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McKenna, U. and Francis, L.J. (2023) *Testing the contact hypothesis in interfaith encounters: personal friendships with sikhs countering anti-sikh attitudes?* In: Reimagining the landscape of religious education: Challenges and opportunities. Springer Nature, Cham Switzerland, pp. 161-180. ISBN 978-3-031-20133-2

This is an Accepted Manuscript published by Springer on 14th March 2023 at:
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-20133-2>

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McKenna, U., & Francis, L. J. (2023). Testing the contact hypothesis in interfaith encounters: Personal friendships with Sikhs countering anti-Sikh attitudes? In Z. Gross (Ed.), *Reimagining the landscape of religious education: Challenges and opportunities* (pp. 161-180) Cham, Switzerland: Springer Nature.

Testing the contact hypothesis in interfaith encounters: Personal friendships with Sikhs
countering anti-Sikh attitudes?

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Abstract

Drawing on data provided by 5,811 students from schools in England, Wales, and London who self-identified as either ‘no religion’ or as Christian, this study explored the effect of the contact hypothesis (having friends who are Sikhs) on scores recorded on the five-item Scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude (SASA), after controlling for type of school (with or without a religious character), location (England, Wales, and London), personal factors (sex and age), psychological factors (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism) and religious factors (self-assigned affiliation as Christian, worship attendance, and belief in God). The data demonstrated the positive effect of having friends who are Sikhs on lowering anti-Sikh attitudes.

Keywords: religious diversity, contact hypothesis, Sikhs, Gurdwara, United Kingdom

Introduction

The charity BeatBullying found one in four of over 800 children they surveyed were bullied because of their faith or religious beliefs (Lipsett 2008). As highlighted by Lipsett, these children may begin to question their faith, stop talking about it, or even feel ashamed of it. Other studies have also shown that students who identify as religious, or are visibly members of religious minorities, may experience hostility, abuse, and prejudice, and may face challenging incidents at school because of their religious beliefs (Weller, Feldman, and Purdam 2001; Ipgrave and McKenna 2008; Moulin 2011, 2016; Ipgrave 2012; Dupper, Forrest-Bank, and Lowry-Carusillo 2015).

However, the body of research on religion-related victimization and its impact on the lives of people from different faiths appears sparse in comparison to research examining race-related or sexuality-related discrimination and victimization. Moreover, the perspectives and experiences of school age students belonging to religious minorities have been given relatively little attention. Empirical research has often focused on the perspectives of students towards religion and to religious education (Bertram-Troost and O'Grady 2008; Ipgrave and McKenna 2008; McKenna, Neill, and Jackson 2009; Arweck 2017), while research that does explore the connections between religion and victimization among young people, has tended to give particular attention to the experiences of faith-based discrimination and harassment reported by those from the Muslim faith (Verma, Zec, and Skinner 1994; Archer 2003; Anwar 2005; Francis and McKenna 2018). In particular, the Sikh community in the UK may have been overlooked in this regard.

There is a long-established Sikh population in the UK. While some writers have claimed that the number of Sikhs in the UK may be under-estimated (Singh and Tatla 2006, p. 58), according to the 2011 UK Census, 420,196 Sikhs live in England and of these 30% live in London (126,134). A further smaller number of Sikhs live in Wales (2,962) (Office for

National Statistics 2012). The majority of these Sikhs were born in the UK, with the first generation of Sikh immigrants giving way to second, third, and fourth generations of younger Sikh people. In terms of their religiosity these young Sikhs are not a homogeneous group, but rather diverse in terms of identifying with, and practicing their faith. According to Singh and Tatla (2006, p. 58), 'while religion remains an important determinant of self and collective identity the younger generation of Sikhs are both less religious and more likely to identify with British identity.' The wearing of the five articles of faith, known as the Khalsa (5Ks), as a way of signifying their commitment to the Sikh religion makes Sikhs distinctive and publicly recognisable. However, there may be differences in the degree to which young Sikhs give public expression to their Sikh identity. As Hall (2002, p. 5) points out, 'some who practice Sikhism choose to keep the symbols of the faith, while others do not, and not all those who could identify as Sikh, ethnically or religiously actually do.'

Generally, the Sikh population has been able to integrate socially into UK society, and UK law has been accommodating when cases of potential discrimination have been highlighted by the Sikh community. For example, within the UK there have been legal exemptions for Sikhs who wear turbans from having to wear crash helmets when riding a motorcycle, and from wearing hard hats on construction sites. Likewise, offensive weapons legislation allows for the carrying of the Kirpan on religious grounds (see: Singh and Tatla 2006, pp. 127-138; Sidhu and Gohil 2009, pp. 118-119; EHRC 2011, p. 12), although as pointed out by Singh and Tatla (2006) not all challenges have been successful as particular exemptions do not always override health and safety legislation. Consequently, at times there have been highly publicised legal disputes where individual Sikhs have challenged discrimination in the workplace, in schools, and in public spaces on the basis of their right to wear particular items of the 5Ks including the Kirpan (ritual sword) and the Kara (bracelet) (Singh and Tatla 2006, p. 135; Gammell and Allen 2008; London Evening Standard 2009).

