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Religious motivations for everyday goals: their religious context and potential consequences

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Abstract The present studies explored different religious reasons for everyday goals. We proposed that religious reasons can include transcendental religious motivation (TRM, e.g. striving for spiritual communion with the transcendent) and normative religious motivation (NRM, e.g. following church norms). In the study, transcendental and normative religious motivation for personal projects was explored in three cross-sectional samples of Hungarian adults (Study 1, $N = 158$ and 224, Study 2, $N = 512$). In Study 1 TRM and NRM were found to be interrelated, however differently associated with constructs of religiosity (sanctification of projects, types of religious self-regulation, intrinsic-extrinsic religiosity, and basic religious attitudes). In Study 2, TRM was associated with autonomous regulation of personal projects while NRM was associated with controlled regulation. Moreover, path analysis showed that NRM predicted negatively and TRM predicted positively indices of well-being and that these links were partially mediated by regulation types. Results indicated that the description of religiosity on the level of everyday goals is a viable concept, although it cannot be treated as a uniform phenomenon. Further theoretical and practical implications of the results are discussed in terms of the link between forms of religiosity, everyday functioning and autonomy support.

Introduction

People strive for everyday goals for many reasons and purposes, and some of these reasons and purposes might be religious in nature. The inner search for the transcendent (the 'sacred', Pargament and Mahoney 2005) may direct everyday activities and relationships thus giving them significance. On the other hand, the high number of religious rules and norms shows that adherence to religious traditions and institutions can also influence the individual's behavior, thinking, and even emotions (Silberman 2003; Silberman et al. 2005). In this way religiosity may influence the individual's goals and contribute to everyday functioning and well-being both through the search for the sacred and through the adherence to religious traditions. In the present study we address the question whether it is possible to distinguish between two different types of religious reasons that may motivate the individual's everyday goals, that is, in following church expectations and/or in striving for the transcendent. Furthermore, we aim at exploring the religious context and potential consequences of these religious motivations by assessing their relationship to other conceptualizations of religiosity, as well as to a general motivational orientation (i.e. controlled vs. autonomous regulation), and positive functioning.

Personal goals and religiosity

Goals play an important role in the personality: they motivate behavior, and define the direction, energy level,

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and subjective meaning of actions, providing a link between the central aspects of the self, like personality dispositions, core values and unconscious motives, and the challenges and possibilities presented by the environment (Austin and Vancouver 1996; Emmons 1996; Karoly 1993; Little 2007). These features make goals essential in describing how religion shapes everyday behavior and experiences (Emmons 1999).

Recently, three interrelated ways have been proposed for seeing how religiosity may be present in goal striving. Emmons defined religious/spiritual goals primarily on the basis of their content, that is, whether a given goal explicitly includes for example the effort to increase knowledge of a Higher Power, and/or to develop or maintain a relationship with a Higher Power (Emmons 1999; Emmons et al. 1998). The proposal calls attention to the fact that goals with religious or spiritual contents can be an important part of the broader project system. Another possibility in conceptualizing religious/spiritual goals is to use the concept of sanctification. Sanctification refers to the experience whereby something ordinary gains a special sacred nature for the individual (Pargament and Mahoney 2005). In that sense it is possible to talk about the sanctification of personal goals (Mahoney et al. 2005): sanctified goals are spiritual or religious according to the individual's own attribution and not necessarily according to their content. Individuals may assign sanctified properties to any goal by linking them to a divine being (theistic sanctification) as well as by perceiving them as imbued with spiritual qualities (non-theistic sanctification). Finally, a similar concept was suggested by Tix and Frazier who proposed that everyday goals may be motivated to some extent by religious or spiritual reasons as well (Tix and Frazier 2005). Their approach is close to the concept of sanctification but also reflects explicitly the motivational nature of religiosity for everyday functioning.

There is also a growing body of evidence that religious goals play a role in positive human functioning. The proportion of goals with spiritual content within the system of goals was found to be linked positively with subjective well-being (Emmons et al. 1998; Tix and Frazier 2005). Mahoney et al. (2005) found that a higher sanctification of strivings correlated positively with the overall importance of strivings as well as with a series of other attributes (e.g. commitment, psychological investment, social support and perceived internal locus of control). Furthermore, sanctification was linked positively to the overall feeling of meaningfulness. However, there was no relationship between the average level of sanctification and the level of physical and psychological symptoms, depressive symptoms, and life satisfaction. Finally, Tix and Frazier (2005) found evidence that the religious/spiritual motivation of personal strivings may partially mediate between religiousness and mental health. According to their results

higher religiosity predicted religious/spiritual motivation for strivings which in turn predicted decreased hostility. These findings reinforce the notion that religiosity is connected with everyday goal striving and that goals may be one path where religiosity has an impact on positive human functioning.

