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Implicit religion, extrinsic religious orientation and consumerism:

Exploring what 'no religion' young people do to make themselves feel better

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Abstract

The present study tests the connection among 8,084 unchurched 13- to 15-year-old students between consuming chocolate, caffeine, and alcohol to make themselves feel better and levels of purpose in life and suicidal ideation. After controlling for personal factors (sex and age) and psychological factors (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism) the data demonstrated that such consumption was associated with lower levels of purpose in life and higher levels of suicidal ideation. This connection is explored in light of Edward Bailey's theory concerning implicit religion and Gordon Allport's theory concerning extrinsic religious orientation.

Keywords: implicit religion, religious orientation, chocolate, caffeine, alcohol, purpose in life, suicidal ideation

Introduction

Edward Bailey (1997, 1998, 2002) advanced the notion of implicit religion to suggest that there exists in contemporary societies a range of phenomena that behave in ways analogous to explicit religion. For Bailey, implicit religion may be characterised by (but is not limited to) three key qualities:

> Implicit religion displays *commitment*; it is something to which individuals feel committed. Implicit religion provides *integrating foci*; it is something that draws together the identity of an individual (or a group) and in doing so furnishes meaning and generates purpose. Implicit religion displays *intensive concerns with extensive effects*; it is something that helps to shape a worldview and carries implications for the way in which life is lived. (Francis, Flere, et al*.,* 2013, p. 953)

One stream of research inspired by Edward Bailey's notion of implicit religion has identified examples of phenomena in contemporary societies that have been conceptualised and interpreted through the lens of implicit religion, including commitments to football (French, 2002), belly dancing (Kraus, 2009), the personality cult of Prince (Till, 2010), celebrity worship (Aruguete et al., 2014), fly fishing (Fife, 2017), knitting (Fisk, 2017), Straight Edge Punk (Stewart, 2017), and cosplay (Stewart, 2022).

A second stream of research inspired by Edward Bailey's notion of implicit religion has identified examples of belief systems that may function as forms of implicit religion, including commitment to: belief in luck (Francis, Robbins, & Williams, 2006; Francis, Williams, & Robbins, 2006, 2008), belief in the paranormal (Williams et al., 2011), New Age beliefs (Kemp, 2001; Francis, Flere, et al., 2013), belief in supernatural forces (Schuurmans-Stekhoven, 2014), belief in the inerrancy of science (Francis, Astley, & McKenna, 2018), belief in environmentalism (McCalman, 2019), and belief in human rights (Francis, McKenna, & Stewart, in press).

One way to test claims about the validity of conceptualising such phenomena and such beliefs as behaving in ways analogous to explicit religion was proposed by Francis (2013a, 2013b). Rooted within the empirical psychology of religion, Francis noted that there tend to be consistent findings that explicit religion is correlated with certain psychological characteristics, including enhanced positive affect reflected in areas like purpose in life (Francis, 2013a) and decreased negative affect reflected in areas like suicidal ideation (Francis, 2013b). Francis then argued that it is reasonable to hypothesise that phenomena and belief that function as a form of implicit religion should demonstrate the same psychological correlates.

Drawing on a sample of over 25,000 13- to 15-year-old adolescents Francis (2013a, 2013b) tested this hypothesis, taking as an indicator of implicit religion the item, 'I believe that I can be a Christian without going to church', and taking as an indicator of explicit religion frequency of church attendance. The first study, taking purpose in life as the outcome measure, demonstrated that the measures of explicit religion and implicit religion worked in the same way, predicting higher scores. However, in the study on suicidal ideation, while the measure of explicit religion predicted lower scores, the measure of implicit religion was not significantly related to suicidal ideation. The conclusion drawn from these two studies was that implicit religion, as captured by the view that you do not have to go to church to be a Christian, may work in the lives of people in the same was as explicit religion to generate positive psychological outcomes (like sense of meaning and purpose), but that this expression of implicit religion may not work in the lives of people in the same was as explicit religion to offer protection from negative psychological outcomes (like suicidal ideation).

