Religion Monitor 2008: Structuring Principles, Operational Constructs, Interpretive Strategies

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Are we facing a global renaissance of religiosity? What roles do religion and religiosity play in modern societies and in individual life horizons? Are Germany and Europe forging a unique path with regard to religion? How can one describe the position of Germany and Europe in the global religious arena? These are some of the questions that data from the Bertelsmann Foundation's Religion Monitor should help answer.

To do justice to this task, the Religion Monitor must be able to model the structures and dynamics of various religions and religious cultures in comparative perspective. The survey instrument must thus have high intercultural and interreligious sensitivity. Moreover, the instrument must be comprehensive; it must capture a great many facets of religious experience and behavior, each of which may carry different weight in different religious cultures.

This introduction presents the information necessary to critically assess the survey instrument and its potential. It first explains the Religion Monitor's structuring principles, focusing mainly on its interconnecting categories and perspectives, which are drawn from sociology, psychology, religious studies, and theology. On this basis, we then discuss individual operational constructs and all of their empirical indicators. Emphasis is placed on the semantics of the indicators, since the empirical fruitfulness of a quantitative instrument ultimately depends on the semantic precision of its indicators. Finally, this chapter outlines some innovative interpretive strategies enabled by the Religion Monitor. Foremost among these is analysis of endogenous religious studies and dynamics, which is a desideratum of empirical research on religion.

Structuring principles

The Religion Monitor is based on a substantial notion of religion (see Pollack 2000) in which the essential quality of religious experience and behavior lies in its connection to transcendence. This connection is not restricted to a theistic concept of transcendence, however. Instead, theistic and pantheistic ideas alike—and their associated forms of practice and experience—are included to ensure the Religion Monitor's validity over as broad an area as possible. Not least, this lets us systematically study how widespread these two religious semantics are, globally and across religions.

The Religion Monitor further considers special features of individual religions. Examples of this include obligatory prayer in Islam and home altars in Hinduism and Buddhism. Finally, the Religion Monitor integrates questions on respondents' religious and spiritual self-understanding. This makes the survey instrument equally sensitive to highly individualized manifestations of religiosity and spirituality that take shape outside of traditional religious forms and contents.

The Religion Monitor integrates theoretical concepts and operational constructs from various disciplines that study religion empirically (including sociology of religion, psychology of religion, religious studies and theology). The common denominator of these categories is that they have empirically proven to be of high value, and that they are well known—at least within their own disciplinary discourses. Given this state of affairs, the Religion Monitor's primary claim to uniqueness lies in its ability to systematically cross-reference and interconnect these categories.

The Religion Monitor's interdisciplinary taxonomy is constructed on the basis of three principles that rely on an interdisciplinary model of religiosity (Huber 2003) and have already been applied in the "Structure of Religiosity Test" (S-R-T, Huber 2006; 2008b and c):

From the sociology of religion comes the question of what general social form religiosity takes. Corresponding to this, the first principle of construction is the distinction among six *core dimensions* of religion.

From the psychology of religion comes the question of how relevant religiosity is to an individual's cognitive and emotional system. Corresponding to this, the second principle of construction is the distinction among three qualitatively distinguishable *levels of centrality*.

From theology and religious studies comes the question of the materiality of religiosity and its resultant inner logic. Corresponding to this, the third principle

of construction is the distinction between the general and specific "Gestalt" of the contents of religiosity. Theistic and pantheistic foundational religious semantics are each considered here in connection with the general Gestalt of religiosity.

Table 1 shows the interconnections between these principles of construction and the "location" of the operational constructs that follows from them.

Table 1: Taxonomy of the Religion Monitor 2008

		Contents		
		General		Specific (themes, approaches, attitudes, styles)
		Foundational semantics		
		Theistic	Pantheistic	
Core dimensions	**Intellect**	Interest in religious matters		Religious reflexivity, religious quest, theodicy, spiritual and religious books
		religious socialization[a]		
	Ideology (belief)	Belief in God or something divine		God-concepts, worldviews, religious pluralism, religious fundamentalism, further religious ideas
	Public practice	Church service, communal prayer, spiritual rituals		Religious affiliation
		Religious socialization[a]		
	Private practice	Prayer	Meditation	Obligatory prayers, Puja, family altar, interreligious practice
		Religious socialization[a]		
	Experience	One-to-one experience	Experience of being at one	Religious feelings
	Consequences	General relevance of religion to everyday life		Relevance of religion in eleven areas of life
Centrality		Centrality scale (C-scale)[b]		Religious and spiritual self-concept, importance of religious area of life
		Religious socialization		

a The indicators for analyzing dimension- and gender-specific aspects of religious socialization processes are integrated into the Religion Monitor's online tool only (www.religionsmonitor.com).
b The centrality scale consists of the indicators in the blue-shaded cells.

The backbone of the Religion Monitor consists of six core dimensions of religiosity as defined by the sociology of religion: intellect, ideology (belief), public practice, private practice, experience and consequences for everyday life. They denote general social forms through which religious experience and behavior are expressed. Representative studies in the sociology of religion have substantiated their rela-

tive autonomy (Glock 1962; Stark and Glock 1968; for an overview see Huber 1996, 2003). For this reason alone it is absolutely necessary to consider all six forms of expression if one hopes to obtain a reasonably valid and differentiated picture of the individual as well as of the social relevance of religiosity. The six core dimensions are found in all religious cultures, albeit with varying weight. They thus also lend themselves as a general comparative framework and tertium comparationis for interreligious comparisons (Krech 2006).

The core dimensions from the sociology of religion define the first six lines of the schema in Table 1. They can be operationalized only through specific *contents* through which religiosity assumes a concrete Gestalt. This brings into play the expertise of disciplines that deal with the material aspects of religiosity, namely, religious studies and theology. When operationalizing the core dimensions with regard to their content, the Religion Monitor consistently distinguishes between their general intensity and specific themes. For example, with regard to religious experience, the questions initially ask about the general intensity of both basic forms, one-to-one experience and an experience of being-at-one. Only in a second iteration does the survey make further distinctions within the universe of religious experience's specific content (e.g., security or fear). The Religion Monitor operationalizes the specific content of religiosity in the form of themes, cognitive schemes, approaches, attitudes and styles.

Defining the *foundational religious semantics* that are capable of being highly generalized across different religious cultures is a precondition for drawing the basic distinction between the general intensity and specific contents of each core dimension. The concept of foundational religious semantics refers to the basic categories of transcendence that help structure additional religious content and that are thus able to organize religious experience and behavior. The Religion Monitor distinguishes between theistic and pantheistic semantics in this regard.

In theistic semantics, transcendence is construed in the Gestalt of a "counterpart" who can be addressed in prayer and experienced as an interactive entity in daily life. This gives the relationship to transcendence a dialogical structure. In pantheistic semantics, by contrast, transcendence is construed in the Gestalt of an omnipresent principle that can be accessed in contemplative practices and experienced in daily life as inner strength. The relationship to transcendence thus takes on a participatory structure.