Often in the case of schools it is the headteacher and school governors who decide and develop policies on appropriate school uniform or the wearing of religious articles of faith. In one incident the parents of a Sikh boy removed their son from his school when the school banned him from carrying the Kirpan. While the school argued it was a safety risk, it was revealed that the boy had worn it for the previous two years without any problem (London Evening Standard 2009). Gammell and Allen (2008), similarly, detail the case of a Sikh teenager who was successful in winning a high court discrimination case against her school when she refused to take off her Kara.

Though not one of the 5Ks, for many Sikhs who keep the Kesh (uncut hair), it is the turban which is the core part of their self-identity with some Sikhs choosing to wear a turban despite not adopting the remaining four Ks. According to Nesbitt (2000, p. 9), ‘the turban symbolically marks the interface between Sikhs and all other communities in Britain.’ Similarly, Singh (2010) concluded that the turban, like any item of religious dress which symbolises ethnic identity, was not just important for those who actually wear it but highly significant for the majority of the community which it represents. Indeed, many respondents in the study by Singh (2010) raised specific issues related to being Sikh and wearing the turban in Britain. The right to do so is perhaps the most debated and most written about issue in the literature on Sikh identity. In 2019, about a quarter of nearly 2,500 respondents who took part in the annual *British Sikh Report* said that they wore a turban (BSR 2019, p. 14). While BSR (2019) makes no mention of racism or discrimination, the first BSR report undertaken in 2013 with 650 respondents, found that three-quarters had experienced racism (Talwar 2013). Such racism experienced by Sikhs due to their appearance is not new. In the UK, Rait (2005) interviewed young, middle-aged, and elderly Sikh women. All age groups reported incidents of intimidation and harassment that had occurred in schools and in daily

life dating back to the 1950s. The nature of such incidents included witnessing physical attacks and verbal abuse.

Sikhs, along with Asians of all faiths, have experienced a rise in hate crime with incidents of intolerance, discrimination and violence increasing after the attacks on the World Trade Centre in America on 11 September 2001 (9/11), and after the attacks in London on 7 July 2005 (7/7). Thus, the first reported hate crime after 7/7 was the firebombing of a Sikh gurdwara in Kent (Nagarajah 2005). The perception of turbaned Sikhs changed significantly as a result of these events and as part of a heightened dialogue on dealing with global terrorism. Frequently the association between Sikhism and terrorism is made as a result of media images which mistakenly link Sikh appearance, in particular the wearing of the turban, with membership of terrorist groups, 'hate crimes have increased against turbaned Sikhs who are often mistaken for followers of bin Laden or Muslim extremists' (Singh and Tatla 2006, p. 93). There is increasing evidence which illustrates how Sikhs can be homogenised in this way and which report on how Sikhs have been targeted in cases of mistaken identity. Their physical appearance, and turban in particular, leading to them being labelled as terrorists (Falcone 2006; Singh and Tatla 2006; Sidhu and Gohil 2009; Klein 2015; Atwal and Wang 2019). This in turn, according to Hall (2002, p. 206), 'has produced its own forms of terror in the lives of those, like Sikhs, who have been implicated however mistakenly as other.'

Much of the research on the way in which terrorist events have affected those of the Sikh faith comes from studies undertaken in America, particularly since 9/11 (Falcone 2006; Sidhu and Gohil 2009). This includes research which focuses on the experience of Sikh students in American schools with many Sikh American students reporting experiences of peer victimization linked to their physical appearance and the wearing of the turban (Verma 2006; Sidhu and Gohil 2009; Klein 2015; Atwal and Wang 2019). According to Sidhu and Gohil (2009, pp. 69-73), the harassment and bullying of Sikh students by their peers in