Building on the initial studies reported by Francis (2013a, 2013b), subsequent studies have worked in the same research tradition using both different outcome measures and different conceptualisations of implicit religion. For example, Penny and Francis (2015)

employed as a measure of implicit religion commitment to traditional Christian rites of passage at the times of birth, marriage, and death, with attitudes toward substances as the outcome measure. Francis, Astley, and McKenna (2018) employed as a measure of implicit religion belief in the inerrancy of science, with self-esteem and empathy as the two outcome measures. Francis, McKenna, and Stewart (in press) employed as a measure of implicit religion belief in human rights and human rights activism, with empathy as the outcome measure.

Consumerism as implicit religion

The idea that consumerism can be conceptualised and interpreted through the lens of implicit religion was proposed by Kurenlahti and Salonen (2018) who in arguing for a move away from narrow anti-consumerist critiques proposed a more comprehensive approach 'that the under-researched and underdeveloped topic of religion might offer one way to approach consumerism from a more holistic and multidimensional perspective' (p. 14). Kurenlahti and Salonen (2018) draw on the work of Clifford Geertz (1973) to theorise consumerism within secular settings as having various functionalities often found in explicitly faith-based traditions. With a focus on religion, they asserted, patterns of consumption could become illuminated with meaning and connected to a shared way for individuals to articulate a sense of purpose in contemporary contexts. To illustrate this, they utilised three categories of functions religion can serve, as outlined in the work of Gordon Lynch; the social function, the existential/hermeneutical function, and the transcendent function (Lynch, 2005, p. 28). These functions are then further illuminated with examples taken from other research studies. The social function of religion is defined as providing an experience of community that also binds people into a social order of shared beliefs and values that provide structure for their everyday lives. As an example of this type of consumption-related community-building they point to veganism and how it has been presented as a 'way of life' (Kurenlahti & Salonen,

2018, p. 10). The existential/hermeneutical function of religion is defined as providing people with a set of resources (e.g., myths, rituals, symbols, beliefs, values, narratives) that may help them to live with a sense of identity, meaning and purpose. Here two examples are drawn upon: the dating app Tinder which may be used by people in the hope of increasing their self-worth or to feel better about themselves when receiving external validation on how they look and the activities and interests they engage in; and the celebrity Beyoncé, who thorough consumer endorsement can turn products and movements into 'fashionable and trendy consumption choices' (Kurenlahti & Salonen, 2018, p. 11). The transcendent function of religion is defined as providing a way through which people can come to experience 'God', the numinous or the transcendent. Here the example discussed is the way in which the purpose of advertising is not simply to make the consumer desire the product for its functional use but, rather, to engender the desire for something more transcendent to which the product points, like the happiness it may bring or the better life it promises (Kurenlahti & Salonen, 2018, pp. 12-13).

Extrinsic religiosity and consumerism

Religion itself is a complex construct that may be conceptualised and accessed in a variety of ways. Within the field of the social scientific study of religion, routinely differentiation is made among religious affiliation, religious belief, religious practice, and religious attitude (see further, Francis, 2016). A further key differentiation is made in terms of religious orientation and religious motivation. The notion of religious orientation arose from the pioneering work of Gordon Allport (see Allport, 1966) who was puzzled by the routine finding that religious people (as assessed by church attendance) tended to be more racially prejudiced than non-attenders. Allport recognised that what really counted was not attendance *per se*, but the motivation underpinning attendance. As a consequence, Allport distinguished

between what he characterised as intrinsic religious motivation and extrinsic religious motivation.

In a subsequent (and now classic) co-authored paper, Allport and Ross (1967, p. 434) develop the understanding of the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic orientation in the following way. Here is their description of the extrinsic orientation:

> Persons with this orientation are disposed to use religion for their own ends. The term is borrowed from axiology, to designate an interest that is held because it serves other, more ultimate interests. Extrinsic values are always instrumental and utilitarian. Persons with this orientation may find religion useful in a variety of ways–to provide security and solace, sociability and distraction, status and self-justification. The embraced creed is lightly held or else selectively shaped to fit more primary needs. In theological terms the extrinsic type turns to God, but without turning away from self.

Here is their description of the intrinsic orientation:

> Persons with this orientation find their master motive in religion. Other needs, strong as they may be, are regarded as of less ultimate significance, and they are, so far as possible, brought into harmony with the religious beliefs and prescriptions. Having embraced a creed the individual endeavours to internalize it and follow it fully.

