen, 2019): a search for significance or meaning, personal growth, seeking or connecting with the sacred or with the divine, and affiliating with other people. Notwithstanding the considerable debate regarding the definitions of intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity and whether they apply across religious affiliations (Cohen et al., 2017; Dittes, 1971; Kirkpatrick & Hood, 1990), the first three motivations appear to be more intrinsic in nature, whereas the fourth motivation appears to be more extrinsic in nature. In particular, intrinsic religiosity is concerned with directly experiencing religion in a humble manner at a personal level (Allport & Ross, 1967), a characteristic common to the motivations to find significance, to grow, and to seek the sacred. Extrinsic religiosity is concerned with the communal and social aspects of religion (Allport & Ross, 1967; Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989), such as the motivation to affiliate. In addition, people may be religious as a form of self-enhancement (Sedikides & Gebauer, 2010), and a prominent way of doing so is social, including downward social comparisons (Wills, 1981) or elevating identification

TABLE 1 Features of religious expressions and motivations

Religious phenomena	Features
<i>Religious expressions</i>	
Belief	Professing faith and endorsing religious doctrines such as might pertain to the nature of God
Social behavior	Partaking in communal practices, such as communal prayer or social events with one's religious community
Private behavior	Partaking in religious practices that occur in isolation, such as private prayer or meditation
<i>Religious motivations</i>	
<i>Intrinsic</i>	
Searching for significance	Desiring to pursue that which gives one a sense of purpose and meaning
Personal growth	Desiring to engage in self-understanding or self-improvement for the sake of self-actualization
Seeking the sacred	Desiring to develop a relationship with God or a divine figure
<i>Extrinsic</i>	
Affiliation	Desiring to develop social relations or to belong to a community
Social enhancement	Desiring to view oneself favorably by denigrating outgroups or by committing to one's ingroup
Maintaining tradition	Desiring to submit to transcendental authority and to revere the rules and dictates of one's religion

with one's ingroup (Cialdini et al., 1976). Furthermore, religion is a uniquely powerful social identity, in which the perception of a positive social group vis-à-vis negative outgroups is a critical element (Ysseldyk et al., 2010). Consequently, we included social enhancement as a fifth religious motivation. Finally, extrinsic religiosity is concerned with the institutional aspects of religion (Allport, 1950, 1954). This characteristic is common to the motivation to maintain tradition. Indeed, since religiosity is often associated with conservative values (Saroglou et al., 2004; Schwartz & Huismans, 1995), we included maintaining tradition as the sixth religious motivation. We elaborate upon each of these six motivations below, and provide some preliminary predictions regarding how each motivation might be expressed.

2.3.1 | Searching for significance

A search for significance involves pursuing a sense of purpose and meaning. Purpose and meaning are facilitated by a sense that the world is coherent and predictable (Baumeister, 1991; Heintzelman et al., 2013), and such a sense of coherence can be provided by an encompassing belief system, religious or otherwise (Baumeister, 1991; Park et al., 2005). In addition, purpose and meaning can be fostered by the pursuit of meaningful activities to which one is invested and committed (Nozick, 1989; Ryff & Singer, 1998). Regularly engaging in rituals, religious or otherwise, may provide a sense of purpose and meaning (Kertzer, 1988).

2.3.2 | Personal growth

Personal growth refers to the motivation to engage in self-understanding or self-improvement for the sake of self-actualization (Gorlow & Schroeder, 1968; Neyrinck et al., 2005; Pargament & Park,

1995). Religious teachings about each person containing a spark of the divine or that the kingdom of God is within them may lead adherents to strive for personal growth (Pargament & Park, 1995). In a religious context, personal growth might be actualized by expressions of religion that are self-reflective and focus on internal states, such as private devotions.

2.3.3 | Seeking the sacred

A central motivation of religion involves developing a relationship with God or a divine figure (Gorlow & Schroeder, 1968; Neyrinck et al., 2005; Pargament & Park, 1995). Such a motivation might be actualized by expressions that reflect singular commitment to God, such as by praying to God and believing in God's existence and eminence.

2.3.4 | Affiliation

Affiliation or belonging is a fundamental social motive (Kenrick et al., 2010). In a religious context, a motivation to affiliate might be actualized by developing social relations in a religious community and by engaging in collective rituals (Van Cappellen et al., 2017).

2.3.5 | Social enhancement

Social enhancement refers to the motivation to view oneself favorably by denigrating outgroups or committing more strongly to one's ingroup (Sedikides & Gebauer, 2010; Ysseldyk et al., 2010). In a religious context, such a motivation could manifest itself as favoring the members of one's religion and disfavoring the members of other religions. Such a motivation might be actualized by public demonstrations of

commitment to one's religious group and to one's belief system. It is less likely to be actualized by religious behaviors that occur in private, such as meditation, because these have weaker social implications than religious behaviors that occur in public.