Finally, scales for representing the centrality of religiosity to an individual's personality can be constructed by equally weighting the measurements of general intensity for the first five core dimensions (see the left column in Table 1). At this date, we have three versions of the C-scale with 10, 15 and 7 indicators

(Huber 2003, 2004, 2008c). The psychology of religion comes into play with the centrality concept. One of the basic questions in this discipline is how religiosity is anchored in the psychic organization of a personality (Allport 1950; Allport and Ross 1967). Three groups can be distinguished according to ideal types.

- In the first group, the personal religious system holds a central position. Religious content can affect the depths of personality, penetrate numerous realms of life, and exert an autonomous, consistent, and continuous influence on general experience and behavior. This group can be classified as highly religious.
- In the second group, the personal religious system holds merely a subordinate position within the personality's cognitive and emotional architecture. Though religious content can indeed be found in the person's life-horizon, it cannot be expected to have a clearly determinant effect on experience and behavior. Religion plays more of a background role. This group can be classified as religious.
- In the third group, religious content does not appear in the individual life-horizon, or it does so only sporadically. The presence of religiosity remains so weak that one cannot speak of the personality having an independent religious system—or if so, only for comparative purposes. This third group can be classified as non-religious.

Operational constructs

The Religion Monitor's operational constructs are listed in the second and third columns of Table 1. They will be discussed row by row. I will begin my description of each by defining the social expectation that constitutes a core dimension as a social form. I then identify the psychological medium through which an individual actualizes the social expectation. This sociological and psychological localization basically describes the framework in which religious content can take on social and psychic form.

With this in mind, in the following I first describe the operational constructs that enable measurement of the general intensity of each core dimension. Here I rely especially on the ideas of Glock (1962) and Stark and Glock (1968), since their theory provides the historical point of departure for discussing and operationalizing these dimensions. I then look at the options that the Religion Monitor offers for specifying the content of a core dimension.

Intellectual dimension

From a sociological perspective, the intellectual core dimension refers to the social expectation that people have some knowledge of religion, and that they can say something about their views on transcendence, religion and religious questions. In psychological terms, this is manifested through the medium of thinking. Religiosity is thus expressed in this dimension by structures of knowledge as well as by patterns of thought and interpretation.

In Glock's empirical research (1962), this dimension was restricted to the scope of an individual's religious knowledge. That is why the intellectual dimension is sometimes equated with religious knowledge in the scholarly literature. However, on the basis of its inner logic, the intellectual dimension should be understood much more broadly. It also refers to the intensity with which an individual deals with religious questions and the Gestalt of their deliberations. This is why concepts such as the "quest," which comes from social psychology (Batson 1976; Batson and Schoenrade 1991a and b) and implies a searching engagement with religious and existential questions, can be assigned to this dimension.

From the perspective of philosophical anthropology, the intellectual dimension is based upon the human capacity to reflect on God and or transcendence. It thus appears to be a direct expression of what Max Scheler referred to as "Weltoffenheit" (Scheler 1928) or Helmuth Plessner called the "excentric positionality" of human existence (Plessner 1928). If this is understood to be an anthropological constant, then the intellectual dimension of religiosity should inherently pose the greatest resistance against secularization tendencies (compared to the other core dimensions).

General intensity

The Religion Monitor measures the general intensity of the intellectual dimension with two indicators (Table 2). Their semantics are independent of confessional or religious affiliation. They can therefore be applied across religions and can also represent the degree to which excentric positionality has a religious resonance with those respondents who are not members of a religious community. The more strongly this construct is expressed, the greater the likelihood that the individual has formed a consistent system of religious convictions that is integrated into his or her overall philosophy of life and that can be flexibly applied to

various areas of life. This construct accordingly also provides information on a person's capacity for religious interpretation.

Table 2: Indicators for the general intensity of the intellectual dimension

1. How interested are you in learning more about religious issues?[a]
2. How often do you think about religious issues?[b]

a Response categories are *not at all—not very much—moderately—quite a bit—very much so*. These responses are also used for all other questions that ask about the individual strength of importance of a trait.

b Response categories are *never—rarely—occasionally—often—very often*. These responses are also used for all other questions that ask about the individual frequency of a trait. The only exceptions to this are the questions on public and private religious practice; see Tables 11 and 12.

Specific themes

The ways in which people grapple intellectually with religion cannot be inferred from the general intensity of the intellectual dimension. For example, this can take on a reflective form, but also an affirmative one. Thus, an interest in religious questions does not necessarily imply that the individual will self-critically reflect on them. In the context of religious plurality, however, self-critical reflection on religious questions appears to be precisely the sort of trait that is important for interreligious dialogue and understanding. The Religion Monitor thus includes a short scale for measuring "religious reflexivity" (Table 3) and three individual indicators for "religious quest" (Table 4).

The scale for religious reflexivity comes from the S-R-T. Its construction is based on a critique of previous ways of operationalizing the quest concept (Huber 2003: 71–77). It controls for all confounders with an agnostic worldview and concentrates wholly on the reflective form of religious thought processes. Supplementing this, the three items in Table 4 operationalize other specific themes in the intellectual dimension. A preoccupation with theodicy can be viewed as an indirect indicator for religious questing. The second item, by contrast, asks directly about the self-understanding of "religious seekers."

Table 3: Indicators for the short scale for "religious reflexivity"

1. How important is it for you to consider religious issues from different perspectives?
2. How often are you critical towards religious teachings you in principle agree with?
3. How often do you rethink certain aspects of your religious views?

Table 4: Additional indicators for specific themes in the intellectual dimension

1. How often do you think about suffering and injustice in this world?
2. To what extent are you looking for something in your religious beliefs?
3. How often do you read religious or spiritual books?

Religious ideology

The core dimension of ideology refers to the social expectation that religious individuals have a set of empirically unverifiable beliefs regarding the existence and nature of a transcendent plane of reality. This dimension manifests itself psychologically through the medium of belief. Religiosity is thus a phenomenon of socially shared ideas about paradigms of plausibility.

The semantic universe of religious beliefs and the doctrines that can be derived from them is basically infinite. This is fundamentally connected to the inner logic of theological thinking. For any theological position, a well-founded opposing position can be constructed. Kant paradigmatically worked through this problem in his exposition of the Transcendental Dialectic in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. The dynamic of theological thinking is thus not subject to any internal limits. In light of this problem, empirical studies of the ideological dimension face the basic question of which criteria can be used to structure the universe of religious beliefs in order to operationalize it. Glock (1962) proposed distinguishing three thematic areas in religious ideology:

- the existence and nature of God
- divine will with respect to humans
- human behavior in light of its divine purpose

Glock's taxonomy was implemented empirically in a large-scale study by Stark and Glock (1968). It has hardly been used since then, nor has it initiated an ongoing theoretical discussion. In addition, it suffers from several serious flaws. First, Stark and Glock did not distinguish between aspects of the existence and nature of transcendence. Their findings on these two aspects are thus mutually confounded and cannot be unequivocally interpreted. Furthermore, it appears that the second and third classes of statements about faith cannot be neatly distinguished, empirically. This calls into question their taxonomy's operational utility. Finally, one must question whether their proposed tripartite distinction relies too heavily on a Christian theological paradigm. This limits its usefulness in an interreligious context.