Allport and Ross (1967) proposed two scales to measure their dimensions of intrinsic and extrinsic orientation. The intrinsic measure contained nine items, the first of which was, ‘It is important for me to spend periods of time in private religious thought and meditation’. The extrinsic measure contained eleven items, the first of which was, ‘Although I believe in my religion, I feel there are many more important things in my life’.

The notion of religious orientation was broadened by Batson and Ventis (1982) who added a third component that they characterised as quest religious motivation. They also proposed a six-item measure of this orientation, where the first item was, ‘It might be said

that I value my religious doubt and uncertainties'. Francis (2007) reworked and refined both the conceptualisation and operationalisation of these three religious orientations and proposed the New Indices of Religious Orientation (NIRO). The NIRO clarified three components within each of the three orientations. For the purposes of the present discussion, the intrinsic and the extrinsic orientations remain central. The contention is that Bailey's notion of implicit religion could be strengthened by incorporating the differentiation between an implicit religious orientation and an extrinsic religious orientation. This differentiation may be particularly helpful in nuancing the ways in which the lens of implicit religion may illuminate the nature of consumerism.

Within the NIRO, the three components of intrinsic orientation are styled integration, public religion, and personal religion. Integration is accessed by items like, 'My religious beliefs really shape my whole approach to life'. Public religion is accessed by items like, 'I go to church because it helps me feel close to God'. Personal religion is accessed by items like, 'I pray at home because it helps me to be aware of God's presence'. Within the NIRO, the three components of extrinsic orientation are styled compartmentalisation, social support, and personal support. Compartmentalisation is accessed by items like, 'While I believe in my religion, there are more important things in my life'. Social support is accessed by items like, 'One reason for me going to church is that it helps to establish me in the community'. Personal support is accessed by items like, 'I pray chiefly because it makes me feel better'.

Psychological correlates of extrinsic religiosity

The original hypothesis advanced by Francis (2013a, 2013b) that implicit religion should, like explicit religion, be associated with enhanced positive affect (like purpose in life) and with reduced negative affect (like suicidal ideation) had not taken into account the differentiation between intrinsic religious orientation and extrinsic religious orientation. There are, however, developing bodies of research that illuminate different patterns of

associations between intrinsic religious orientation and extrinsic religious orientation on the one hand and positive affect and negative affect on the other hand.

In particular, a long-standing body of research has explored the connection between religious orientation and measures of purpose in life, including studies: among 71 students by Crandall and Rasmussen (1975); among 52 students by Bolt (1975); among 427 students by Soderstrom and Wright (1977); among 84 students and 177 adults by Paloutzian et al. (1978); among 11 Protestant ministers and 38 parishioners by Weinstein and Cleanthous (1996); among 103 older adults by Ardelt (2003); among 130 adults by Janssen et al. (2005); among 472 adults by Dezutter et al. (2006); among 161 undergraduate students by Byrd et al. (2007); among 133 university students by Hui and Fung (2009); among 407 older Methodists by Francis, Jewell, and Robbins (2010); among 197 parents and relatives of psychology students by Blazek and Besta (2012), and among 155 Catholic priests serving in Italy by Francis and Crea (2016).

All of these 13 studies included a recognised measure of intrinsic religious orientation and all but three of them also included a recognised measure of extrinsic religious orientation (Soderstrom & Wright, 1977; Weinstein & Cleanthaus, 1996; Byrd et al., 2007). The data from these 13 studies provide a fairly consistent and coherent account of the connection between religious orientation and purpose in life. Only one of the 13 studies failed to report a significant positive correlation between intrinsic religious orientation and purpose in life. That one study by Crandall and Rasmussen (1975) reported a significant negative correlation. None of the ten studies that included a measure of extrinsic religious orientation reported a significant positive correlation between extrinsic religion and purpose in life: nine of the three studies reported no significant connection between the two variables and one reported a significant negative correlation (Francis & Crea, 2016).