2.3.6 | Maintaining tradition

In a religious context, the motivation to maintain tradition refers to submitting to transcendental authority and revering the rules and dictates of one's religion (Schwartz & Huisman, 1995). Of the 10 values in Schwartz's circumplex model, religiosity is most strongly tied to tradition (Schwartz & Huisman, 1995). The motivation to maintain tradition is likely to be reflected in commitment to the injunctive norms of a religion. To the extent that some religions have stronger norms for beliefs whereas other religions have stronger norms for behaviors (Cohen et al., 2003; Norenzayan, 2013), a motivation to maintain tradition might be expressed differently among these different religions.

2.4 | Links between religious motivations and expressions

There are overall 18 possible links between religious motivations and expressions. Based on the architectures of goal systems, some of the associations might be multifinal (with one expression linked to more than one motivation), and some of the associations might be equifinal (with a given motivation being linked to more than one expression). However, the set of means with which each motivation is linked can be expected to vary across the different motivations. On the basis of previous research, it is possible to predict some of the link paths, as we outlined above. For instance, we noted that religious belief might be linked with the motivations of searching for significance because belief can provide a coherent worldview, leading to a sense of purpose and meaning. However, expectations regarding other paths are less clear. Therefore, our focus is more on building a model of associations between religious motivations and expressions inductively rather than on confirming a set of a priori hypotheses.

In Studies 1–2, we developed a model of links between religious motivations and expressions. This model was developed inductively by testing which particular religious motivations are associated with particular religious expressions. Study 1 comprised a Christian sample from the United Kingdom and Study 2 comprised a Jewish sample from Israel, allowing us to test whether these associations are common to adherents of both ascent and descent religions (Morris, 1996), as well as across religions varying in orthodoxy versus orthopraxy (Cohen et al., 2003; Norenzayan et al., 2016). Ethics approval was granted by the Institutional Review Board of the second author's institution. We report sample sizes, all data exclusions, and all measures in the studies. Data files and scripts are available on the Open Science Framework (<https://osf.io/qbm6h/>).

3 | STUDY 1

3.1 | Method

3.1.1 | Participants

The sample comprised participants living in the United Kingdom who were preselected for identifying as religious and Christian. In total, 451 participants completed the survey. The same quality control filters were used in Studies 1–2 and were pre-registered in the latter. First, we removed participants with zero variance in their religious motivations ($N = 3$), participants who identified with another religion ($N = 1$), participants who completed the survey in less than half the median time ($N = 12$), and participants who failed the attention check ($N = 17$), leaving 418 participants (76% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 39.25$).¹

3.1.2 | Materials

Motivations for being religious

Self-reported motivation for being religious can be difficult to assess and intellectually demanding because people might only infrequently think about why they are religious. The assessment of personal values encountered a similar difficulty (Schwartz et al., 2001). To cope with this challenge, personal values were assessed in the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ) by presenting participants with short statements describing other people and asking participants how similar they are to the person described. We used a similar method to assess religious motivations. Specifically, participants were presented with the following prompt: "For each of the following statements, imagine that this is a statement by a person who is explaining why they are religious. How much like you is this person?" Then, they were asked to rate each statement on the same scale as the PVQ (Schwartz et al., 2001) from 1 (*not like me at all*) to 6 (*very much like me*).

Six motivations for being religious were selected based on the criteria reported above. These include three intrinsic motivations: a search for significance or meaning (e.g., "S/he is religious because it gives her/him a sense of purpose in life"), personal growth (e.g., "S/he is religious because it helps her/him grow spiritually"), and seeking or connecting with the sacred or god (e.g., "S/he is religious because it connects her/him to the Divine"). They also include three additional, more extrinsic motivations: affiliating with other people (e.g., "S/he is religious because it keeps her/him connected with other people"), preserving tradition, which was assessed by adapting items assessing the values of conformity and tradition (Schwartz et al., 2012; e.g., "S/he is religious because it is important to her/him to maintain tradition"), and social enhancement, which was assessed using negative descriptions of outgroups from previous research (Duckitt et al., 2005; e.g., "S/he is religious because nonbelievers are untrustworthy"). For the complete measure of religious motivations, see the Supplemental Materials.

¹ We re-ran the analyses on the entire sample to establish the robustness of the results (see Table A3 in the Supplemental Materials). Results remained unchanged.

TABLE 2 Descriptive statistics and pairwise correlations among study variables (Study 1)

Variable	Scale	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6
Motivations										
1. Intrinsic	1–6	4.17	1.24	.95	–					
2. Affiliation	1–6	2.98	1.01	.74	.53**	–				
3. Tradition	1–6	3.06	1.10	.74	.49**	.49**	–			
4. Enhancement	1–6	1.41	0.74	.92	.18**	.25**	.41**	–		
Expressions										
5. Belief	1–5	4.10	0.87	.88	.71**	.22**	.31**	.10 [†]	–	
6. Social	1–7	4.06	1.17	.68	.56**	.30**	.18**	0.07	.50**	–
7. Private	1–7	4.94	1.71	.83	.70**	.25**	.18**	0.07	.68**	.66**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

Religious expressions

We assessed three different religious expressions: belief, social behavior, and private behavior. Religious belief was assessed using five items on a 5-point scale (e.g., “What do you believe about God?”; 1 [*I don't believe in God*] to 5 [*I know God really exists and have absolutely no doubts about it*]) adapted from a measure for belief orthodoxy (De Jong et al., 1976). Social behavior was assessed based on frequency of attending a house of worship and frequency of taking part in communal religious events, on a scale from 1 (*never or almost never*) to 7 (*several times a week*), and a third item assessing the number of one's religious friends and acquaintances on a scale from 1 (*None of my friends and acquaintances*) to 5 (*All of my friends and acquaintances*). Private behavior was assessed using three items measuring the frequency of different aspects of personal devotion (Stark & Glock, 1968), including private prayer, private Bible study, and private contemplation of God. For the complete measure of religious expressions, see the Supplemental Materials.