Despite all these criticisms, we should emphasize Glock's achievement in even raising the question of general criteria for operationally structuring the semantic universe of religious ideology. The Religion Monitor uses two principles to this end:

- It analytically and operationally distinguishes the question of the existence of transcendence from the question of its nature.
- It defines operational religious subuniverses corresponding to particular theological problems, which hold alternative theological positions on those problems.

The first principle reflects the taxonomy of the Religion Monitor, which distinguishes between general intensity and specific themes for each core dimension. The general intensity of the ideological dimension is operationalized only with regard to belief in the existence of a transcendent plane of reality. The nature of transcendence, by contrast, is differentiated by operationalizing specific themes. The second principle comes into play here: the definition of self-contained operational subuniverses. One example of this is the inventory of conceptions of the divine by which alternative beliefs are operationalized.

General intensity

Operationalization of the ideological dimension's general intensity concentrates entirely on the plausibility of the existence of a transcendent plane of reality that extends beyond the empirical realm. This is the precondition for the nature of transcendence being psychologically relevant on the level of its content. In general, we can presuppose a correlation between the overall plausibility of transcendence and the psychological potential of religious doctrine and religious ways of interpreting the world.

The Religion Monitor represents the general intensity of the ideological dimension with two indicators (Table 5). The first indicator asks about the plausibility of central religious symbols. The equal weight placed on "God" and "something divine" is intended to ensure that this item will be sensitive to both theistic and pantheistic ways of constructing transcendence. The second indicator focuses on the plausibility of transcending the bounds of death. The survey's scope of validity is expanded here by integrating a variety of religious concepts (such as immortality, resurrection and reincarnation).

Table 5: Indicators for the general intensity of the ideological dimension

1. To what extent do you believe in God or something divine?[a]
2. To what extent do you believe in an afterlife—e.g. immortality of the soul, resurrection of the dead or reincarnation?

a For respondents who belong to Hindu or Buddhist religious cultures, "deities" is used.

Specific themes

The plausibility of the existence of a transcendent plane of reality is the necessary condition for the subjective relevance of statements about faith that further specify the nature of this reality. Only if people "believe" can the specific content of their faith be relevant. The Religion Monitor operationalizes four sets of themes in the realm of religious ideology: conceptions of the divine (Table 6), worldviews (Table 7), religious pluralism (Table 8), and religious fundamentalism (Table 9). Additional religious beliefs are also operationalized (Table 10).

In the context of a substantial notion of religion, "God" and/or "the divine" ranks as central symbols. Conceptions of the divine thus fulfill a structuring function in the ideological construction of transcendence. The Religion Monitor operationalizes seven conceptions of the divine (Table 6), the first six of which are taken from the S-R-T. The indicators are intended to depict basic variants of the modern discussion of the conception of the divine. In this respect, they each represent a religious subuniverse.

These conceptions of the divine are not operationalized as mutually exclusive alternatives but rather as ways of accessing transcendence that can resonate to different degrees with different individuals. With this method, from the individual weighting of these conceptions of the divine we can deduce how they are interrelated in the subjective construction of transcendence. The analysis thus targets configurations of conceptions of the divine that occur empirically. In addition to atheistic ("idea/imagination") and Kantian ("value") constructions—which basically mirror the Enlightenment's radical and moderate approaches to criticism of religion—the survey presents conceptions of the divine that theoretically correspond more to theistic ("person," "higher power") and pantheistic ("law," "energy," "nature") concepts of transcendence.

Table 6: Inventory of conceptions of the divine

To what extent do you agree with the following conceptions about God or the divine?
1. God or the divine is nothing more than a product of the human imagination with no reality in itself. (*agreement*)[a]
2. God or the divine is like a law, which is valid throughout eternity. (*agreement*)
3. God or the divine is like energy flowing through everything. (*agreement*)
4. God or the divine is like a person you can speak to. (*agreement*)
5. God or the divine is like a higher power. (*agreement*)
6. God or the divine is like the greatest possible value. (*agreement*)
7. God or the divine is nature. (*agreement*)

a Response categories are *totally agree—tend to agree—have no definite opinion—tend to disagree—totally disagree*. These responses are also used for all other questions that ask the respondent to agree or disagree with a statement. To distinguish these questions from the "importance" questions, they are identified below with the label "agreement."

The inventory of worldviews (Table 7) was developed in Holland (Felling, Peters and Schreuder 1979, 1982, 1987) and has been used in many representative studies. Theoretically, it focuses on the secularization thesis. Factor analysis shows that this inventory distinguishes among three worldviews (Meulemann 2007):

- Christian worldview (theism, deism): Table 7, items 1–3
- Immanent worldview (existentialism, naturalism): Table 7, items 4–6
- Agnosticism: Table 7, item 7

Table 7: Inventory of worldviews

The following statements are about conceptions of whether there is some higher reality beyond the world in which we live. Please indicate how strongly you agree with each statement.
1. There is one God that wants to be our God. (agreement)
2. Life has only significance because there is a God. (agreement)
3. Life has significance because there is something after death. (agreement)
4. Life only has significance if you make it significant yourself. (agreement)
5. Ultimately our life is determined by the laws of nature. (agreement)
6. Life is just part of the natural evolution. (agreement)
7. In my opinion life has little significance. (*agreement*)

The scale for intensity of pluralistic and fundamentalist religious attitudes expresses possible positions that can be taken on the relationship between different religious traditions. Determining these positions can be viewed as a theological problem superordinate to the two operational constructs. Both constructs have great social relevance in view of globalization and the trend toward multi-

religious societies in Europe. Within this field of tension, the short scale for "religious pluralism," taken from the S-R-T (Table 8), measures attitudes of mutual tolerance and acceptance among different religious traditions and beliefs.

Table 8: Indicators for the short scale for "religious pluralism"

1. For me every religion has a core of truth. (*agreement*)
2. I believe that one should have an open mind to all religions. (*agreement*)

In contrast to religious pluralism, a fundamentalist attitude expresses the primacy of one's own religious tradition over other religious traditions. Many fundamentalism scales concentrate on a literal understanding of holy scripture (e.g., Gibson and Francis 1996). Such scales basically inquire about a theological conception of fundamentalism.