A number of studies have explored the connections between suicidal ideation or suicidal behaviour among adolescents and adults, including work reported by Hills and Francis (2005), Walker and Bishop (2005), Kay and Francis (2006), Ji et al. (2011), Lester (2012), Liu and Koenig (2013), Hovey et al. (2014), Walker et al. (2014), Malihe and Motahare (2016), Lester (2017), Lester and Walker (2017), Lew et al. (2018), Wei et al. (2021), and Ooi et al. (2023). Although by no means as clear cut as the literature concerning the connection between religious orientation and measures of purpose in life, the overall weight of evidence points to the protective effect of intrinsic religious orientation, reducing suicidal ideation and suicidal behaviour. Extrinsic orientation is generally either unrelated to individual differences in suicidal ideation and suicidal behaviour or associated with higher levels, not lower levels.

Consumerism and consumption among young people

The present study is concerned specifically with consumerism and consumption among young people. Some may indeed see consumerism as an end in itself (and thus qualify to adopt an intrinsic implicit religious orientation) and others may see consumerism more as a means to other ends (and thus qualify to adopt an extrinsic implicit religious orientation). The Young People's Values Survey contains three items that may appropriately operationalise the extrinsic implicit religious orientation: 'I eat chocolate to make myself feel better', I drink caffeine to make myself feel better', and 'I drink alcohol to make myself feel better'. These items resonate clearly with the personal support item within the measure of extrinsic religion proposed by the NIRO: 'I pray chiefly because it makes me feel better'.

The three items included within the Young People's Values Survey concerning the consumption of chocolate, caffeine, and alcohol relate to a broader academic enquiry concerning the motivation of young people to engage with such consumption. For example, Scott et al. (2019) reviewed 62 qualitative studies to provide insight into common underlying

factors influencing alcohol use and unhealthy eating behaviours amongst young people aged 10 to 17. The analysis generated five themes: use of alcohol and unhealthy food to overcome personal problems; unhealthy eating and alcohol use as fun experiences; food, but not alcohol, choices are based on taste; control and restraint; and demonstrating identity through alcohol and food choices. A qualitative study reported in Spain by Romo-Avilés et al. (2018) among 96 14- to 17-year-old adolescents focused specifically on motivation for alcohol consumption among young women. The data pointed to disinhibition, to having a good time, 'to be different from how I normally am', and to the unsettling of traditional gender norms. A quantitative study reported in England by NHS Digital (2022) among 9,289 11- to 15-year-old students focused on why they thought people their age drank alcohol. The data identified the following motivations: to look cool in front of friends (74%), because friends pressured them into it (66%), to be more sociable with friends (62%), because it gave a rush or a buzz (62%), to help forget about their problems (58%), because other people they lived with drank (55%), to feel more confident (50%), being bored/having nothing to do (45%), and to help relax (42%).

A second stream of research explored the perceived impact of consumption on wellbeing. For example, in a cross-cultural study involving 1,332 adult participants in seven countries, Ares et al. (2016) investigated the perceived impact of consumption of alcohol (beer), chocolate (cake), and coffee on six dimensions of wellbeing (general, physical, intellectual, emotional, social, and spiritual). Items included: 'it makes me feel good' (general dimension), 'it makes me feel happy' (emotional dimension), 'it keeps me alert' (intellectual dimension). Regarding the intellectual dimension, coffee received high average scores for three of the items (it keeps me alert, it helps me concentrate and it makes me think clearly) while beer received average scores that indicated a negative impact on intellectual aspects of wellbeing (p. 65). Chocolate cake was positively associated with emotional aspects of

wellbeing, particularly with the items, ‘it gives me pleasure’ and ‘it makes me feel happy’, while beer received the lowest scores on these items (p. 66).