3.1.3 | Procedure

The sample was recruited from the online panel Prolific (www.prolific.co). After giving consent, participants indicated their age and gender in order to match the descriptions in the assessment of religious motivation to the participant's gender. Next, participants completed the measure assessing religious motivations. This measure was divided into two screens, with each screen containing two items of each of the six motivations. The items on each screen were presented in a randomized order. Next, participants completed the measure assessing religious expressions, with items assessing beliefs and social or private behavior presented in a counterbalanced order. Finally, participants provided demographic information, including level of education and political ideology, and completed an attention check requesting them to identify which three of seven questions they had answered in the survey. The likelihood of passing the attention check by chance is less than 3%.

3.2 | Results

Table 2 presents descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations among the main study variables. The religious motivations of significance, growth, and seeking were highly correlated ($r_s = 0.80 - 0.81$), and in an exploratory factor analysis all of their items loaded on the same factor. Therefore, they were collapsed into a single factor reflecting intrinsic motivations. Analyses in which these motivations are treated separately appear in the Supplemental Materials.²

3.2.1 | Links between motivations and expressions

To test whether motivations for being religious are associated with particular religious expressions, we regressed each of the motivations for being religious on all three religious expressions (see Table 3) and then compared confidence intervals to evaluate which expressions are most strongly associated with a given motivation.³ Consistent with the notion that different motivations have a different mean set, results reveal that different motivations are associated with different sets of expressions. In particular, intrinsic motivation is more strongly associated with belief and private behaviors than with social behaviors. Affiliation is more strongly associated with social behaviors than with belief or with private behaviors. Tradition is more strongly associated with belief than with social behaviors or private behaviors. Social enhancement is not associated more strongly with any expression. Together with the low rating of social enhancement as a motivation ($M = 1.41$), this suggests that social enhancement is not a prominent motivation to be religious in the present sample.

Figure 1 presents the full set of links between motivations and expressions, including multifinal and equifinal relations. Specifically,

² Analyses presented in the Supplemental Materials suggest that the motivations of significance, growth, and seeking the sacred are distinct among people who are highly religious.

³ An alternative analytic strategy for evaluating links between religious motivations and expressions was to run structural equation models. These resulted in suppression effects and therefore were more difficult to interpret (see Supplemental Results).

TABLE 3 Linear regressions predicting religious motivations from religious expressions (Study 1)

Predictors	Intrinsic		Affiliation		Tradition		Social enhancement					
	β	95% CI	β	95% CI	β	95% CI	β	95% CI				
Intercept	0.004	[-0.056 - 0.065]	0.003	[-0.088 - 0.095]	-0.077	[-0.472 - 0.318]	-0.001	[-0.093 - 0.090]	0.002	[-0.095 - 0.098]	0.214	[-0.197 - 0.625]
Belief	0.410 ^{***}	[0.327 - 0.494]	0.065	[-0.060 - 0.191]	0.064	[-0.063 - 0.190]	0.330 ^{***}	[0.204 - 0.456]	0.085	[-0.047 - 0.216]	0.088	[-0.043 - 0.220]
Social behavior	0.148 ^{***}	[0.067 - 0.229]	0.253 ^{***}	[0.131 - 0.376]	0.246 ^{***}	[0.122 - 0.369]	0.088	[-0.035 - 0.211]	0.100	[-0.088 - 0.169]	0.038	[-0.090 - 0.167]
Private behavior	0.324 ^{***}	[0.229 - 0.420]	0.034	[-0.111 - 0.178]	0.038	[-0.108 - 0.184]	-0.109	[-0.254 - 0.036]	-0.123	[-0.167 - 0.136]	-0.015	[-0.167 - 0.137]
Age	-	-	-	-	-0.089	[-0.184 - 0.006]	-	-	-0.058	-	-0.084	[-0.183 - 0.015]
Gender ¹	-	-	-	-	0.045	[-0.174 - 0.264]	-	-	0.021	-	-0.123	[-0.351 - 0.105]
Political ideology	-	-	-	-	0.008	[-0.055 - 0.072]	-	-	0.190 ^{***}	-	-	0.136 ^{**}
Education	-	-	-	-	0.061	[-0.002 - 0.123]	-	-	0.022	-	-	-0.026
	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	[-0.125 - 0.073]

¹ M = 1, F = 2.
^{***}p < .01; ^{****}p < .001.