The present research

Different religious motivations

While religious/spiritual goals were treated previously as a uniform concept (see Emmons 1999; Tix and Frazier 2005), these goals may be very different in their origin as well as in their wider purpose and consequences. As noted above, everyday goals may be motivated both by the intention of following church norms and the expectations of a faith community, as well as by an inner search for communion with the transcendent. While both kinds of motivation could be labeled 'religious/spiritual' (Tix and Frazier 2005), and they may make the individual move towards similar projects, these reasons for everyday pursuits are far from being identical or even similar in their origin, and also, possibly, in their consequences. For example the project "To solve my family conflicts" may be pursued to some extent because one's faith community highly appreciates harmonic family life or disallows divorce. On the other hand, the goal of solving family conflicts may be deeply rooted in the person's inner search for the transcendent reality and the feeling that earthly disharmony would affect this relationship also. However, these motivations do not necessarily exclude each other. In fact, in everyday functioning they may be mixed for many believers who may see their pursuits as expected by their church but also as leading them towards the sacred. This assumption is in line with previous reasoning about the interrelatedness of institutional and subjective aspects of religiosity (Flere and Lavric 2008; Hill and Pargament 2003).

To conclude, we find the idea that personal goals—regardless of whether or not they have explicit religious content—can have religious/spiritual meanings (i.e. they may be sanctified, Mahoney et al. 2005), and, more specifically, religious/spiritual motivation (Tix and Frazier 2005) worthy of further exploration. To extend previous approaches we propose that 'religious/spiritual reasons' for personal goals may be divided into at least two overlapping but distinct kinds of motivations. Normative religious motivation (NRM, e.g. following church norms or expectations of the religious community) is about adjusting everyday pursuits primarily to external, normative religious references. In transcendental religious motivation (TRM,

e.g. to strive for a spiritual communion with the transcendent) the reason for the person's everyday goals is primarily his/her relationship with 'the sacred'.

H1 Normative and transcendental religious motivations (NRM and TRM) for personal goals are distinct but interrelated constructs that are present in the goal striving of many individuals. Goals with both kinds of motivational background may be perceived by the individual as sanctified (both theistically and non-theistically), while TRM is more likely to be connected to higher sanctification than NRM.

Context of the religious motivations

Despite their connectedness, different religious motivations may have their origins in different kinds of religiosity. A significant amount of theory and empirical findings have indicated that religiosity is a multifaceted construct on several levels. A traditional distinction concerns the different kinds of religious orientation where intrinsic orientation represents religiosity as an end in itself and extrinsic orientation refers to religiosity as a means to reach other ends of either personal or social character (Allport and Ross 1967; Gorsuch 1994). More recently, Ryan and colleagues proposed a model of religiosity in terms of self-regulation (Ryan et al. 1993). Religious acts may be regulated by introjected or identified reasons (e.g. going to church to avoid shame and guilt, or out of commitment and interest), the latter being the more internalized and autonomous way of self-regulation in religion. Finally, a new model of basic religious attitudes (Fontaine et al. 2003; Hutsebaut 1996) distinguished between two independent dimensions. Inclusion (vs. Exclusion) of transcendence concerns commitment to versus rejection of religious beliefs whereas Symbolic (vs. Literal) interpretation is about the way religious issues are dealt with. This latter dimension represents the 'how' of attitudes toward religiosity: a more literal approach was found to be linked with a preference for clarity and against ambiguity (Fontaine et al. 2005), whereas symbolic approach relates positively to cognitive variables such as open-mindedness and tolerance of ambiguity (Duriez 2003).

As a summary of these conceptualizations, we may conclude that there are at least two broad types of religiosity, one representing a more fully internalized and cognitively elaborated way of being religious and one that is more oriented toward external, social reinforcements or less internalized self-regulation coupled with mental rigidity (Neyrinck et al. 2006). Therefore we assume that

H2 NRM and TRM for personal goals associate differently to more general religious constructs; NRM will be associated primarily with ways of religiosity that are less open and more dependent on reinforcements (e.g. introjected regulation, extrinsic orientation), while TRM will be primarily related to more identified and engaged ways of being religious (higher intrinsic religiosity, as well as more identified religious regulation, and a more open, symbolic approach toward religious issues).