A third stream of research explored the risks of chocolate, caffeine, and alcohol consumption among young people. For example, John et al. (2017) examined the link between eating chocolate and dental problems. Each serving of chocolate consumption being significantly associated with a 27% higher incidence of a 6-monthly dental visit. A survey of 589 adolescents by Mathew et al (2021) found caffeine consumption was one of several risk factors for insufficient sleep and poor sleep quality during adolescence, which are in turn risk factors for mental wellbeing. The risks associated with drinking alcohol among young people have been especially well documented. Alcohol consumption has been associated with lower levels of personal happiness (Farmer & Hanratty, 2012; Lambert et al., 2014), higher levels of truancy and fighting (Salas-Wright et al., 2014), increased risk of suicidal ideation (Dendup et al., 2020; Hill et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2021), mental health problems (Mason-Jones & Cabieses, 2015), engaging in sexual behaviour (McAloney, 2015), and aggressive or violent behaviour including the likelihood of being the victim or perpetrator of interpersonal violence (Scholes-Balog et al., 2013; Couturiaux et al., 2021)

Research question

Against this background the aim of the present study is to draw on the rich data provided by the Young People’s Values Survey (see for example, Francis, 2020) in order to address the following research question. Conceptualised as extrinsic implicit religion, when young people, growing up outside a religious tradition, claim that they eat chocolate, drink caffeine, or drink alcohol to make themselves feel better, is this reflected in greater positive affect (sense of purpose in life) and lower negative affect (suicidal ideation)? Before these associations can be properly assessed, two main sets of control variables need to be taken into account. First, personal factors need to be taken into account: both sex and age are important

predictors of individual differences in both purpose in life and suicidal ideation among young people (see Francis, 2013a, 2013b). Second, psychological factors need to be taken into account: in particular the three scales proposed by Eysenck's dimensional model of personality are important predictors of individual differences in both purpose in life and suicidal ideation (see Francis, 2013a, 213b).

Method

Procedure

Schools that agreed to participate in the Young People's Values Survey were asked to follow a standard procedure. The questionnaires were administered in normal class groups to all year nine (13- to 14-year-old) and year ten (14- to 15-year-old) students throughout the school. Students were asked not to write their names on the booklet and to complete the inventory under examination-like conditions. Although the students were given the choice not to participate, very few declined to do so. They were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. A total of 163 schools participated in the project, with thoroughly completed responses from 27,524 students.

Instrument

The Young People's Values Survey contained a range of questions modelled in the tradition of the CYMCA Attitude Survey (Francis, 1982a, 1982b) and the Teenage Religion and Values Survey (Francis, 2001; Robbins & Francis, 2010). The present study drew on the following components.

Religious affiliation was assessed by the question, 'What is your religion?' followed by the checklist: none, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and other.

Church attendance was assessed by the question, 'How often do you attend a place of religious worship (e.g. church, mosque, temple, etc.)? rated on a five-point scale: nearly every day (5), once a week (4), once a month (3), occasionally (2), and never (1).

Purpose in life was assessed by the item, 'I feel my life has a sense of purpose', rated on a five-point scale: agree strongly (5), agree (4), not certain (3), disagree (2), and disagree strongly (1).

Suicidal ideation was assessed by the item, 'I have sometimes considered taking my own life', rated on a five-point scale: agree strongly (5), agree (4), not certain (3), disagree (2), and disagree strongly (1).

Belief in God was assessed by the item, 'I believe in God', rated on a five-point scale: agree strongly (5), agree (4), not certain (3), disagree (2), and disagree strongly (1).

Personal consumerism was assessed by three items, 'I eat chocolate to make myself feel better', I drink caffeine (tea/coffee/cola) to make myself feel better', and 'I drink alcohol to make myself feel better'. Each of the three items was rated on a five-point scale: agree strongly (5), agree (4), not certain (3), disagree (2), and disagree strongly (1).

Personality was assessed by the abbreviated form of the Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised (Francis, 1996). This instrument proposes three six-item scales to measure extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism, together with a six-item lie scale. Each item is rated on a two-point scale: no (0) and yes (1), with negatively-phrased items recoded. Among the present sample the three personality scales recorded the following alpha coefficients: neuroticism, $\alpha = .73$; extraversion, $\alpha = .74$; psychoticism, $\alpha = .57$.

Sex and school year were both treated as dichotomous variables: male (1) and female (2); year nine (1) and year ten (2).

Participants

The present analyses were conducted on a subset of the 27,524 participants who could be described as growing up outside a religious tradition. These were the participants who both checked the religious affiliation question as 'none' and the religious attendance question as 'never'. Within this subset 8,084 young people supplied complete data on all the variables

employed in the analyses. Of these 8,084 young people, 4,335 were male and 3,749 were female; 4,402 were in year nine and 3,682 were in year ten.