American schools occurred immediately after the attacks of 9/11 and went beyond any playful teasing or joking that might usually occur among students. Sikh students, according to Sidhu and Gohil (2009), were specifically targeted because of the association of the Sikh turban with terrorism. Likewise, research by Verma (2006) with a small group of 12 American Sikh youth revealed Sikh students struggling to deal with their treatment by peers within school. Verma maintains that her findings ‘challenge assumptions about...the resilience of immigrant youth in the face of hostile experiences and interactions’ (Verma 2006, p. 89). According to Verma (2006) the Sikh students who were clearly identifiable because of their turbans presented a unique case and this created additional barriers for them not shared by other South Asian immigrant youth. More recently, Atwal and Wang (2019) continue to find evidence of victimization related to race and religion in American schools with Asian American students reporting higher levels of victimization and discrimination at school than students of other ethnic backgrounds. All types of victimization correlated with lower self-esteem and higher depressive and anxiety symptoms. Moreover, using their survey data collected from 199 Sikh American adolescents (aged 12 to 18 years), from 120 schools in 61 cities in California, Atwal and Wang (2019, p. 233) showed that Sikh American students were at higher risk for victimization with a large percentage (76%) of such students in their study reporting at least one type of victimization related to ethnicity and religion during the school year.

Being mis-labelled because of their appearance also happens to Sikh young people in the UK with Keay (2019) reporting on the racism encountered by a 10-year-old Sikh girl in a London park. The young Sikh girl, who was wearing a turban, had asked to play with a group of teenagers who in turn responded by calling her a ‘terrorist’. The Sikh girl returned to the park the next day where she proceeded to make friends with a child nearer her own age, a

9-year-old girl. However, that girl was subsequently told by her mother that her new friend was 'dangerous' and she couldn't play with her anymore. While the teenagers may not have wanted to play with a 10-year-old, this incident illustrates how the general public both young (teenagers) and old (the child's mother) with their inaccurate and hostile responses still lack knowledge about Sikh identity. Eighteen years after 9/11 and fourteen years after 7/7, they were still associating the Sikh turban with terrorism.

While not as prolific as found in the American literature, in the UK there are a small number of research studies that include testimonies and situations illustrating how Sikh young people are particularly vulnerable to abuse and victimization from peers, including in the school setting (James 1974; Nesbitt 2000; Hall 2002). As far back as the early 1970s, James (1974) noted how having long hair made Sikh students look markedly different from their peers with the result being that in schools where there were few Sikh children, such children were likely to get 'teased' for this (James 1974, p. 49). A generation later, Nesbitt (2000) in an ethnographic study of the religious lives of 45 young British Sikhs, explored the experience of these young Sikhs and their relationship to the visible symbols of Sikhism. In this study, Nesbitt (2000, pp. 223-228, p. 248) recounts incidents described by Sikh students of being subjected to verbal abuse and being ridiculed by their peers because of their faith. Examples included a 10-year-old Sikh boy being mocked when he spoke Punjabi as well as being taunted for having long hair and a turban (which he subsequently cut), and a 13-year-old girl being abused for having an Indian accent. Hall (2002, pp. 94-101) also detailed interactions between students which illustrate the racism experienced by Sikh students, including their subjection to widespread stereotyping (in relation to appearance, dress, and language) alongside a lack of cross-ethnic friendships. Hall (2002, p.185), comments on how for British Sikh teenagers the turban can symbolise 'social distance' between them and their friends. Hall spent 11 months engaging with young Sikhs in years 9 to 13 (13- to 18-year-

olds) at a Leeds school and singled out the dilemma faced by Sikh boys of whether to cut their hair in an attempt to become more English. She cites the example of a Sikh boy in the sixth form who removed his turban and cut his hair and was subsequently described as 'trendy' (Hall 2002, p. 109). The bullying experienced and reported by Sikh students in all these studies is very similar to the accounts reported by Archer (2003) as experienced by Muslim students.

As a result of experiencing such prejudice and victimization both verbal and physical, young Sikhs, and young turbaned Sikhs in particular, are faced with the dilemma of whether to embrace or reject their culture and religion. In the UK even before the events of 9/11 and 7/7, Nesbitt (2000, p. 247) noted how, as a result of bullying, some boys in her study had chosen to have their hair cut, thus making 'themselves less conspicuous' (p. 247). Nesbitt (2000) concluded that the effect of such racism might be for young Sikhs to minimise their visibility and to distance themselves from a Khalsa identity. This worry was subsequently shared by Verma (2006, p. 97) who noted that after 9/11 American students tried to 'hide' who they were, thus compromising their self-identity. For Verma (2006, p. 99) this led to concern among Sikhs worldwide that schools 'would become places where young Sikh children would be compelled to 'assimilate' and abandon cultural aspects of their self-identity.'