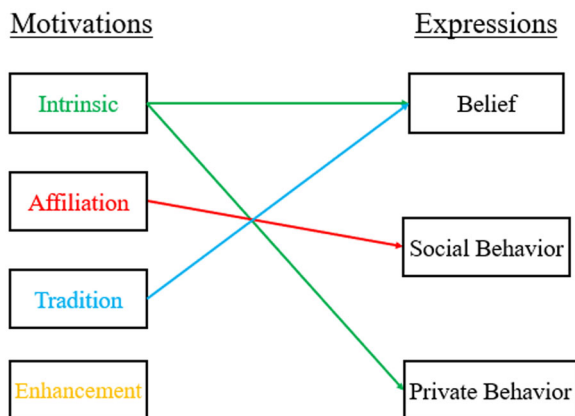


FIGURE 1 Associations between religious motivations and expressions (Study 1)

religious belief is multifinal for intrinsic motivation and for maintaining tradition. Intrinsic motivation is equifinal with respect to belief and private behavior.

3.3 | Discussion

In Study 1, we developed a model integrating two foundational research programs in the psychology of religion—why people are religious and how people are religious. These findings reveal that there are associations between religious motivations and expressions. However, the associations are not necessarily one-to-one, demonstrating the complex inter-play between religious motivations and religious expressions. For instance, the religious expression of belief is linked with the motivation to maintain tradition and intrinsic motivation, and the latter is also linked with private behavior. In Study 2, we sought to replicate these findings in a sample of adherents of a different religion.

4 | STUDY 2

The purpose of Study 2 was to replicate the basic finding from Study 1, that specific motivations for being religious are associated with particular religious expressions, in a sample consisting of adherents of another religion. Some of the specific associations found in Study 1 may not generalize to other religions. For example, relative to Christianity, Judaism places less emphasis on belief (Cohen & Rozin, 2001). In the same vein, the standard by which a Christian judges another to be Christian is more related to belief than behavior, whereas the standard by which one is judged to be Jewish is more related to behavior than belief (Cohen et al., 2003). Consequently, the motivation to preserve tradition may be related more to the expression of belief than to the expressions of behaviors among Christians. In contrast, preserving tradition among Jews may be related more strongly to social and private behaviors than to belief. Therefore, in Study 2, we tested whether certain motivations in religion are related to certain religious expressions

in a sample of religious Jews from Israel. Study 2 was pre-registered (<https://aspredicted.org/8x9km.pdf>).

4.1 | Method

4.1.1 | Participants

The sample comprised participants living in Israel who were pre-selected for identifying as religious and Jewish. 572 participants completed the survey. The same quality control filters from Study 1 were pre-registered in the present study, leaving 505 participants (53% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 32.78$).

4.1.2 | Materials

Motivations for being religious

Motivations for being religious were assessed using the same measure from Study 1 after being translated and back-translated to and from Hebrew.⁴

Religious expressions

As in Study 1, we assessed three different religious expressions: beliefs, social behavior, and private behavior. Religious beliefs are idiosyncratic to a religion and are likely to be widely agreed upon in a specific religious context, potentially leading to ceiling effects with little variance. Therefore, we constructed novel items for assessing belief using the following pre-registered procedure. First, we created eight items to assess belief after conducting interviews with religious Jews in Israel. After running close to 50 participants, we reviewed the means and standard deviations of all items, as well as the internal consistency of the scale. We selected five items that did not reveal a ceiling effect, had a large standard deviation, and were internally consistent with each other (see Supplemental Materials). The rest of the sample responded to these five items. We did not conduct any further analyses until the full sample was collected.

Social behavior and private behavior were assessed using the same items from Study 1, with two exceptions. First, we modified the item referring to frequency of Bible study to frequency of Torah study, which refers to canonical Jewish texts. Second, previous studies indicated that religious Jews in Israel pray, on average, more than once a day (Pasek et al., 2020). This is consistent with Jewish law, which mandates thrice-daily prayers. Therefore, we extended the scales assessing frequency of public and private prayer, participation in communal events, frequency of Torah study, and frequency of contemplating God to include two additional time points: 8 (*Once a day*) and 9 (*several times*

⁴ We originally pre-registered our intention to compare participants' relative motivations by centering their motivations. In Study 1, such an analysis had the advantage of lowering the intercorrelations between religious motivations and thereby eliminating suppression effects in the structural equation models (see Supplemental Materials), rendering the results more interpretable. In the present study, centering motivations rendered the results uninterpretable by yielding no significant associations between religious motivations and expressions. Consequently, we decided to analyze absolute scores of motivations.