Consequences of the religious motivations

Furthermore, we consider the potential consequences of different religious motivations for the everyday functioning of the individual from two aspects. First, we address a general level of self-integration and speculate about the extent to which goals with different religious motivations may be integrated with the self (i.e. the level of goal self-integration). Second, we consider the association of these motivations with well-being.

First, on a general level, one way to describe self-integration is to assess whether the personal goals are regulated in an autonomous way, involving predominantly intrinsic or identified reasons for goal striving (i.e. because of the joy associated with the goal or because the goal seems personally meaningful), or in a controlled way, comprised of external or introjected regulations (i.e. the pursuit of external rewards or a sense of fulfilling obligations as a reason for the goal; Sheldon and Kasser 1995; Sheldon 2001). According to Sheldon and colleagues, higher self-integration can be characterized by higher autonomous and lower controlled regulation of the personal goals.

Regarding religious motivations, although NRM goals may be well integrated and pursued autonomously, and TRM goals may be experienced as instruments for external blessings or as a means of reducing inner constraints, still we can reason that different religious motivations will have different likelihoods of being integrated with the self.

H3a NRM for personal goals is more likely to be perceived as an external reward or obligation, and thus can be connected to controlled regulation, while TRM can be more easily integrated with the self and therefore is positively linked to autonomous regulation.

Second, several studies showed that certain aspects of religiosity might be connected to well-being, although there is a considerable variation in this relationship according to the type of religiosity and the type of well-being measured (e.g. Dezutter et al. 2006; Hackney and Sanders 2003; Ryan et al. 1993). Externally regulated, formal or authoritative religiosity was found to be tied more closely with decreased well-being, while more elaborate ways of religiosity were found to be associated with higher well-being. Therefore another consequence of religious motivations for one's personal projects may be their different association with well-being. Specifically,

H3b NRM would more likely associate with lower, and TRM with higher, well-being.

Finally, we propose a causal model that connects religious motivation, self-integration, and well-being. As reasoned above, religious motivation for goals may affect the goals' potential to be integrated with the self (H3a). Moreover, as previous research has demonstrated, goal self-integration may make a unique contribution to well being (Miquelon and Vallerand 2006; Sheldon 2001; Spence et al. 2004). Consequently, self-integration of religiously motivated goals may represent one link between religious motivations and well-being. Based on this reasoning we assume that

H3c The connection between religious motivations and well-being is mediated through the extent of goal self-integration. Specifically, NRM's presumably negative association with well-being may be mediated by its link to lower self-integration, and TRM's positive relationship by its potential to be better integrated into the self.

This final proposition is also in line with recent theoretical reasoning that religion's effect on health and well-being may be realized through its potential to promote self-regulation and self-control (McCullough and Willoughby 2009). Moreover, our model may shed light on potential difficulties with religiously motivated strivings as a corollary of controlled self-regulation as well.

Overview of the studies

Two cross-sectional studies are presented where the religious context and the potential consequences of normative and transcendental religious motivations were considered. Goal striving was assessed on the level of personal projects, because of their close link to everyday behavior patterns (Little 1983; Little 2007). In Study 1 we explored how different religious motivations (i.e. NRM and TRM) for personal projects fit into the broader domain of existing religious constructs (H1 and H2). We employed both proximal and distal constructs, the former referring directly to motivational aspects of religiosity (sanctification of personal goals, Mahoney et al. 2005, and internalization of religious behaviors, Ryan et al. 1993), and the latter to general conceptualizations like the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity (Allport and Ross 1967; Gorsuch 1994) and the model of basic religious attitudes with Inclusion (vs. exclusion) of the transcendent reality and Symbolic (vs. literal) interpretation (Fontaine et al. 2003; Hutsebaut 1996). In study 2 the connection between

religious motivations, self-integration in terms of controlled and autonomous regulation, and well-being was addressed. It is important to note that, although a quasi-causal model is proposed, in the present research we could rely only on cross-sectional designs. Finally, since previous studies have shown that different aspects of well-being exist (e.g. see the differentiation between subjective and psychological well-being, Ryan and Deci 2001; Ryff and Singer 1998), and that they relate differently to religiosity (Lewis and Cruise 2006), three types of well-being measures were included that tap into relatively distinct constructs: life satisfaction, self-actualization, and meaning in life.