The Religion Monitor, on the other hand, borrows the fundamentalism scale from the S-R-T, which is based on concepts from social psychology (see Altemeyer and Hunsberger 1992; Hood et al. 2005; Perrin and Mauss 1993). It defines fundamentalism as a "holistic" religious attitude characterized mainly by an exclusive attachment to a particular religious orientation. Based on this "holism," we postulate that religious fundamentalism is expressed not just on the ideological but also on the ethical and social levels. In operationalizing it, we thus consider three components (Table 9):

- Ideological components: religious exclusivism (items 1–2)
- Ethical components: religious-moral dualism (items 3–4)
- Social components: religious-social cohesion (items 5–6)

Table 9: Indicators for the scale for religious fundamentalism

I. Ideological components: religious exclusivism

1. I am convinced that in questions of religion, my own religion is right while other religions tend to be wrong. (*agreement*)
2. I am convinced that primarily members of my religion will be saved. (*agreement*)

II. Ethical components: religious-moral dualism

3. For my religiousness it is important to be constantly on guard against evil. (*agreement*)
4. For my religiousness it is important that I resolutely fight against evil. (*agreement*)

III. Social components: religious-social cohesion

5. I am prepared to make considerable sacrifices for my religion. (*agreement*)
6. I try to convert as many people to my religion as possible. (*agreement*)

Along with the 22 items on the four thematic areas of religious ideology, the Religion Monitor includes six more items related to the specific content of religious ideology (Table 10).

Table 10: Additional indicators for religious ideology

1. To what extent do you believe in the efficacy of supernatural powers
2. To what extent do you believe in astrology?
3. To what extent do you believe in the efficacy of demons?
4. To what extent do you believe in the efficacy of angels?
5. I believe that the end of the world is near. (*agreement*)
6. I believe there is something divine in myself. (*agreement*)

Public religious practice

The core dimension of public practice refers to the social expectation that religious affiliation is expressed through communal activities and rituals carried out in public. This dimension manifests itself psychologically through the medium of action. Religiosity in this dimension is thus a phenomenon of socially shared action patterns.

Indeed, the public practice of religion integrates individuals into a social network that can serve as a social resource. Moreover, social validation of transcendent experience is associated with this dimension. Through the experience of communal religious acts, people realize others share their own religious beliefs and sentiments.

General intensity

The Religion Monitor uses two indicators to measure the general intensity of this dimension. They inquire about the frequency and the personal importance of attending worship services (Table 11). The terminology for the main public ritual was tailored to the respondents' religion and confession (e.g., "church service" for Christians and "congregational prayer" for Muslims). Non-religious respondents were asked generally about "spiritual rituals or religious activities."

Table 11: Indicators for the general intensity of public religious practice

1. How often do you participate in spiritual rituals or religious acts?[a]
2. How important is it to you to participate in spiritual rituals or religious acts?

a Because it is so highly formalized, public religious practice is readily observed and easily quantified by participants. Instead of subjective impressions of frequency (never to very often), the response scale thus emphasizes specific frequencies: *more than once a week—once a week—one to three times a month—a few times a year—less often—never.*
Underscored items are adapted to a respondent's religious affiliation in the questionnaire.

Private religious practice

The core dimension of private practice refers to the social expectation that religious individuals engage in activities and rituals in which they invoke or commune with the transcendent in private. Like the public practice of religion, the private practice of religion manifests itself through the psychological medium of action. Here as well, religiosity is a phenomenon of socially shared action patterns. Private practices differ most significantly from public practices insofar as they are conducted in private, which allows for much greater flexibility and variability in the manner and frequency of religious activity as well as in its concrete forms. Private practices thus adapt more easily to individual psychic structures and dynamics, and, as a result, are often much more important to an individual than the public practice of religion.

General intensity

The Religion Monitor considers two basic forms, prayer and meditation, when measuring the general intensity of private religious practices (Table 12). Inherent in the structure of prayer is the act of addressing a "counterpart." It has a dialogical dynamic, which at least implicitly corresponds to a theistic concept of transcendence. In contrast, the basic structure of meditation deals more with the self and/or an omnipresent principle, and is therefore—at least implicitly—more in line with a pantheistic concept of transcendence. Including both forms of private religious practice ensures that measurements of this core dimension will have a broad scope of validity.

Table 12: Indicators for the general intensity of prayer and meditation

1. How often do you pray?[a]
2. How important is personal prayer for you?
3. How often do you meditate?[a]
4. How important is meditation to you?

a Like public religious practice, private religious practice is readily observed, and easily quantified by participants. The response scale specifies the following frequencies: *several times a day—once a day—more than once a week—once a week—one to three times a month—a few times a year—less often—never.*

Specific themes

The Religion Monitor integrates certain specific themes from private religious practice (Table 13): obligatory prayer for Muslims as well as daily puja and the family altar for Hindus and Buddhists. This allows us to determine how personal prayer is weighted in relation to these other forms of private religious practice. All respondents are asked if they rely on teachings from several different religious traditions. This item is located at the intersection of religious ideology and religious practice, since it is the practical expression of a pluralistic view of religion (Table 8). This allows nuanced analysis of pluralistic religious tendencies in two of the core dimensions.

Table 13: Indicators for specific themes in private religious practice

1. How often do you say obligatory prayer? (*only for Muslims*)[a]
2. How important to you is obligatory prayer? (*only for Muslims*)
3. How important is the daily puja to you? (*only for Hindus and Buddhists*)
4. Do you have an altar at home? (*only for Hindus and Buddhists*)[b]
5. For myself I rely on teachings from several different religious traditions. (*agreement*)

a The response scale includes the same frequencies as for personal prayer: *several times a day—once a day—more than once a week—once a week—one to three times a month—a few times a year—less often—never.* To better distinguish between personal prayer (du'a) and obligatory prayer (salát), respondents are asked first about obligatory prayer.

b This question can be answered with a "yes" or "no" only.

Religious experience

The core dimension of religious experience refers to the social expectation that transcendent reality is, at some level, perceptible to religious persons. This dimension manifests itself psychologically through the medium of perception. Here, religiosity is a phenomenon of socially shared patterns of perception.

Stark and Glock define religious experience as "some kind of direct contact to an ultimate reality" (126). Within the context of social science research, the subjective construction of religious experience is the only relevant issue. In keeping with the principle of the exclusion of the transcendent, the search for origins or their "objective" correlates are not part of social science research (Flournoy 1903).

Empirical research rarely explores religious experiences as defined above. This is unfortunate, because religious experiences—particularly in terms of the psychology of religion—constitute a significant aspect of religiosity. According to the theoretical literature on the psychology of learning, religious experiences function as subjective validations of religious constructions of reality. In so doing, they exercise considerable influence on the plausibility, stability and relevance of religious patterns of interpretation.

Furthermore, the emotional quality of religiosity has a strong effect on the quality of religious experience and behavior. This means that emotional structures of religiosity can penetrate religious ideology and the religious consciousness via the "back door."

Finally, religious experiences are an important factor from a sociological perspective, too. Gerhard Schulze captured this with his notion of an *Erlebnisgesellschaft*, or experience-oriented society (Schulze 2005). At the same time, religious experiences and emotion remain largely terra incognita on the map of quantitative empirical religious studies.