Despite many of the issues identified, and in contrast to the conclusions of Nesbitt (2000) and Verma (2006) that victimization, bullying and abuse may lead to Sikh young people having to compromise their self-identity, Singh (2010) on the basis of semi-structured interviews with 25 18- to 32-year-old Sikhs concluded that young Sikhs in the UK were confident in choosing to wear the turban. While some of the Sikhs in this study chose not to keep their hair uncut and not to wear a turban, this was not always because of peer pressure or because they thought doing so would negatively single them out as religious, but instead

was attributed to practical difficulties or because they did not feel it fashionable to do so. As stated by Singh (2010), while many Sikhs in other parts of the world had removed their turbans in order to distance themselves from the media and public image of what a terrorist might be, none of the British Sikhs in his study had done so, even though some had experienced increased racism after the events of 9/11. Singh (2010) concluded that young British Sikhs continued to wear the turban, primarily because they were confident to do so. It is possible that the older age of the interviewees (18 to 32 years) in this study may have made them more confident in asserting their identity and in challenging abuse and discrimination than might be found among school-age students.

Much of the international research into the Sikh community has been ethnographic in approach with scholarship focusing on the history and diversity of Sikh settlement, and on the development and transmission of Sikh identity and Sikh values (Barrier and Dusenbery 1989; Coward, Hinnells, and Williams 2000; Hawley 2013). In the UK, a number of studies report on Sikh experience (Helweg 1986; Ballard 2000; Nesbitt 2005; Rait 2005; Singh and Tatla 2006; Jaspal 2013) with studies specifically focused on Sikh young people (James 1974; Hall 2002; Gill 2005; Nesbitt 1999, 2000) and including those growing up in mixed faith families (Nesbitt 2009). The limitation of existing UK research is that some of it is now dated and is small in scale. Hence, the work by James (1974) was focused mostly on immigrant Sikh children when there are now subsequent generations of Sikh children who have been born and raised in the UK. Comprehensively, Nesbitt (2000) provided an overview of early studies of the Sikh tradition (pp. 12-13), studies of Sikhs in the UK (pp. 14-16), and studies on Sikh children and young people (pp. 18-20). However, the empirical studies cited tend to be localised MA and PhD dissertations (see Dury 1989; Sohal 1989; Gill 2005). Although more recent, Jaspal (2013) looked at Sikh identity among young British born Sikhs but this was

limited to 10 interviews with post school-age young adults aged between 18 and 27 years in Derby.

Moreover, while existing studies may draw attention to individual incidents of racist bullying and discrimination, these studies do not specifically focus on school-based peer relationships as the main focus of study. Rather, they explore the lives of Sikh children in relation to the transmission of the Sikh religion, gender roles within Sikh families, and issues of Sikh identity. For Hall (2002) the central focus was the social mobility experiences of Sikh young people and the process of becoming British citizens. Indeed, Hall (2002) discussed the turban only in relation to Sikh boys, but increasingly the issues surrounding the wearing of this item of Sikh identity also apply to Sikh girls as the racist incident reported by Keay (2019) demonstrates. Similarly, Singh and Tatla (2006, p. 3) in what they claim to be the ‘first systematic and comprehensive national study of the British Sikh experience since World War II’ focus on youth identity in relation to Punjabi language, Punjabi broadcasting, the British Punjabi press, British Punjabi literature and Bhangra music (pp. 186-207) rather than on peer relationships. There are few peer-reviewed empirical studies that explore the direct experiences of school-age Sikh students in relation to peer-based victimization, or which examine the attitudes of other students toward their Sikh peers.

One study, the work of Thanissaro (2012), aimed to explore attitude toward Sikhism and toward Sikh values among a sample of 364 non-Sikh schoolchildren aged between 13 and 15 years in London. Thanissaro (2012) concluded that in respect of non-Sikh attitudes towards Sikhism, schools had failed to ameliorate negative attitudes towards Sikh values. However, examination of the data presented by Thanissaro shows that the majority of student answers in this study were in the ‘not certain’ category. Thanissaro interprets this as ‘apathy’ towards Sikhism which he then judges to be illustrative of a negative attitude to the Sikh religion.

In her study, Nesbitt (2000, pp. 260-261) suggested that future research look at the hypothesis that differences of geographic region (e.g., between London and the provinces) might affect the lives of British Sikh children in different ways. In this sense the difference between London and the provinces is important in light of the greater presence and therefore the higher visibility of the Sikh community within London (Office for National Statistics 2012). In this context the contact hypothesis may suggest that the greater presence and higher visibility of the Sikh community may lead to wider acceptance and to less prejudice.

The contact hypothesis (or intergroup contact theory) proposes that changes in belief about or attitude toward particular groups may come about from direct contact with members of those groups. By bringing people from different backgrounds together and encouraging collaboration, prejudice may be reduced and more positive attitudes toward the other result. The contact hypothesis was originally developed by Gordon Allport. Allport (1954) asserted that prejudice arose because of negative assumptions made about entire groups of people. He suggested that interpersonal contact between members of different groups, if undertaken in appropriate situations, could help to reduce prejudice and improve relations among groups that are experiencing conflict. To be beneficial in reducing prejudice and hostility it has been proposed that the contact situation must be characterised by positive intergroup relations, what Allport (1954, p. 489) termed, the ‘optimal’ conditions: equal status, intergroup cooperation, common goals, and support by social and institutional authorities. An extensive critique of contact theory can be found in Vezzali and Stathi (2017) with an in-depth review of this work provided by Lytle (2018).