Study 1

Method

Samples and procedure

In Study 1 data from two cross-sectional convenience samples were used. Sample 1a consisted of 158 Hungarian speaking adults, 61 males (mean age 24.4 ± 6.2 years) and 97 females (mean age 23.0 ± 4.8 years). Response rate was 93%. Participants were recruited by volunteer students of an introductory course on research methodology as partial fulfillment of the study requirements. Members of various Catholic communities of young adults in the capital of Hungary were reached through snowball sampling. The study questionnaire was designed to investigate several aspects of religious and psychological functioning (e.g. God images), but measures outside the scope of this study are not reported here. Sample 1b consisted of 224 Hungarian speaking participants from urban areas in the middle part of Hungary, 60 males (mean age 29.1 ± 12.4 years) and 164 females (mean age 27.8 ± 11.8 years). Students of an introductory course in personality psychology recruited volunteer participants among their friends and relatives as partial fulfillment of the course requirements. The denominational background in the sample was: Catholic 157 (70.1%), other Christian 31 (13.8%), religious but not belonging to any denomination 6 (2.7%), non religious 29 (12.9%), approximately reflecting the proportions of denominations in the Hungarian population. Church attendance was as follows: weekly 97 (43.4%), occasionally 70 (31.3%), never 57 (25.4%). Response rate was satisfactory in both samples (93 and 90% of the questionnaires were returned, respectively). Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed.

Measures, Sample 1a

Personal projects

Personal project assessment was conducted in three steps (Little 1983). First, participants were asked to write a list of their current personal projects which were defined as follows: "Your personal projects are the goals which you are already taking steps to achieve". As a second step, participants were asked to select the five projects that are "the most characteristic/most present in your everyday life". Finally, participants were asked to evaluate each of these five projects against a series of predefined aspects that were intended to map different characteristics of the project.

For the purposes of this study two new aspects of evaluation were developed to assess the extent to which personal projects are motivated by normative and transcendental religious motivations. These were introduced by the question: "Why are you working on this project?" Two possible reasons were provided. "Because my denomination or church expects me to work on this project" represented normative religious motivation (NRM), and "Because I can experience communion with God/the transcendent through this project" represented transcendental religious motivation (TRM). In addition, participants evaluated a series of statements regarding the sanctified character of their personal projects, using the items and procedure of Mahoney and colleagues (Mahoney et al. 2005). Five items represented theistic sanctification (e.g. "God is present in this project") and five items non-theistic sanctification (e.g. "This project may be characterized as *holy*").

Participants rated their projects on an 11-point Likert scale with the anchor points of "strongly disagree" and "does not describe at all" (0) to "strongly agree" and "very closely describes" (10) for religious motivations and sanctification items, respectively. Individual scores of the projects were then averaged to form four aggregated scores (NRM, TRM, theistic and non-theistic sanctification). Alpha coefficients were .79 and above, indicating that all aspects of the project pursuit formed reliable scales (see Table 1).

Christian religious internalization scale (CRIS)

CRIS measures the degree to which certain religious activities (e.g. prayer, church attendance) are regulated in introjected or identified ways (Ryan et al. 1993). Sample items are "When I turn to God, I most often do it because… I enjoy spending time with Him (identified regulation) vs. I would feel guilty if I didn't (introjected regulation)". Possible answers ranged from "Completely disagree" (1) to "Completely agree" (7). Both subscales proved to be reliable (Cronbach's alphas .72 and .77 for introjected and identified regulation, respectively).

Age-universal intrinsic-extrinsic scale (IES)

The 12-item Age-universal intrinsic-extrinsic scale (Maltby 1999, 2002) was developed from earlier versions to disentangle three religious orientations: intrinsic, extrinsic-personal and extrinsic-social. Sample items are "It is important for me to spend time in private thought and prayer" for intrinsic, "I pray mainly to gain relief and

Table 1 Means, standard deviations and zero-order and partial correlations of religious motivations with other constructs of religiosity in Study 1, Sample 1a ($N = 158$)