General intensity

The Religion Monitor uses three indicators to represent the general intensity of the dimension "religious experience" (Table 14). They concentrate on the frequency with which a respondent perceives a transempirical reality. Since the indicators address a "one-to-one experience" as well as the "experience of being at one," theistic and pantheistic concepts of the transcendent are both included.

Table 14: Indicators for the general intensity of religious experience

1. How often do you experience situations where you have the feeling that God or something divine wants to communicate or to reveal something to you?[a]
2. How often do you experience situations where you have the feeling that God or something divine intervenes in your life?[a]
3. How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that you are at one with all?

a For Hindu and Buddhist respondents, the wording is "God, deities, or something divine."

Specific themes

The general intensity of religious experiences does not point to any conclusions about the structure of its content or its emotional valence. For example, religious experiences can impart feelings of protection as well as anxiety. It is evident that in each of these cases, the content of religious experience displays different emotional valence and thus channels experience and behavior in opposite directions. This problem requires that we inquire not just about the general intensity of religious experience but also about its specific content.

To this end, an inventory of religious emotions is integrated into the Religion Monitor (Table 15). Its taxonomy, which interconnects psychological and theological distinctions, comes from the S-R-T, as do most of its indicators. In psychological terms, we distinguish between a "positive" and "negative" valence for religious emotions. Studies by Kenneth Pargament have confirmed the relevance of these two valences for the psychology of religion (see, e.g., Pargament et al. 1998). In theological terms, the inventory indicates preferences for different religious contents and problems. For example, the feeling of awe can be linked to the theological problem of God's holiness. The inventory also represents the theological problems of divine providence ("protection" versus "rage") and divine judgment ("release from guilt" versus "guilt" and "anxiety").

Table 15: Inventory of religious emotions

How often do you experience the following in relation to God or something divine …	
1. Awe	9. Help
2. Protection	10. Release from guilt
3. Gratitude	11. Liberation from an evil power
4. Power	12. Guilt
5. Joy	13. Rage
6. Hope	14. Fear
7. Love	15. Desperation
8. Justice	

For Hindu and Buddhist respondents, the introductory question asks about "God, deities, or something divine."

Consequences for daily life

The core dimension of consequences for daily life (the consequential dimension) refers to the social expectation that religious individuals are not only characterized by a specific religious experience and behavior, their religious beliefs will also shape the way they lead their daily lives. This dimension manifests itself psychologically primarily through the medium of action. Once again, religiosity is here a phenomenon of socially shared action patterns.

In comparison to the first five core dimensions, the contours of this dimension are less clearly delineated. Patterns of action based on religious values and norms, such as purity, dress or dietary laws, can be relatively easily distinguished. However, any everyday life situation that is influenced by religious categories can also be associated with this dimension. As a result, this dimension encompasses a very broad and heterogeneous set of phenomena. Glock (1962) attempted to structure this set of phenomena by differentiating between duties, such as adherence to religious dietary laws, and rewards, such as the comfort of faith, or the social support associated with membership in a religious community.

However, Stark and Glock did not differentiate between duties and rewards in their major empirical study conducted in 1968. Instead, they bracketed out the consequential dimension from their multidimensional model of religiosity and defined this dimension as an upstream or downstream variable of religiosity. As a result, nearly every non-specifically religious variable can be associated with this dimension. It requires only that there be a theoretically sound correlation between the non-specifically religious and specifically religious variables. Accord-

ing to this logic, the consequential dimension is present in the overwhelming majority of quantitative studies on contemporary religiosity. Examples of so-called consequence variables that are frequent subjects of empirical research include satisfaction, health, drug consumption, depression and fear.

General intensity

Given this situation, it is hardly feasible to define an operational construct that would span the full scope of the consequential dimension. The Religion Monitor thus focuses on this dimension's ethical side when measuring its general intensity (see Table 16). This ensures that at least one central aspect of this dimension is modeled.

Table 16: Indicator for the general intensity of the consequential dimension

To what extent do you adhere to religious commandments in your daily life?

Specific themes

Differentiation of the content of the consequential dimension concentrates mainly on ethical aspects, as with the measurement of its general intensity. Its differentiation is based on an inventory of the everyday ethical consequences of religious beliefs (Huber 2003: 369). For both the Religion Monitor and the S-R-T, the inventory was formulated in a fairly general way regarding its instructions and expanded to cover a variety of areas of life (Table 17).

Table 17: Inventory of the consequences of religiosity for various areas of life. To what extent do your religious beliefs affect the following areas of your life?

1. The upbringing of your children
2. Your relation with your partner
3. Your work, your occupation
4. Your free time
5. Your political opinion
6. Your attitude towards nature
7. Your attitude towards sexuality
8. Your coping with disease
9. Your questioning the meaning of life
10. Your coping with life crises
11. Your dealings with vital events in your family, like birth, marriage, or death

Centrality of religiosity to the personality

With the category of centrality, the psychology of religion is brought to the forefront. One of the basic questions addressed by the psychology of religion is how religious contents are represented and anchored in an individual's psychic system. What fraction of the basically endless universe of religious semantics is even present in a psychic system? And what position does a personal religious system occupy in an individual's overall psychic system?

The category of centrality refers to the position occupied by a religious system within the total ensemble of an individual's psychic systems. Three positions can be distinguished according to ideal types (Huber 2007):

Central position: If the religious system holds a central position, it can exert an autonomous, powerful and broad influence on several other psychic systems. This means that an individual's fields of experience and action are frequently cast in a truly religious light. In terms of Allport's personality psychology, this ideal type reflects an intrinsic religious orientation and one can speak of *highly religious* individuals (Allport 1950; Allport and Ross 1967). This group is of particular interest to the fields of sociology and political science because it can be assumed that its members are willing to actively shape public discourse.

Subordinate position: If the religious system holds a subordinate position, it relies on input from other psychic systems. Its impact on other psychic systems is characterized as heteronomous, weak and thin. As a result, an individual's field of experience and action are only occasionally cast in a religious light. In

terms of Allport's personality psychology, this ideal type reflects an extrinsic religious orientation. Religious discourses resonate to a certain extent with this group. However, it is unlikely that such individuals will actively push their own religious convictions in public discourse or become confrontational in advocating their beliefs. Members of this group can generally be referred to as *religious*.

Marginal religious system: The third ideal type is characterized by the near-absence of religious contents and practices in an individual's life horizon. In such cases, there is no personal religious system to speak of, or one that exists only in rudimentary form. As might be expected, religious discourses do not resonate much among such individuals. Generally speaking it is fair to speak of this group of persons as *non-religious*.

The centrality scale (C-scale) provides operational access to these three ideal types. It is constructed by equally weighting the general intensity of the five first core dimensions (Huber, 2003, 2004, 2007). The result depicts a representative cross-section of the presence of religious semantics in an individual's life horizon. The centrality of his or her personal religious system can then be inferred from the density of this presence. Centrality scales have proven to be highly reliable and valid instruments in numerous empirical studies. There is also ample empirical evidence pointing to the validity of distinguishing between the categories of religious and highly religious respondents (Huber 2003: 257–264; 2004: 93–99; 2007: 220–227).