TABLE 4 Descriptive statistics and pairwise correlations among study variables (Study 2)

Variable	Scale	M	SD	α	1	2	3	4	5	6
Motivations										
1. Intrinsic	1–6	3.93	1.12	.92	-					
2. Affiliation	1–6	2.00	0.95	.81	.25**	-				
3. Tradition	1–6	3.57	1.14	.70	.61**	.39**	-			
4. Enhancement	1–6	1.42	0.75	.89	.24**	.38**	.35**	-		
Expressions										
5. Belief	1–5	3.91	0.89	.86	.39**	-0.03	.25**	.19**	-	
6. Social	1–9	5.56	1.33	.54	.25**	.14**	.10*	.16**	.25**	-
7. Private	1–9	5.86	1.93	.54	.39**	.00	.11*	0.08	.34**	.41**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

a day). Since Jewish law obligates daily Torah study and thrice-daily prayer for men but not for women, and since previous research has found that Jewish men attend places of worship and study religious texts more than women (Loewenthal et al., 2002), we were cognizant of the need to examine gender differences regarding social and private behavior. Consequently, we report supplemental analyses with gender added as a covariate.

4.1.3 | Procedure

The sample was recruited from the online Israeli panel Ipanel (www.ipanel.co.il). The procedure was identical to the procedure of Study 1.

4.2 | Results

Table 4 presents descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations among the main study variables. As in Study 1, the religious motivations of significance, growth, and seeking were highly correlated ($r_s = 0.63 - 0.71$), and in an exploratory factor analysis all of their items loaded on the same factor. Therefore, as in Study 1, they were collapsed into a single factor reflecting intrinsic motivation. Analyses in which these motivations are treated separately appear in the Supplemental Materials.

4.2.1 | Links between motivations and expressions

To test whether motivations for being religious are associated with particular religious expressions, we followed the same procedure as in Study 1. Specifically, we regressed each of the motivations for being religious on all three religious expressions (see Table 5) and then compared confidence intervals to evaluate which expressions are most strongly associated with a given motivation. Intrinsic motivation is more strongly associated with belief and private behaviors than with social behaviors, though the former comparison is not significant after controlling for demographic variables. Affiliation is more strongly associated with social behaviors than with belief or with private behaviors.

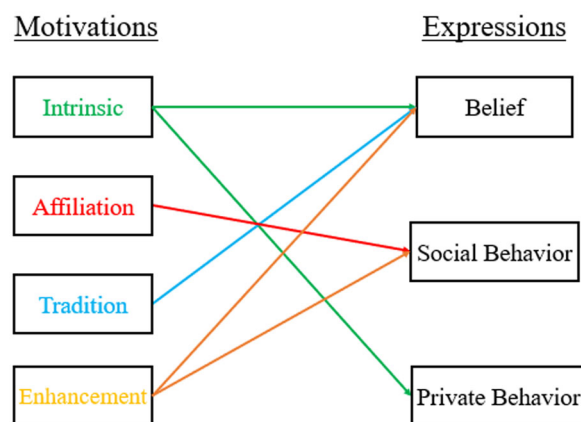


FIGURE 2 Associations between religious motivations and expressions (Study 2)

Tradition is more strongly associated with belief than with social behaviors or private behaviors, though the former comparison is not significant after controlling for demographic variables. Social enhancement is more strongly associated with belief and social behaviors than with private behaviors.

Figure 2 presents the full set of links between religious motivations and expressions, including multifinal and equifinal relations. Overall, there are six associations out of a possible 12. These results are identical to the results of Study 1, with the exception of the additional links between social enhancement and the expressions of belief and social behavior. The importance of social enhancement as an underlying motivation of religious expressions may reflect the greater role of religion in political conflict in the sample of Jews from Israel, including between Jews and predominantly Muslim Arabs, as well as between religious and secular Jews.

4.3 | Discussion

The purpose of Study 2 was to extend the findings from Study 1 by testing the links between religious motivations and expressions in a sample

TABLE 5 Linear regressions predicting religious motivations from religious expressions (Study 2)

Predictors	Intrinsic		Affiliation		Tradition		Social enhancement	
	β	95% CI	β	95% CI	β	95% CI	β	95% CI
Intercept	0	[-0.077 - 0.077]	0	[-0.086 - 0.086]	0	[-0.085 - 0.085]	0	[-0.086 - 0.086]
Belief	0.284***	[0.202 - 0.367]	-0.054	[-0.147 - 0.039]	0.238**	[0.147 - 0.329]	0.167***	[0.075 - 0.258]
Social behavior	0.066	[0.042 - 0.246]	0.181***	[0.085 - 0.277]	0.032	[-0.061 - 0.126]	0.128**	[0.034 - 0.223]
Private behavior	0.265***	[0.178 - 0.353]	-0.059	[-0.158 - 0.039]	0.017	[-0.079 - 0.113]	-0.033	[-0.130 - 0.065]
Age	-	[-0.068 - 0.068]	-	[-0.151 - 0.016]	0.047	[-0.078 - 0.105]	0.014	[0.014 - 0.014]
Gender ¹	-	[0.307 - 0.307]	-	[-0.023 - 0.023]	-	[0.262 - 0.262]	-	[-0.116 - 0.116]
Political ideology	-	[0.116 - 0.498]	-	[-0.243 - 0.197]	-	[0.052 - 0.473]	-	[-0.331 - 0.099]
Education	-	[0.081 - 0.081]	-	[-0.046 - 0.138]	0.205***	[0.117 - 0.293]	-	[-0.026 - 0.154]
	-	[-0.110 - 0.110]	-	[-0.095 - 0.095]	-	[-0.066 - 0.066]	-	[-0.179 - 0.179]
	-	[-0.194 - 0.026]	-	[-0.192 - 0.002]	-	[-0.158 - 0.027]	-	[-0.274 - 0.085]

¹ M = 1, F = 2.