Analysis

Block-wise multiple regression was employed to test the incremental effect of four blocks of variables separately on purpose in life and on suicidal ideation. The first block takes into account the effect of personal factors (sex and age); the second block takes into account the effect of psychological factors (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism); the third block takes into account the effect of individual differences in response to the item, 'I believe in God'; and the fourth block takes into account the effect of consumerism (chocolate, caffeine, and alcohol).

Results and discussion

- insert table 1 about here -

Table 1 presents the frequency endorsement for the six core items on which the following analyses are based. Four main findings emerge from these data, concerning belief in God, purpose in life, suicidal ideation, and consumerism among this population of 13- to 15-year-old students who could be described as growing up outside a religious tradition. In terms of belief in God, 5% emerged as theists, 17% as agnostics, and 78% as atheists. While lack of religious practice and lack of religious affiliation are not synonymous with lack of belief, only a small minority (5%) of these young people professed belief in God. Growing up outside a religious tradition renders God as largely incredible. The largest group (61%) does not just show rejection of God, but strong rejection of God.

In terms of a sense of purpose in life, 61% affirm that they feel their life has a sense of purpose, 12% are clear that this is not the case, and the other 28% remain non-committal. In terms of suicidal ideation, 21% affirm that they have sometimes considered taking their own life, 67% are clear that this is not the case, and the other 12% remain non-committal.

In terms of consumerism, over one third of the young people eat chocolate to make themselves feel better (35%) or drink caffeine (tea/coffee/cola) to make themselves feel better (34%). Over one sixth of the young people drink alcohol to make themselves feel better (18%).

- insert table 2 about here -

Table 2 presents first the bivariate correlations between the predictor variables and response to the item, 'I feel my life has a sense of purpose'. Then table 2 presents the sequence of four regression models as each block of predictor variables is entered. It is model 4 that is of primary interest. This model confirms that the personality variables are of primary importance, with a higher sense of purpose in life being associated with high extraversion, low neuroticism and low psychoticism. With personality in the model, sex differences are not significant, but there is a significant decline in purpose in life between year nine and year ten. With personal factors and psychological factors in the model, belief in God (a component of explicit religion) is associated with a higher sense of purpose in life, while consumerism (conceptualised as a component of extrinsic implicit religion) is associated with a lower sense of purpose in life.

- insert table 3 about here -

Table 3 presents first the bivariate correlations between the predictor variables and response to the item, 'I have sometimes considered taking my own life'. Then table 3 presents the sequence of four regression models as each block of predictor variables is entered. It is model 4 that is of primary interest. This model confirms that the personality variables are of primary importance, with higher levels of suicidal ideation being associated with high neuroticism, high psychoticism, and low extraversion. With personality in the model, age differences are not significant and sex differences are of low significance ($p <$ .05). With personal factors and psychological factors in the model, belief in God is not

significant, but consumerism (conceptualized as a component of extrinsic implicit religion) is associated with higher levels of suicidal ideation.

Conclusion

The present study has drawn together two bodies of knowledge (Edward Bailey's notion of implicit religion and Gordon Allport's notion of extrinsic religious orientation) to illuminate the connection between a form of adolescent consumerism (consuming chocolate, caffeine, and alcohol to make themselves feel better) and two areas of psychological affect: positive affect (purpose in life) and negative affect (suicidal ideation). Data provided by 8,084 13- to 15-year-old students (who checked both the religious affiliation question as 'none' and the religious attendance question as 'never') demonstrate that, after taking personal factors (sex and age) and psychological factors (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism) into account, higher levels of this form of consumption were associated both with higher levels of suicidal ideation and with lower levels of purpose in life. Three main conclusions can be drawn from these findings, concerning the fruitfulness of Edward Bailey's notion of implicit religion, the value of integrating Gordon Allport's notion of extrinsic religious orientation within the study of implicit religion, and the importance of differentiating between the intrinsic and the extrinsic expressions of consumerism considered through the lens of implicit religion, as proposed by Kurenlahti and Salonen.