It is worth noting that neither the frequency of meditation nor the frequency of being-at-one experiences were included in earlier versions of the centrality scales. A pantheistic approach to religiosity is therefore underrepresented in the centrality scale. To compensate for this deficit, a previous version used a supplementary index to gauge the relevance of pantheistic semantics, which could then be linked to the C-scale. This method served as a sort of external check on the possibility of theism confounding the C-scale. A third version of the C-scale was developed expressly for the Religion Monitor, with its global and interreligious scope, which strikes a consistent balance between theistic and pantheistic semantics within the scale itself (Table 18).

This third version of the C-scale consists of seven items. To calculate a respondent's score, however, only five indicators are used—one item from each of the first five core dimensions. The indicators for the intellectual and public practice dimensions are neutral in regard to the two basic semantics. The indicator for religious ideology integrates both a theistic and a pantheistic semantic with the terms "God" and "the divine." The dimensions of private religious practice and religious experience, by contrast, each require two indicators to repre-

sent both basic semantics. For these two dimensions, the indicator with the higher value is used in calculating a respondent's centrality score.

Table 18: Indicators for the interreligious version of the centrality scale

1. **Intellectual:** How often do you think about religious issues?
2. **Religious ideology:** To what extent do you believe in God or something divine?
3. **Public practice:** How often do you participate in religious services/synagogue services/congregational prayer/ temple rituals/spiritual rituals or religious acts?
4. **Private practice:** How often do you pray? / How often do you meditate?
5. **Experience:** How often do you experience situations where you have the feeling that God or something divine intervenes in your life? / How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that you are at one with all?

Underscored terms are adapted to a respondent's religious affiliation in the questionnaire.
For the dimensions of private practice and experience, the indicator with the higher value is used in calculations.

Religious and spiritual self-concept

The centrality of religiosity has a close internal linkage both to religious self-concept and to the relevance of religiosity to daily life. The more strongly religious semantics are present in a personal system, the greater their effect both on an individual's religious self-concept and on the everyday consequences of religiosity. Both of these operational constructs are thus well suited for validation of the C-scale. Its correlation with the consequential dimension can be assessed with the indicators described in the section "consequences for daily life." Its correlation with a respondent's religious self-concept can be tested with the indicators in Table 19.

Table 19: Indicators for religious and spiritual self-concept

1. All in all, how religious would you consider yourself to be?
2. Putting aside whether or not you would describe yourself as a religious person, how spiritual would you say you are?

The two indicators in Table 19 are not just suitable for validating the C-scale; they also allow one to determine a relationship between religious and spiritual self-concepts and analyze their social representation (Moscovici 1984). This lets us study how widespread these two concepts are and how they are interrelated. Based on the differentiated structure of the Religion Monitor, it is further possible to clarify empirically which dimensions and contents of religiosity are typical

for respondents who employ the concept of spirituality. The background to this set of questions is the increasing use of the concept of spirituality in psychological and medical studies for the past 15 years or so (see Zinnbauer, Pargament and Scott 1999; Hill et al. 2000; Utsch 2005).

Finally, an indicator for the relative importance of religion to various areas of life corresponds to centrality, religious self-concept, and the aforementioned indicators for the consequential dimension (Table 20).

Table 20: Inventory on the importance of the religious realm to other areas of life

Now I will read some areas of life to you. Please tell me how important each of these are to you personally. How important do you rate the area of life …
1. your family and children
2. your spouse/partner
3. work and occupation
4. free time
5. politics
6. religiousness
7. education

Religious socialization

The empirical research on religion unanimously assumes that parents are by far the strongest influence on a person's religiosity (Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle 1997: 99; Hood et al. 1996: 74). Francis and Carter (1980) found a correlation of .49 between parents' religiosity and that of their children. The study by Cavalli-Sforza et al. (1982) is particularly interesting, since it included parental influence on other areas of life besides religiosity, such as sports and politics. They found religiosity, by a significant margin, to be the realm in which parents are the most successful in passing on their values to their children. The average correlation for religion was .57, while the coefficients for politics and sports were only .32 and .13. Thus parents not only have an enormous influence on their children's religiosity; religion also appears to be the area of life in which they enjoy the greatest influence, compared with politics or sports, for instance.

An indicator on the general relevance of religious socialization is integrated into the Religion Monitor (Table 21). In addition, the online tool (www.religionsmonitor.com) includes an inventory from the S-R-T that allows religious socialization processes to be reconstructed along gender- and dimension-specific lines

(Table 22). It draws on the intellectual dimension as well as the dimensions of public and private religious practice.

Table 21: Indicator for religious socialization

Has religion been part of your upbringing?*
* This question can be answered with either a "yes" or "no" only.

Table 22: Inventory for the gender- and dimension-specific description of religious socialization processes via the intellectual dimension.*

Intellectual dimension
1. How often did your mother speak about religious questions with you?
2. How often did your father speak about religious questions with you?
Dimension of public religious practice
3. How often did your mother go to religious services with you?
4. How often did your father go to religious services with you?
Dimension of private religious practice
5. How often did your mother pray with you?
6. How often did your father pray with you?

* The indicators for assessing dimension- and gender-specific aspects of religious socialization processes are integrated into the Religion Monitor's online tool only (www.religionsmonitor.com).

Interpretive strategies

As emphasized at the beginning of the first section, the interdisciplinary taxonomy of the Religion Monitor is based on categories that have convincingly proven themselves within their disciplinary discourses of origin. As was further emphasized, three of these categories serve as design principles for this study (see Table 1):

- The category of core dimensions as defined by the sociology of religion
- The category of centrality as defined by the psychology of religion
- The category of the *Gestalt* of the content of religiosity as defined by theology and religious studies

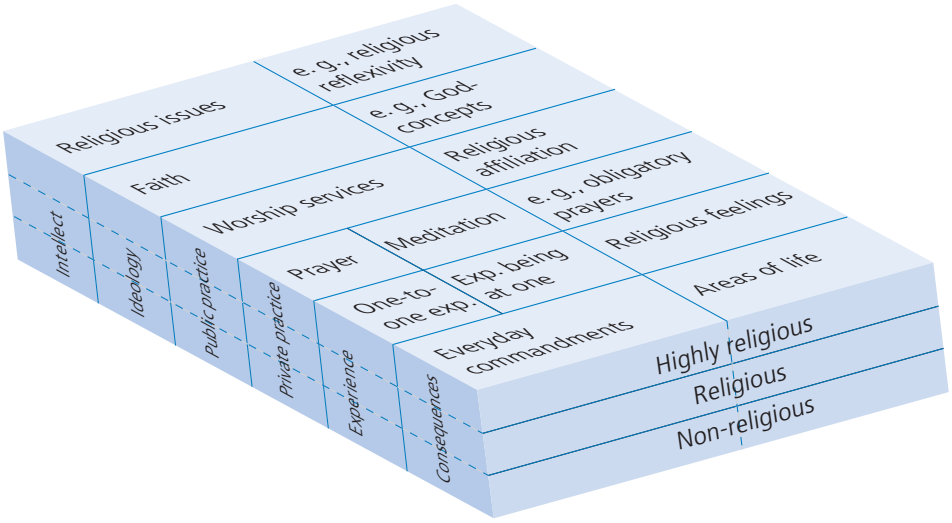
With this in mind, the main unique contribution of the Religion Monitor is that it systematically cross-references and interconnects these categories. This inter-

disciplinary taxonomy facilitates a number of innovative interpretive strategies that go beyond conventional methods in the sociology and psychology of religion and point toward a transdisciplinary approach to research on religion. By integrating perspectives from theology and religious studies, this approach creates an opportunity to achieve deeper, empirically bounded knowledge about endogenous religious structures and dynamics.