Research Aim

Against this background the aim of the present study is to test the power of the contact hypothesis to explain individual differences in the levels of anti-Sikh attitude expressed by 13- to 15-year-old students who participated in the Young Peoples Attitude to Religious

Diversity project. Specifically, the study needs to develop and to test a measure of anti-Sikh attitude and to propose a measure of contact with Sikhs in order to operationalise the contact hypothesis.

In light of the accumulated findings from the Young People's Attitude to Religious Diversity project, the pressing research question (concerning the connection between contact with Sikhs and anti-Sikh attitude) needs to be contextualised within recognising the potentially contaminating effects of school factors (schools with a religious character or schools without a religious foundation), geographical factors (England, Wales, and London), personal factors (sex and age), psychological factors (employing the Eysenckian three dimensional model of personality), and religious factors (differentiating among the three factors of self-assigned religious affiliation, religious belief, and religious practice). In line with other analyses that have explored the effects of predictor variables on attitude toward minority religious groups (see, for example Francis and Village 2014; Francis, ap Siôn, McKenna, and Penny 2017) the present analyses will be conducted on the data provided by participants who identified their religious affiliation either as Christian or as no religion.

The control variables identified above have been selected for the following reasons. Differentiation between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious foundation has been noted on both theoretical and empirical grounds as potentially influencing attitudes toward religious diversity (see Francis and Village 2014). Differentiation among the three geographical locations has been noted in light of the evidence of the 2011 census showing the different proportions of Sikhs present in Wales, England, and London (see Office for National Statistics 2012). Personal and social factors have been noted in light of the significant sex differences consistently found in religion-related spheres (see Francis and Penny 2014) and the significant changes that occur in religion-related spheres during adolescence (see Kay and Francis 1996). Psychological factors have been noted in

light of the consistent findings that the Eysenckian three dimensional model of personality (Eysenck and Eysenck 1975, 1991) predict individual differences both in social attitudes (see Eysenck and Eysenck 1975, 1976) and in religion-related attitudes (see Francis 2009).

Religious factors have been noted in light of the controversy regarding whether religious commitment promotes or frustrates acceptance of religious diversity (see Francis, Pyke, and Penny 2015). Religious factors differentiate between self-assigned affiliation, public practice, and personal belief in light of the different effects of these diverse experiences of religiosity (see Francis and Village 2014).

Method

Procedure

The Young People's Attitude to Religious Diversity Project set out to obtain responses from at least 2,000 13- to 15-year-old students attending state-maintained schools in each of five parts of the UK: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales *and* London. In each nation half of the students were recruited from schools with a religious character (Anglican, Catholic, or joint Anglican and Catholic) and half from schools without a religious character. Within the participating schools, questionnaires were administered by the religious education teachers within examination-like conditions. Students were assured of anonymity and confidentiality and given the option not to participate in the project.

Participants

The present analyses were conducted on a sub-sample from the Young People's Attitude to Religious Diversity project, drawing on information provided by 5,811 students from schools in England, Wales, and London who self-identified as either 'no religion' or as Christian and who completed all the items in the Scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude. In terms of sex, 2,733 were male, 3,050 were female, and 28 were of undisclosed sex; in terms of school year, 2,925 were in year nine, 2,875 were in year ten, and 11 were of undisclosed school year; in terms of self-

assigned religious affiliation, 3,663 self-identified as Christian and 2,148 as of no religion; in terms of geographical location, 2,072 were from England, 2,048 from Wales, and 1,691 from London; in terms of school type, 3,276 were from schools with a religious character and 2,535 from schools without a religious foundation.

Measures

Anti-Sikh attitude was assessed by the newly proposed five-item Scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude (SASA). This instrument combines items concerned with social distance, acceptance of religious clothing in schools, and wider affective response. An example of social distance is provided by the item, 'I would not like to live next door to Sikhs'. An example of acceptance of religious clothing is provided by the item, 'Sikhs should be allowed to wear the Turban in school'. An example of wider affective response is provided by the item, 'A lot of good is done in the world by Sikhs'. Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale: agree strongly (5), agree (4), not certain (3), disagree (2), and disagree strongly (1).