		Alpha	M	SD	Zero order								Partial	
					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	NRM[a]	TRM[b]
1	NRM	.89	2.21	2.63										
2	TRM	.79	5.50	2.81	.49***									
3	Theistic sanctification	.95	7.24	2.14	.33***	.75***							−.06	.71***
4	Non-theistic sanctification	.96	5.36	2.67	.37***	.77***	.72***						−.01	.72***
5	CRIS-Introjected	.72	2.68	1.06	.41***	.16	.16	.16					.38***	−.05
6	CRIS-Identified	.77	5.00	1.22	.25**	.39***	.56***	.39***	.47***				.07	.32***
7	Intrinsic	.85	5.61	1.23	.19*	.52***	.65***	.47***	.24**	.67***			−.08	.49***
8	Extrinsic-personal	.73	4.61	1.38	.36***	.35***	.30***	.27**	.37***	.47***	.41***		.23**	.21**
9	Extrinsic-social	.82	2.12	1.10	.31***	.15	.03	.17*	.28***	.11	.11	.18*	.27**	.00

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

[a] Controlled for TRM

[b] Controlled for NRM

protection" for extrinsic-personal, and "I go to church because it helps me to make friends" for extrinsic-social orientation. Respondents could indicate the extent to which these statements were characteristic of them on a 7-point scale ranging from "Does not apply for me at all" (1) to "Completely applies for me" (7). Internal consistency was acceptably high for all three subscales (Cronbach's alphas were .73 or higher).

Measures, Sample 1b

Personal projects

Personal project assessment was the same as presented earlier, but only NRM and TRM items were included. Average scores were computed for the two religious motivation ratings. Internal consistency estimates were high (.90 and .93 for NRM and TRM, respectively).

Post-critical belief scale (PCBS)

The Hungarian translation of the 33 item version of the Post-critical belief scale (PCBS) was used (Horváth-Szabó 2003; Hutsebaut 1996). PCBS was designed to assess both commitment to and rejection of religious beliefs (Inclusion vs. Exclusion of transcendence, IT) and the way religious issues are treated (Symbolic vs. Literal interpretation, SI), therefore it is applicable in nonreligious samples as well. Sample items are "Only a priest can give an answer to important religious questions" (Inclusion-Literally), "In the end, faith is nothing more than a safety net for human fears" (Exclusion-Literally), "Each statement about God is a result of the time in which it was made" (Exclusion-Symbolically) and "The Bible holds a deeper truth which can only be revealed by personal reflection" (Inclusion-Symbolically). Items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale,

from "Completely disagree" (1) to "Completely agree" (7).

To obtain the scores for the underlying independent dimensions of Inclusion of transcendence (IT) and Symbolic interpretation (SI), we followed the factor-analytic procedure developed by Fontaine et al. (2003), Martos et al. (2009). Results indicated good reliability of the measure, thus allowing the two components to be interpreted as IT and SI dimensions. Factor scores were used subsequently as religiosity variables in the analysis. Higher scores mean more accepting attitudes towards the transcendent reality (IT), and a more complex processing of religious contents (SI).

Results and discussion

Means, standard deviations, zero-order and partial correlations of continuous variables in both samples are presented in Tables 1 and 2. The intercorrelation between the two religious motivation scores was moderately strong in Sample 1a and strong in Sample 1b ($r = .49$ and .75, respectively, both $ps < .001$). Since the high correlation between these constructs in Sample 1b was considered as a potential corollary of relatively high frequency of 0 values for both religious motivations by nonreligious respondents, we selected a subsample where only those respondents were included who provided at least one rating higher than 0 for any of the two religious motivations ('religious project' subsample, $N = 153$). Even in this subsample NRM and TRM correlated considerably ($r = .63$, $p < .001$) indicating that these aspects of religious motivation are closely interrelated.

Considering the religious context of NRM and TRM, we examined their relationship with several religious constructs: (1) sacred qualities of personal projects (Theistic and Non-theistic sanctification); (2) internalization of religiosity (CRIS) with Introjected and Identified

Table 2 Means, standard deviations and zero-order and partial correlations of religious motivations with other constructs of religiosity in Study 1, Sample 1b ($N = 224$)

		Alpha[a]	M	SD	Zero order			Partial	
					1	2	3	NRM[b]	TRM[c]
1	NRM	.90	2.21	2.75					
2	TRM	.92	3.12	3.36	.75*** (.63***)				
3	IT[3]	.99	.00	1.00	.55*** (.41***)	.65*** (.54***)		.12 (.10)	.43*** (.40***)
4	SI[3]	.98	.00	1.00	−.16* (−.36***)	−.09 (−.29***)	0.00 (−.33***)	−.14* (−.24**)	.04 (−.09)

Zero-order and partial correlation coefficients in parentheses are for the subsample with religiously motivated projects ($N = 153$)

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

[a] Tucker phi is presented for Inclusion and Symbolic

[b] Controlled for TRM

[c] Controlled for NRM

regulations of religious behavior; (3) dimensions of general religious orientations (IES): Intrinsic (deeply held beliefs), Extrinsic-personal (religion as personal comfort) and Extrinsic-social (religion as a source of social connections); (4) dimensions of religious attitudes (PCBS) with the extent to which religious beliefs are accepted (Inclusion of the Transcendent, IT), and the way religious contents are dealt with (Symbolic Interpretation, SI).