This final section outlines several interpretive strategies that can help realize the innovative potential of the Religion Monitor. They are intended as suggestions and do not claim to exhaust the potential of these methods.

The reference point for this methodological discussion is the three-dimensional visualization of the Religion Monitor's taxonomy in Figure 1 (see also Table 1). Its novel contribution in comparison to Table 1 is that centrality is no longer represented as an additional row following the core dimensions in a two-dimensional diagram. Instead, it is now shown as a new, vertical axis in a third dimension. This illustration underscores the variety and complexity of ways core dimensions, centrality, and the Gestalt of content can reciprocally combine. The following discussion emphasizes the options for analyzing the Gestalt of religiosity's content as a function of core dimensions and degrees of centrality. The intent is to illuminate endogenous structures and dynamics.

Figure 1: Possible combinations of the operational constructs



Profiles of religiosity

The backbone of the Religion Monitor consists of six core dimensions of religiosity as defined by the sociology of religion. They are thus also a suitable starting point for discussing innovative interpretive strategies. Part one of this chapter emphasized that these core dimensions are relatively autonomous. This means that their intensity can vary widely among respondents. A variety of configurations or profiles of religiosity should thus be anticipated. Certain forms (Gestalten) of religiosity are expressed in these profiles, though at a very general level.

In strongly individualistic societies, the intellectual dimension may play an important role, since individuals are exposed to increased social pressure to determine their own religious position in relation to a variety of religious traditions, worldviews, and interpretive possibilities. Such societies also offer favorable conditions for an "intellectual type of religiosity," where the main access to religiosity is through the psychological medium of thinking. It is plausible that religious experience and behavior take on a different form in such types than in an "ideological type" where access to religion is primarily controlled via the medium of faith.

Yet another sort of endogenous religious dynamics can be expected in a type of religiosity where the profile is dominated by the dimension of public religious practice. Here, the medium of socially shared action patterns is at the forefront of religious experience and behavior. Religiosity is thus basically mediated by participation in public religious life. This type is probably more common in less-secularized societies where public religious practice represents an undisputed element of social life. In light of these reflections, it makes sense to analyze the distribution of intellectual and public/practical types of religiosity in the context of a society's level of modernization and secularization, for instance. In addition, different profiles of religiosity can be compared across confessions and religions.

Patterns of spirituality

For the past 15 to 20 years, the term spirituality has been increasingly discussed in the psychology of religion. It is used to convey a wide variety of meanings (see Klein and Albani 2007; Utsch 2005; Zinnbauer, Pargament and Scott 1999). However, most authors agree that spirituality is characterized by belief that is authentic, intrinsically motivated, and connected to one's own experiences. For such a notion of spirituality, the dimensions of private religious practice and reli-

gious experience hold special relevance, since they are where personally practiced, personally experienced faith is most densely expressed.

The Religion Monitor considers theistic and pantheistic semantics when measuring the general intensity of private religious practice and religious experience. Doing so permits one to inquire across all dimensions about the general intensity of theistic and pantheistic patterns of spirituality (Table 23). Here one must bear in mind that prayer and meditation do not preclude each other, nor does one-to-one experience rule out the experience of being at one (or vice versa). Inquiry into the intensity of these two patterns of spirituality thus does not target explicit and exclusive religious identities. Instead, it aims to capture implicit religious dynamics at work in private religious practice and in religious experience.

Table 23: Indicators for the general intensity of theistic and pantheistic patterns of spirituality

Theistic pattern of spirituality
1. How often do you pray?
2. How important is personal prayer for you?
3. How often do you experience situations where you have the feeling that God or something divine intervenes in your life?
Pantheistic pattern of spirituality
4. How often do you meditate?
5. How important is meditation to you?
6. How often do you experience situations in which you have the feeling that you are at one with all?

The higher the score for an index, the stronger the presence of the corresponding pattern of spirituality in that person's religious experience. By cross-tabulating the two indices, one can distinguish exclusive as well as syncretic orientations in the field of implicit spiritual orientations. Table 24 shows the distribution of these types in the sample of the Religion Monitor 2008. Where at least one pattern of spirituality is pronounced, it is highlighted with blue shading. People belonging to these groups have a high probability of experiencing the presence of transcendence with special intensity. This is expressed by adding the term "highly."

Table 24 demonstrates that exclusive spiritual orientations are generally the exception in regard to religious practice and religious experience. Only 25 percent of respondents are committed exclusively to either a theistic or a pantheistic pattern of spirituality. By contrast, both patterns are integrated in 58 percent of respondents' religious experience and behavior. These findings demonstrate the

Table 24: Implicit spiritual orientations

		Intensity of pantheistic patterns of spirituality			Total
		Low	Medium	High	
Intensity of theistic patterns of spirituality	**Low**	18 Not spiritual	6 Pantheistic	1 Highly pantheistic	25
	Medium	11 Theistic	16 Integrative	4 Highly pantheistic-integrative	31
	High	7 Highly theistic	16 Highly theistic-integrative	22 Highly integrative	44
Total		36	37	27	100

All data in percent, differences due to rounding

broad relevance of both basic semantics. Explicit religious and spiritual identities can build upon them. Finally, it is remarkable that at least one of the two patterns of spirituality is strongly pronounced in nearly half of all respondents. This indicates that spirituality is a powerful presence in a person's experience of life.

The findings in Table 24 are intended primarily as a stimulus and starting point for more detailed analyses. An almost completely unexamined topic is the connection between implicit patterns of spirituality located at the level of religious practice and experience, and explicit religious attitudes and identities that lie more on the level of religious ideology. This can be analyzed in greater depth in the Religion Monitor thanks to its rich data on conceptions of the divine (see Table 6) and the general intensity of religious and spiritual self-concepts (see Table 19). When analyzing the distribution of implicit patterns of spirituality and their connection to various aspects of religious ideology, it makes sense to do this separately for each religious affiliation and cultural context. Such analyses can make a meaningful contribution to expanding our empirical knowledge about endogenous religious structures and dynamics.