Psychological factors were assessed by the abbreviated version of the Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised (JEPQR-A) developed by Francis (1996) who reported the following Cronbach alpha coefficients: extraversion = .66; neuroticism = .70; psychoticism = .61; lie scale = .57.

Religious affiliation was recorded by a checklist of world faiths and Christian denominations in response to the question, 'What is your religion?' For the current analysis all the Christian categories were collapsed into a single group and those affiliated with other world faiths were omitted, producing a dichotomous variable: no religion = 0, and Christian = 1.

Religious attendance was assessed by the question, 'Apart from special occasions (like weddings) how often do you attend a religious worship service (e.g. in a church, mosque or synagogue). Responses were recorded on a seven-point scale: never (1), sometimes (2), at

least once a year (3), at least six times a year (4), at least once a month (5), nearly every week (6), and several times a week (7).

Belief in God was assessed by the statement ‘I believe in God’. Responses were recorded on a five-point scale: disagree strongly (1), disagree (2), not certain (3), agree (4), and agree strongly (5).

Contact hypothesis was assessed by the statement, ‘I have friends who are Sikhs’. Responses were recorded on a five-point scale: disagree strongly (1), disagree (2), not certain (3), agree (4), and agree strongly (5).

Personal factors were recorded as two dichotomous variables: male (1) and female (2), and year nine (1) and year ten (2).

School type was recorded as a dichotomous variable: schools without a religious foundation (1) and schools with a religious character (2).

Analysis

The data were analysed by the SPSS package, using the frequencies, correlation, reliability, and regression routines. In the regression models school location (distinguishing among England, Wales, and London) was operationalised as dummy variables with England and London entered into the model against Wales as the point of comparison.

Results and Discussion

Table 1 Scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude: Psychometric properties

	<i>R</i>	Yes %	? %	No %
A lot of good is done in the world by Sikhs ⁺	.42	23	54	22
I am interested in finding out about Sikhs ⁺	.39	29	23	48
I would not like to live next door to Sikhs	.31	12	22	67
Sikhs should be allowed to wear the Turban in school ⁺	.68	58	23	18
Sikhs should be allowed to wear the Kara in school ⁺	.67	54	28	19

Note: ⁺ These items are reverse coded to generate the scale score

r = correlation between individual item and sum of other four items

Table 2 Scale Properties

	N Items	alpha α	M	SD	Scale range	
					Low	High
Anti-Sikh Attitude	5	.73	13.49	4.16	5	25
Extraversion	6	.69	4.70	1.54	0	6
Neuroticism	6	.68	3.13	1.80	0	6
Psychoticism	6	.58	1.14	1.29	0	6

Table 1 presents the scale properties of the five-item Scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude (SASA) in terms of the correlations between the individual items and the sum of the other four items, and in terms of the item endorsements with the agree strongly and agree responses combined as ‘yes’, and the disagree strongly and disagree responses combined as ‘no’. These statistics demonstrate variability in item discrimination and a level of negativity toward Sikhs. One in five of the young participants feel that Sikhs should not be allowed to wear the Kara (19%) or the Turban (18%) in school or disagree that a lot of good is done in the world by Sikhs (22%). One in eight of the young participants would not like to live next door to Sikhs (12%), and half of them show no interest in finding out about Sikhs (48%). Table 2 presents the alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951), mean and standard deviation for the Scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude. The alpha coefficient confirms a good level of internal consistency reliability ($\alpha = .73$). Table 2 also presents the alpha coefficients, means and standard deviations for the three scales proposed by the abbreviated version of the Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised (JEPQR-A). These data demonstrate that the extraversion scale and the neuroticism scale both achieved alpha coefficients in excess of the threshold of .65 proposed by DeVellis

(2003). The lower alpha coefficient achieved by the psychoticism scale is consistent with the recognised difficulties in operationalising this dimension of personality (see Francis, Brown, and Philipchalk 1992).

Table 3 Frequency statistics

	%
<i>I have friends who are Sikhs</i>	
agree strongly	8
Agree	10
not certain	25
Disagree	23
disagree strongly	34
<i>I believe in God</i>	
agree strongly	24
Agree	20
not certain	26
Disagree	10
disagree strongly	20
<i>I attend religious worship services</i>	
several times a week	2
nearly every week	16
at least once a month	6
at least six times a year	5
Sometimes	18
at least once a year	11
Never	43

Table 3 presents the frequency responses for the three single-item measures concerned with belief in God, worship attendance, and contact with Sikhs. These data demonstrate quite a high level of church attendance, with nearly one in five of the young participants attending services weekly (18%) and quite a high level of belief in God, with 44% identifying as theists, 26% as agnostics, and 30% as atheists. These figures reflect the sampling strategy, whereby half of the participating schools were schools with a religious character that received higher populations of students from churchgoing backgrounds (see further Francis and Village 2020). These data demonstrate that fewer than one in five of the young participants consider that they have friends who are Sikhs (18%).