Both NRM and TRM correlated significantly and positively with measures of religiosity, with the exception of the non-significant associations between TRM and Introjected religious regulation, Extrinsic-social orientation and SI. Even zero-order correlation coefficients showed different patterns for NRM and TRM. NRM was more strongly related with Introjected regulation and Extrinsic-social orientation than TRM (rs = .41 and .31 vs. .16 and .15, for NRM and TRM, respectively, Fisher-Zs for the test of difference 3.24, $p < .001$ and 2.00, $p < .05$, respectively), while less closely associated with Theistic and Non-theistic sanctification, Identified regulation, Intrinsic orientation and IT (rs = .33, .37, .19 and .55 vs. .75, .77, .52 and .65, for NRM and TRM, respectively, Fisher-Zs < −2.7, ps < 0.01, respectively). Furthermore, TRM also showed a tendency for a stronger relationship with Identified regulation (rs = .25 and .39, for NRM and TRM, respectively, Fisher-Z = −1.92, $p = .055$). Difference of the correlation coefficients was nonsignificant for Extrinsic-personal and SI, however, for the latter the association was only significant for NRM ($r = −.16$, $p < .05$). To take the common variance of religious motivations into account, we ran two series of partial correlations, one for NRM, controlled for TRM, and one reversed. Controlling for the other religious motivation removed shared variance and the above described pattern was confirmed even more clearly: NRM, but not TRM related positively to Introjected regulation and Extrinsic-social religiosity, and negatively to SI, while TRM (but not NRM) was positively associated with sanctification indices, Intrinsic religiosity, Identified regulation, and IT (see Tables 1 and 2). Again, Extrinsic-social orientation was the only clear exception, relating to both NRM and TRM equally positively. In addition, since in Sample 1b there were relatively numerous participants who did not assign any kind of religious motivation to their projects, we ran all the analyses in the 'religious project' subsample, that is, among those who assigned religious motivation to their projects at least to a minor extent. Results confirmed the above described pattern in this subsample as well.

Study 1 confirmed our suggestion that two kinds of religious motivation for everyday projects can be distinguished. While normative and transcendental religious motivation proved to be interrelated constructs, they still represented separate routes as shown in their relationship to both proximal (i.e. project sanctification and regulation of religious behaviors) and distal religious constructs (i.e. measures of general religiosity) both in a sample of believers (Sample 1a) and in a sample that was closer to the general population (Sample 1b). Moreover, Study 1 provided additional support to our preliminary reasoning regarding the possible links between religious motivations and project self-integration (H3a) by showing that NRM may stem primarily from a personal religiosity with introjected regulation of religious behaviors, a search for social reinforcement (extrinsic-social religiosity), and a more rigid cognitive approach to religion (lower SI). These features make it more likely that the integration of NRM projects is more difficult and can be regulated in a more controlled way. On the contrary, TRM for personal projects may stem from more elaborate ways of being religious; therefore the integration of these projects in the form of their autonomous regulation is more probable. Finally, it is important to note that although NRM and TRM as motivations for projects showed different patterns of associations, they are far from being independent, let alone opposites of each other. While complex modeling of associations accounting for shared variance may help disentangle these aspects of religious motivations, in the real lives of believers they may go together in a natural way. Still the centrality and focus on one of these reasons may be of importance for everyday functioning (see H3a–c). Study 2 was to test these assumptions directly.