Note.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

of adherents of a different religion. All the links found in Study 1 in a Christian sample replicated in the present sample of Jews, demonstrating that particular religious motivations underlie particular religious expressions. Thus, the question of why people are religious is intimately connected to how they are religious. Contrary to our expectations, the motivation to maintain tradition in the Jewish sample was associated with belief (as in Study 1) and not with behavior.

The purpose of Part I was to construct a model linking religious motivations and expressions to bridge two independent lines of research in the psychology of religion – why people are religious and how people are religious. Links between four religious motivations and three religious expressions were largely consistent across Studies 1–2. These include links between intrinsic motivation and the expressions of belief and private behavior, between affiliation and social behavior, and between tradition and belief. Two additional links between social enhancement and the expressions of belief and of social behavior appeared in Study 2.

In Part II, we seek to use this model to understand how different religious expressions are related to constructs frequently studied in the context of religion. If religious expressions are the manifestations of religious motivations, then the impact of religious motivations on attitudes and behavior might be mediated by the religious expressions to which they are linked. For instance, part of the association between religiosity and well-being is due to the greater social support that religious involvement can provide (McIntosh et al., 1993; Siegel et al., 2001). Social support in religion is likely to vary by the motivation to affiliate more than other motivations, but the presence of the motivation itself is not sufficient to increase social support. Instead, the motivation to affiliate may increase religious social behavior such as going to communal church events, and such social behavior may lead to increased social support. Thus, associations between motivations and constructs frequently studied in the context of religion are likely to be mediated by religious expressions. In particular, we test whether the motivations underlying religious expressions, as presented in our integrated model, account for the links between religious expressions and political ideology.

5 | PART II: LINKS WITH POLITICAL IDEOLOGY

A central prediction arising from the integrative model is that an outcome which is associated with a given religious motivation should also be associated with the religious expressions to which that motivation is connected. For instance, if a given construct is associated with intrinsic motivation, we would expect it to be associated with belief and private behavior but not with social behavior. Thus, the integrated model can be used to make predictions about associations with religious expressions based on associations with religious motivations. We examined the predictive power of the integrated model by testing associations between religious motivations and expressions and political ideology.

Religiosity is associated strongly with ideological conservatism (e.g., Feldman & Johnston, 2014; Jost et al., 2014; Ksiazkiewicz & Friesen, 2021; Malka et al., 2012). A variety of reasons have been explored to understand the link between these concepts, such as cognitive ten-

dencies and genetic predispositions. According to one leading account, both political conservatism and religiosity reflect a motivation to preserve existing social institutions, and do so by fostering perceptions that the existing order is legitimate and just and consequently worth preserving (Jost et al., 2003, 2014). For instance, religiosity fosters perceptions that the existing order is legitimate by promoting a suite of systems-justifying beliefs, such as belief in a just world (Lerner, 1980). However, little or no empirical work has directly tested which religious motivations and religious expressions predict political ideology. To the extent that religiosity is indeed associated with political conservatism because the latter reflects a motivation to preserve existing social institutions, then we expect that political conservatism will be associated with the motivation to maintain tradition—that is, the motivation to preserve the social order—more than with any other religious motivation. Furthermore, since the motivation to maintain tradition is linked exclusively with religious belief in the integrative model, political conservatism might be linked with the religious expression of belief more strongly than with any other religious expression. Some findings suggest that conservative political ideology is associated more with religious belief than with social behavior (Arikan & Ben-Nun Bloom, 2019; Kotler-Berkowitz, 2001), but these studies did not examine its motivational basis and either did not include private behavior or did not distinguish between private behavior and social behavior.

We tested associations between religious motivations, religious expressions, and political ideology using the data collected in Studies 1–2. In both studies, we assessed political ideology using a single item (“How would you describe your political views?”) on a scale from 1 (*very liberal*) to 7 (*very conservative*). First, we regressed all the religious motivations on political ideology, both with and without demographic covariates, in both studies. Results revealed that in both studies, only the motivation to maintain tradition predicted more conservative political ideology, as expected (Study 1: $\beta = 0.248$, 95% CI [0.128, 0.368]; Study 2: $\beta = 0.237$, 95% CI [0.124, 0.350]; see Table 6).⁵ Next, given that belief is the only religious expression linked to maintaining tradition (see Figures 1 and 2), it was expected that from among religious expressions, belief should also predict political ideology. To test this, we regressed all the religious expressions on political ideology, both with and without demographic covariates, in both studies. Results revealed that in Study 1, no religious expression predicted political ideology, while in Study 2, as expected, only belief predicted more conservative political ideology ($\beta = 0.283$, 95% CI [0.193, 0.373]; see Table 7).