Table 4 Correlation matrix

	SASA	SF	Be	At	Ch	Ps	Nu	Ex	Sy
Sex	-.18***	.01	.12***	.06***	.05***	-.25***	.27***	.06***	.00
School year (SY)	.02	-.03*	.03*	-.04**	.00	.00	.01	.05***	
Extraversion (Ex)	.06***	.04**	.01	-.07***	.00	.08***	-.14***		
Neuroticism (Ne)	-.10***	.01	.07***	.03*	.00	.01			
Psychoticism (Ps)	.30***	-.03*	-.17***	-.14***	-.09***				
Christian (Ch)	-.11***	.06***	.56***	.51***					
Attendance (At)	-.23***	.13***	.51***						
Belief (Be)	-.27***	.12***							
Sikh Friends (SF)	-.25***								

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

Table 4 presents the correlations among the main variables later to be employed in the regression models. These data demonstrate that, when the bivariate correlations are being considered separately, higher levels of anti-Sikh attitudes are associated with one of the two personal factors: being male rather than female. Higher levels of anti-Sikh attitudes are

associated with all three psychological factors: higher scores on the psychoticism scale, higher scores on the extraversion scale, and lower scores on the neuroticism scale. Lower levels of anti-Sikh attitude were associated with all three religious factors: self-identifying as Christian rather than as of no religion, believing in God, and attending worship service. Lower levels of anti-Sikh attitude are also associated with having friends who are Sikhs.

The bivariate correlations presented in table 4 also demonstrate the complex patterns of association among the range of predictor variables (personal factors, psychological factors, religious factors, and the measure of contact). For example, not only is sex significantly correlated with scores recorded on the Scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude (with males recording higher scores), but also with psychoticism scores (males recording higher scores), with neuroticism scores (females recording higher scores), with extraversion scores (females recording higher scores), and with all three religious measures of affiliation, belief in God, and worship attendance (females recording higher scores). Scores recorded on the single-item measure of having friends who are Sikhs is also significantly related to the three religiosity factors. Having friends who are Sikhs is more likely among those who score high on belief in God, and high on worship attendance, and who also self-identify as Christian. Moreover, the three religious measures are themselves highly intercorrelated. It is for these reasons that it is wise to focus the research question within the environment of a series of regression models.

Table 5 Regression models

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
<i>School type</i>						
Religious character	-.02	-.01	-.00	-.01	.05***	.03**
<i>School location</i>						
England		.00	-.00	-.01	-.01	.02
London		-.09***	-.08***	-.08***	-.04*	.01

<i>Personal factors</i>						
Sex						
Age						
<i>Psychological factors</i>						
Extraversion						
Neuroticism						
Psychoticism						
<i>Religious factors</i>						
Christian affiliation						
Church attendance						
Belief in God						
<i>Contact hypothesis</i>						
Sikh friends						
Total R^2						
Δ						

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

Table 5 presents a series of six regression models in which scores recorded on the Scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude serves as the dependent variable and contact with Sikhs is entered as the final step. The increase in the variance accounted for by the models shows that, while the first model was not statistically significant, each of the following five steps added further significant explanatory power to the model. Step one entered first the distinction between schools with a religious character and schools without a religious foundation. On its own this factor was insignificant. Step two entered England and London as two dummy variables against Wales as the reference point. This step added significant explanatory power to the

model. Step three entered the two personal factors of sex and age (conceptualised as school year). This step added significant explanatory power to the model. Step four added the three psychological factors (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism). This step added significant explanatory power to the model. Step five added the three religious factors. This step added significant explanatory power to the model. Step six added to the model the variable designed to test the contact hypothesis (having friends who are Sikhs). This step too added significant explanatory power to the model. The main conclusion drawn from this sequence of regression models is that having friends who are Sikhs is significantly correlated with lower scores on the Scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude, even after the type of school (religious or not religious), the geographical location (England, Wales, and London), personal factors (sex and school year), psychological factors (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism) and religious factors (self-assigned affiliation as Christian, belief in God, and worship attendance) have been taken into account.