Regarding Edward Bailey's (1997, 1998, 2002) notion of implicit religion, the present study has illustrated the utility of examining the contemporary experience of consumerism through lenses afforded by the study of religions. For all the reasons ably set out by Kurenlahti and Salonen (2018) consumerism has potential for fulfilling the functions of religions within the lives of those who show intrinsic commitment to what consumerism has to offer.

Regarding Gordon Allport's notion of differentiation between an intrinsic religious orientation and an extrinsic religious orientation (Allport & Ross, 1967), the present study has illustrated how Bailey's notion of implicit religion can be enriched by taking this perspective into account. Allport's original work in the 1960s was inspired by the empirical observation that not all practitioners within the field of explicit religion displayed in their lives the correlates hypothesised as characterising religious adherents. Likewise the present study has demonstrated that consumerism conceptualised as implicit religion does not deliver in all cases the expected psychological outcome of an enhanced purpose in life. Allport's differentiation between intrinsic religious motivation and extrinsic religious motivation can also nuance different expressions of implicit religion, just as much as different expressions of explicit religion.

Regarding Kurenlahti and Salonen's (2018) conceptualisation of consumerism as implicit religion, the present study has affirmed the value of further nuancing this conceptualisation in light of the differentiation between intrinsic religious orientation and extrinsic religious orientation. This differentiation may be of particular importance in the design of future empirical studies intended to operationalise consumerism as implicit religion and to explore the correlates of such operationalisation. The present study has set a pattern by picking up an example item from the extrinsic scale proposed by the New Indices of Religious Orientation (Francis, 2007), 'I pray chiefly because it makes me feel better', in order to shape motivational intent for consuming chocolate, caffeine, and alcohol.

Limitations within the present study include a relatively restricted age range of young people, single-item measures of purpose in life and of suicidal ideation, indicators only of extrinsic consumerism, drawing on a database that included a limited range of consumerism behaviours, and reliance on the contention that eating chocolate and drinking caffeine may serve as proxy measures of implicit religion in the same way as veganism. These are

limitations that can be properly addressed in subsequent studies building on the foundations put in place by the present study.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflicts of interest were reported by the authors.

Availability of data

Data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Ethical approval

The study received approval from the St Mary's Centre Ethics Committee (SMC13EC0012).

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Table 1

Response frequencies

	AS %	A %	NC %	D %	DS %
I believe in God	1	4	17	17	61
I feel my life has a sense of purpose	24	37	28	7	5
I have sometimes considered taking my own life	7	14	12	15	52
I eat chocolate to make myself feel better	14	21	19	27	19
I drink caffeine (tea/coffee/cola) to make myself feel better	14	20	20	25	21
I drink alcohol to make myself feel better	7	11	16	28	38

Note: AS = agree strongly; A = agree; NC = not certain; D = disagree; DS = disagree strongly

Table 2

I feel my life has a sense of purpose

	r	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Personal factors					
Sex	-.03*	-.03*	-.01	-.01	-.01
Age	-.06***	-.06***	-.05***	-.05***	-.04***
Psychological factors					
Extraversion	.19***		.17***	.16***	.19***
Neuroticism	-.21***		-.18***	-.19***	-.17***
Psychoticism	-.07***		-.11***	-.11***	-.06***
Belief					
I believe in God	.09***			.09***	.09***
Strategies					
I eat chocolate	-.02*				.03**
I drink caffeine	-.08***				-.02*
I drink alcohol	-.14***				-.13***
Total R^2		.005	.081	.088	.104
Δ		.005***	.076***	.07***	.016***

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

Table 3

I have sometimes considered taking my own life

	r	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Personal factors					
Sex	.12***	.12***	.04***	.04***	.03*
Age	.03*	.03*	.01	.01	-.01
Psychological factors					
Extraversion	-.14***		-.08***	-.08***	-.13***
Neuroticism	.44***		.43***	.43***	.38***
Psychoticism	.12***		.17***	.17***	.10***
Belief					
I believe in God	.01			.00	.00
Strategies					
I eat chocolate	.13***				-.01
I drink caffeine	.21***				.08***
I drink alcohol	.28***				.22***
Total R^2		.015	.226	.226	.275
Δ		.015***	.210***	.000	.050***

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