Next, we ran a mediation analysis in Study 2 to test whether the link between the motivation to maintain tradition and political ideology is mediated by belief. A mediation analysis with 5000 bootstrapped samples revealed that the association between maintaining tradition and political ideology was partially mediated by the religious expression of belief, indirect effect = 0.059, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.03, 0.09], while the direct effect between maintaining tradition and political ideology remained significant, direct effect = 0.214, $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.13, 0.30].

⁵ The motivation to affiliate predicted less conservative political ideology in Study 1. Since the simple correlation between the motivation to affiliate and political ideology was not significant, $r = -.05$, $p = .293$, this was apparently due to a suppression situation.

TABLE 6 Predicting political ideology from religious motivations

Predictors	Study 1				Study 2			
	β	95% CI	β	95% CI	β	95% CI	β	95% CI
Intercept	.001	-.093 - 0.094	.562**	0.178 - 0.946	-.001	-0.085 - 0.083	.047	-0.228 - 0.322
Intrinsic	-.056	-.172 - 0.061	-.035	-0.149 - 0.079	.074	-0.032 - 0.180	.053	-0.053 - 0.159
Affiliation	-.161**	-.277 - -0.045	-.129*	-0.242 - -0.017	-.088	-0.183 - 0.007	-.091	-0.186 - 0.003
Tradition	.248***	.128 - 0.368	.229***	0.113 - 0.344	.237***	0.124 - 0.350	.245***	0.132 - 0.358
Enhancement	.080	-.023 - 0.183	.072	-0.028 - 0.171	.075	-0.019 - 0.168	.047	-0.047 - 0.141
Age	-	-	.207***	0.116 - 0.299	-	-	.031	-0.061 - 0.122
Gender ¹	-	-	-.319**	-0.531 - -0.106	-	-	-.032	-0.203 - 0.139
Education	-	-	-.121*	-0.214 - -0.028	-	-	-.166***	-0.260 - -0.073

¹ M = 1, F = 2.

Note.

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

TABLE 7 Predicting political ideology from religious expressions

Predictors	Study 1				Study 2			
	β	95% CI	β	95% CI	β	95% CI	β	95% CI
Intercept	-.001	-0.097 - 0.096	.625**	0.231 - 1.020	0	-0.084 - 0.084	-.143	-0.477 - 0.191
Belief	.023	-0.110 - 0.155	.033	-0.095 - 0.160	.283***	0.193 - 0.373	.264***	0.174 - 0.354
Social behavior	-.090	-0.219 - 0.039	-.082	-0.207 - 0.043	.034	-0.059 - 0.128	.048	-0.065 - 0.160
Private behavior	.062	-0.090 - 0.215	.058	-0.089 - 0.206	-.011	-0.106 - 0.084	.009	-0.087 - 0.105
Age	-	-	.206***	0.112 - 0.300	-	-	.034	-0.058 - 0.126
Gender ¹	-	-	-.356**	-0.574 - -0.137	-	-	.092	-0.119 - 0.303
Education	-	-	-.141**	-0.236 - -0.046	-	-	-.183***	-0.275 - -0.092

¹ M = 1, F = 2.

Note.

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

The findings in Part II demonstrate the predictive power of the model in mapping associations between political ideology and religious motivations and expressions. We showed that political ideology is associated with the motivation to maintain tradition, and furthermore that political ideology is associated only with the religious expression of belief. According to our integrated model, belief is the only religious expression linked to the motivation to maintain tradition. Previous work has frequently examined how various constructs relate to various religious motivations or to various religious expressions, without taking into consideration their entire causal sequence. In Part II, we have demonstrated how a full account of religious motivations and religious expression can help in mapping associations between religiosity and other constructs.

6 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

In Part I, we constructed a single model describing how religious motivations and religious expressions are linked. Links between four religious motivations and three religious expressions were largely

consistent across two studies. These include links between intrinsic motivation and the expressions of belief and private behavior, between affiliation and social behavior, and between tradition and belief. Two additional links between social enhancement and the expressions of belief and of social behavior appeared in Study 2. They might not have appeared in Study 1 because of a floor effect or a smaller sample size. In Part II, we sought to use this model to account for associations between religiosity and political ideology. We found that more conservative political ideology was associated with a particular religious motivation (maintaining tradition) and a particular religious expression (belief), which themselves were linked to each other in the integrative model. These findings lend support to the suggestion that religiosity is linked to political conservatism because the latter reflects a motivation to preserve existing social institutions (e.g., Jost et al., 2014).

Contrary to our expectations, links between religious motivations and expressions were mostly consistent across religious Christian and Jewish participants. Nevertheless, these two groups were not compared directly. It may be the case that the links are qualitatively similar across religious affiliations, but differ in magnitude. For instance, intrinsic motivation was linked to all three religious expressions more

strongly in the UK Christian sample (Study 1) than in the Jewish sample (Study 2). A direct comparison between adherents of different religions would best be demonstrated in a future study in a single national context.

6.1 | Limitations and future directions

The present investigation included samples of participants from two religious traditions in two different countries. These religious traditions differ in important ways, such as the extent to which they are open to converts (ascent vs. descent religions; Morris, 1996), but also have much in common, such as being Abrahamic faiths. Future research can investigate whether the model generalizes to samples of participants from Karmic faiths and in non-WEIRD contexts (Henrich et al., 2010).