Four other features of the final regression model also deserve comment in terms of the beta weights. Given the size of the sample and the number of variables engaged, interpretation will be based only on beta weights that reach the one percent level of probability. First, when all other factors are in the model, students in England, London and Wales do not record significantly different scores on the Scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude. The religious question in the 2011 census demonstrated that there was a higher proportion of Sikhs in London than in England and Wales (Office for National Statistics 2012). While London is associated with lower scores on the scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude in the earlier regression model, the influence of London is removed in model 6 when Sikh friends have been added to the model. Second, when all other factors are in the model, male students record higher scores than female students on the Scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude. This finding is important because it indicates that the difference between males and females cannot be

explained in psychological terms as a consequence of different personality predisposition but needs to be explained more in sociological terms. The different inculturation of anti-Sikh attitudes among male students and among female students requires further investigation. Third, when all other factors are in the model, the psychological factors remain highly significant. In particular scores recorded on the psychoticism scale are important. Students recording high scores on the psychoticism scale may be particularly susceptible to endorsing anti-Sikh views. This is consistent with Eysenck's (1975, 1976) pioneering research that originally linked low psychoticism scores with tenderminded social attitudes and high psychoticism scores with toughminded social attitudes. Fourth, the pattern of beta weights alongside the three religious factors is particularly revealing. When all other factors are in the model there are significant negative paths from both worship attendance and belief in God to scores of anti-Sikh attitude. Students who attend church and/or believe in God tend to record significantly lower scores on the Scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude. On the other hand, there is now a significant positive path from self-assigned Christian affiliation to scores of anti-Sikh attitude. In other words, cultural Christians (those who claim the Christian designation but neither attend worship services nor believe in God) tend to record significantly higher scores on the Scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude, compared with those who are religiously unaffiliated.

Conclusion

The present study set out to test the power of the classic contact hypothesis to account for individual difference in the levels of anti-Sikh attitudes expressed by 13- to 15-year-old students who participated in the Young People's Attitude to Religious Diversity Project. The analysis progressed in four steps and leads to four main conclusions.

The first step involved designing and testing a new measure of anti-Sikh attitude. The five-item Scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude (SASA) devised from the Young People's Attitude to Religious Diversity Project has good face validity, drawing together items concerned with

social distance, acceptance of religious clothing in school, and wider affective response, and good internal consistency reliability, reflected in an alpha coefficient of .73. The conclusion is that this instrument may be commended for use in further studies.

The second step involved proposing a measure of contact with Sikhs in order to operationalise the contact hypothesis. The Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity Project contained the following item: 'I have friends who are Sikhs'. This item has good face validity and in the present study displayed good construct validity in the sense of achieving the hypothesised correlation with lower anti-Sikh attitude. The conclusion is that this single-item measure may be commended for use in further studies.

The third step involved contextualizing the primary research question (concerning the connection between contact with Sikhs and anti-Sikh attitude) within a network of potentially contaminating effects of school factors (schools with a religious character or without a religious foundation), geographical factors (England, Wales, and London), personal factors (sex and age), psychological factors (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism), and religious factors (differentiating among the three factors of self-assigned religious affiliation, religious belief, and religious practice). The conclusion supported the wisdom of such contextualisation and drew attention to the effects of geographical factors (anti-Sikh attitude was higher in England and Wales than in London), of personal factors (anti-Sikh attitude was higher among male students than among female students), of psychological factors (anti-Sikh attitudes were associated with higher psychoticism scores, higher extraversion scores, and lower neuroticism scores), and of religious factors (anti-Sikh attitudes were associated with non-churchgoers, atheists and people who self-identified as Christian but neither practised nor believed).

The fourth step involved structuring a set of regression models with the Scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude as the dependent variable and with Sikh friends entered as the final step after

taking into account school factors, geographical factors, personal factors, psychological factors, and religious factors. The conclusion is that the regression analyses supported the contact hypothesis. The young participants who count Sikhs among their friends score significantly lower on the Scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude.

The limitations with the present study arise from the way in which the present analyses were conducted on a dataset designed to address a number of related, but distinct, research questions. The Scale of Anti-Sikh Attitude (SASA) could have been enriched by including a larger number of more diverse items. The findings generated by this five-item scale clearly support the value of future research investing in the development of a more highly nuanced instrument. The operationalization of the contact hypothesis through a single-item measure could have been enriched by the development of a multi-item scale. The findings generated by this single-item measure clearly support the value of future research investing in the development of a more sophisticated instrument. In spite of such limitations, the findings carry important implications for religious education.

Note

Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity Project (AHRC Reference: AH/G014035/1) was a large-scale mixed methods research project investigating the attitudes of 13- to 16-year-old students across the United Kingdom. Students from a variety of socio-economic, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds from different parts of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, with the addition of London as a special case, took part in the study. Professor Robert Jackson was principal investigator and Professor Leslie J. Francis was co-investigator. Together they led a team of qualitative and quantitative researchers based in the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit, within the Centre for Education Studies, University of Warwick. The project was part of the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme and ran from 2009-2012.

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