Interactions between the centrality and the content of religiosity

Inclusion of the psychological category of centrality is a new avenue in sociological studies of religion. Its integration into the Religion Monitor thus opens up a plethora of possibilities for innovative analysis. An especially promising approach

is analysis of the interactions between the centrality and the content of religiosity (see Huber 2007 and 2008a; Huber and Klein 2008). This brings into focus the specific dynamics of highly religious individuals, who make up a full 41 percent of the sample for the Religion Monitor 2008. Such analyses are based theoretically on the assumption of a "qualitative leap" in the cognitive representation and psychic relevance of religious content in highly religious individuals, compared to moderately religious and non-religious individuals (Huber 2003). Two postulates can be formulated about this.

The first postulate relates to the cognitive representation of religious content. It ought to be considerably more extensive and sophisticated in highly religious individuals than in those who are moderately religious and non-religious. Not only is a good deal more religious content present in the personal religious systems of highly religious individuals, they are also significantly better able to distinguish between individual facets of religious content. Their religious experience and behavior is thus substantially richer and more complex. In religious terms, they "see" more, and with greater nuance. This should also be borne in mind in empirical studies of the global situation of religion.

The empirical validity of this postulate can be demonstrated with the example of the cognitive representation of nine religious emotions: awe, protection, gratitude, strength, joy, love, hope, justice, help (see Table 15). The common denominator of these emotions is that they express a positive psychological valence. In contrast, the inventory in Table 15 also includes four emotions with a negative valence and two that have a generally cathartic character, in psychological terms. Theoretically one can expect that among moderately religious and non-religious individuals, the cognitive representation of positive religious feelings will be dominated by their positive psychological valence. They "see" mainly the psychological valence, so to speak. In contrast, highly religious individuals should have a heightened perception of theological distinctions as well as the psychological valences. They also "see" a variety of theological problems such as holiness, providence and judgment, and they therefore draw additional distinctions along the lines of these categories.

One empirical measure of the degree of differentiation in the perception of religious emotions is their average intercorrelation. The stronger the perceptions of emotions correlate among themselves, the more strongly they will be dominated by their common quality, their positive valence. If it is true that highly religious people are more likely to perceive theological distinctions along with psychological commonalities, the average intercorrelation coefficient should be significantly lower for them than for moderately religious and non-religious indi-

viduals. Table 25 shows that this is indeed the case. The considerable difference between .43 and .66 can definitely be interpreted as a "qualitative leap."

Table 25: Average intercorrelation of positive religious emotions

Level of centrality	Average intercorrelation (range)	*n* of the partial sample
Non-religious	.66 (.41–.80)	1,668
Religious	.66 (.53–.77)	7,790
Highly religious	.43 (.25–.63)	7,757

The average was calculated on the basis of Fisher-Z transformed correlations.
The data included only those respondents who answered all nine questions on positive religious emotions.

The second postulate relates to the influence that religious content exerts on general experience and behavior. Such influence ought to be significantly greater for highly religious persons than for those who are moderately religious and non-religious. In highly religious individuals, the personal religious system occupies a central position within the personality's cognitive and emotional architecture (see Huber 207: 214). Religious content thus penetrates the entire personality and exerts a clear influence on numerous areas of life. General experience and behavior thus have much stronger religious connotations in highly religious individuals. They very often see the world through religious glasses, so to speak. This, too, should receive more attention in empirical studies of the global situation of religion.

The empirical validity of the second postulate can be demonstrated with the example of the linkage between religion and politics. The Religion Monitor includes questions on the influence of religiosity on political opinions (IRP item) and on the importance of politics as an area of life (IPL item). The second question is posed independently of religiosity (see Tables 17 and 20). On the basis the religious system's central position alone, religiosity should influence political opinions more strongly among highly religious individuals than among those who are moderately religious and non-religious. The IRP averages in the second column of Table 26 suggest that this is the case. The political relevance of religiosity seems to increase together with the level of centrality.

The relationship between religion and politics in personal religious systems can be manifested in a variety of ways. The possibilities range from strict separation of the two realms to complete integration of politics into the sphere of religiosity. The responses to the IRP item also reflect this theme. The stronger a respondent feels that religiosity holds political relevance, the lower the probabil-

Table 26: Influence of religiosity on political opinions (IRP) and importance of politics as an area of life (IPL)—mean (*M*) and correlations

Level of centrality	IRP (*M*)	IPL (*M*)	Correlation IRP/IPL	*n* of the partial sample
Non-religious	1.4	2.9	.14	1,727
Religious	2.2	2.9	.25	8,235
Highly religious	2.9	2.9	.42	7,898

ity that religion and politics will be construed as separate spheres in one's personal religious system. The answers to the IRP item are thus, in themselves, not unequivocal evidence for the validity of the second postulate. They can also refer to the Gestalt of the content of one's personal religious system. In that case, a rise in the IRP mean would mean that at higher levels of centrality, the probability increases that the relation between religion and politics will tend toward the direction of integrating the political into the religious sphere.

However, unequivocal empirical evidence for the validity of the second postulate can be achieved by including the IPL item. If it is assumed that the IRP item basically expresses one element of the content of an individual's personal religious system, then the more centrally the religious system is positioned in the personality, the greater the influence this content should have on the general valuation of the realm of politics. This hypothesis can be tested with the correlation between the IRP and IPL items. The stronger influence of content at higher levels of centrality should be expressed in a higher correlation coefficient. This is the case, as the third column of Table 26 indicates. At .42, the correlation for highly religious individuals is significantly higher than for moderately religious (.25) and non-religious (.14) respondents. An element of religious content is thus significantly more strongly correlated with general experience and behavior in highly religious individuals. For this finding, too, the clear difference can be interpreted as a qualitative leap.

The data of the Religion Monitor provide impressive evidence for the empirical validity of both postulates on the cognitive representation and psychic relevance of religious content. Highly religious individuals, who account for 41 percent of the sample of the Religion Monitor 2008, have significantly more nuanced representations of religious content. Moreover, religious content has significantly greater relevance to experience and behavior for this group.

Further analyses should systematically differentiate these findings and go into more depth. Among the questions to be answered are the following: Which

religious content is typical for highly religious individuals? Which overarching Gestalten of content can be empirically distinguished for this group? Are there differences in this regard among various confessions and religious communities? Do the different Gestalten of content have discriminative effects in regard to general experience and behavior? To what extent can the centrality of religiosity and its content be explained by exogenous variables such as an individual's social position? Does the explanatory potency of exogenous variables differ between moderately religious and highly religious persons? How strong are the inner dynamics of religiosity for each of these two groups?

The Religion Monitor makes available for the first time a rich set of international and interreligious data that allows systematic study of endogenous religious structures and dynamics. This open new empirical and analytical access points to the complex phenomenon of religiosity. It can be expected to lead to an enormous advance in empirical research on religion that conceives of itself as international and interdisciplinary.

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