We addressed the complexity of measuring religious motivations by adopting the Portrait Values Questionnaire used by Schwartz et al. (2001). Future research refining the measurement of different religious motivations may help clarify differences between the three intrinsic motivations. Even though we treated the items assessing the three intrinsic motivations as a single measure, the findings are not reducible to Allport's distinction between intrinsic versus extrinsic religiosity because the three extrinsic motivations were associated with different expressions.

Following most of the literature in the psychology of religion, the present studies were correlational, cross-sectional, and based on self-report. Future studies can test different aspects of the explanatory model using experimental methods or a longitudinal design. For instance, it may be possible to manipulate the salience of different religious motivations and then test whether these different manipulations affect preferences for engaging in different religious expressions. In addition, a longitudinal design can reveal whether changes in religious motivations predict later changes in religious expressions. Since many people acquire their religion from home through socialization (Miller & Glass, 1989), an ideal population for such a longitudinal study would comprise religious converts or those who are born-again. Furthermore, religious expressions with clear behavioral correlates, such as social behavior, can be assessed via observational methods rather than self-report. Future research can directly assess how religious motivations affect the frequency of engaging in such religious expressions.

We have demonstrated a relatively simple application of the model for understanding associations between religiosity and another construct. However, the model may also explicate more complex relations, where the same religious expression is tied to different outcomes, depending on the conflicting religious motivations underlying that expression. For instance, consider two students who prepare for a test via group study. The motivation of one student for taking part in a group study is to succeed on the test, whereas the motivation of another student for taking part in a group study is to socialize. In such an instance, the differing motivations, rather than the observed behavior, are likely to be stronger predictors of outcomes on the test. In particular, though both may be engaging in group study, the student who does so for the purpose of succeeding on the test can be expected,

ceteris paribus, to receive a higher grade than the student who does so for the purpose of socializing. Similarly, religious belief may be associated with more prosociality when the primary motivation underlying it is seeking the sacred, given that focusing on God's perspective leads to less parochial moral reasoning (Ginges et al., 2016; Pasek et al., 2020). However, religious belief may be associated with less prosociality when the primary motivation underlying it is social enhancement. Future research can apply the integrated model to establish which elements of religious motivations and expressions are tied to constructs that have been frequently studied in association with religion, such as prosociality and life satisfaction, and how religious expressions might manifest different motivations (e.g., see Ben-Nun Bloom et al., 2021).

6.2 | Implications

The distinction between religious motivations and expressions, as well as their possible links, advances and adds clarity to the psychology of religion literature. The common distinction between intrinsic orientations and extrinsic orientations, as originally conceived by Allport (1950, 1966; Allport & Ross, 1967), does not adequately distinguish between orientations at the motivational level of religion versus those at the expressive level of religion (Kirkpatrick & Hood, 1990). A few notable exceptions have suggested that religious motivations might be intimately tied to religious expressions. For instance, one account suggests in passing that "one's principal religious motivation may affect expressed religiosity" (Welch & Barrish, 1982, p. 357). Another account suggests that different social motivations affect how religiosity is expressed (Johnson et al., 2015). However, the latter account only addresses social motivations in religion. Moreover, these accounts are theoretical and have not been subjected to empirical scrutiny. The present investigation provides evidence that is consistent with these theoretical accounts.

Much of the psychology of religion has remained mired in the early stages of scientific development: developing typologies and categorizations of relevant phenomena without identifying causal mechanisms, and doing so while resisting conceptual integration with other knowledge systems (Tooby & Cosmides, 1992). For instance, an accepted view in the psychology of religion is that religion and spirituality exert effects on well-being and prosociality that are qualitatively different from the effects of secular mechanisms, although this is not necessarily so (Galen, 2018). The present investigation is not a reductionist view of unique religious phenomena (Pargament, 2013). Instead, this investigation is an attempt to link unique religious phenomena via generalized causal mechanisms (for other theoretical attempts, see Johnson et al., 2015; Purzycki & Sosis, 2009).

While many subfields in psychology investigate fundamentally motivational processes, research has only recently distinguished between motivations and the means for attaining them. Distinguishing between motivations and means for attaining them has proven fruitful in other domains concerned with motivational processes, including the study of behavioral intentions (Ajzen & Kruglanski, 2019), interpersonal processes (Orehek & Forest, 2016), emotion regulation

(Vishkin et al., 2020), and acculturation (Vishkin et al., 2021). As new insights are gleaned regarding the properties of goal constructs in general, these insights may be further integrated into our understanding of the psychology of religion in particular.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The authors confirm that the manuscript adheres to ethical guidelines specified in the APA Code of Conduct. Thus, the authors confirm that the research is conducted ethically, results are reported honestly, the submitted work is original and not (self-)plagiarized, and that the authorship reflects individuals' contributions.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

Data files and scripts are available on the Open Science Framework (<https://osf.io/qbm6h/>).

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