Study 2

Method

Sample and procedure

For Study 2 again we ran a cross-sectional questionnaire study on a convenience sample from the middle part of Hungary. Questionnaires were distributed by students of an introductory personality psychology course as partial fulfillment of the course requirements. Students were again instructed to collect data among their friends and relatives. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed. 512 participants, 180 males (mean age 26.6 ± 10.7 years) and 332 females (mean age 27.3 ± 12.3 years) took part in the study, and the response rate was 94.5%. Distribution of denominational background was very close to that of Study 1b: Catholic 341 (66.3%), other Christian 69 (13.6%), religious but not belonging to any denomination 28 (5.4%), non religious 74 (14.4%), with 2 cases missing. Church attendance was weekly in 210 cases (40.9%), occasionally in 166 cases (32.3%), and never in 136 cases (26.5%).

Measures

Personal projects

For project elicitation and evaluation we followed the same procedure as described in Study 1. Aspects for project evaluation were prompted with the same question: Why are you working on this project? The same religious motivations were provided as in Study 1. As in Sample 1b, a substantial proportion of respondents pursued their projects without any religious motivation ($N = 165$, 34.2%). Again, of those respondents who provided at least one rating higher than 0 for any of the two religious motivations a subsample was selected for further analysis ('religious project' subsample, $N = 337$).

Apart from the two religious motivations (NRM and TRM), four general reasons were provided, as in the work of Sheldon and colleagues (e.g. Sheldon and Kasser 1995; Sheldon 2001): "Because of the direct gains this project may produce for me" for external, "Because I feel obliged/ I feel I ought to work on this project" for introjected, "Because this project is meaningful and valuable for me" for identified, and "Because this project provides me enjoyment and inner satisfaction" for intrinsic regulation. All answers were scored from "Not at all true" (0) to "Completely true" (10). Extrinsic and Introjected reasons were averaged into Controlled regulation of the projects, and Identified and Intrinsic reasons into Autonomous regulation of the projects. Alpha estimates for these two scales (using ten items for each scale) were .81 and .73, respectively. Since scores for Controlled and Autonomous regulation were unrelated ($r = -.09$, ns, calculated before normalizations, see below), they were treated as separate variables. The reliability and convergent validity of this procedure has been presented elsewhere in more detail (Martos 2009).

Satisfaction with life scale (SWLS)

SWLS is a widely used five item scale for measuring general satisfaction with one's life (Diener et al. 1985). Items were scored on a 7-point Likert-scale yielding from "Strongly disagree" (1) to "Strongly agree" (7). Estimate of internal consistency was excellent in our sample (Cronbach alpha .847). A sample item is "In most ways my life is close to my ideal".

Short index of self-actualization (SISA)

This 15-item scale (Jones and Crandall 1986) was developed to measure the humanistic concept of self-actualization and has frequently been used in past research about self-integration and also in PCBS research (e.g. Neyrinck

et al. 2006). The focus of the scale is on the acceptance of one's emotions, as well as on authentic and loving relationships with others (e.g. "I am not ashamed of any of my emotions"). Agreement with the statements is scored on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from "Disagree" (1) to "Agree" (4). The 15-item version yielded an alpha of .592, which is considered relatively poor as an estimate of internal consistency. After deleting the two items with the lowest item-total correlations, this index was slightly higher than .60. Subsequent item analysis showed that after withholding the best 8 items, alpha would increase only up to .622. We decided to use the mean of the 13-item version in the subsequent analysis, because its alpha was already in the marginally acceptable zone while containing the greatest possible variability of the answers.

Meaning in life scale (MLS)

To assess meaning in life the meaning in life scale of the Brief Stress and Coping Inventory was used (Rahe and Tolles 2002; Rózsa et al. 2005). Eight items assess the person's general sense of meaningfulness in life, coherence and harmony with others. Previous analysis showed the scale's reliability and validity as a separate measure (Konkolÿ Thege et al. 2008). Sample items are: "My life has no direction and meaning (reverse coded)" and "My values and beliefs guide me daily". Items are scored on a 4-point Likert-scale ranging from "Not true" (1) to "Completely true" (4). The estimate of internal consistency was marginally acceptable (Cronbach's alpha .629).

Results and discussion

Preliminary analysis and descriptive statistics

For the path analysis, we screened our variables for considerable departure from normality (i.e. skewness statistic divided by its standard error was greater than $|1.96|$). Square root transformations were applied in the case of significant positive skew (NRM and TRM) and inverse square root transformations in the case of a significant negative skew (Autonomous regulation, SWLS, MLS). After transforming the scores, skewness statistics were acceptable. Means, SD-s and correlations for the variables in the study are presented in Table 3. Correlation coefficients were calculated also for the 'religious motivation' subsample. NRM and TRM correlated positively (rs = .69 and .39, both ps < .001, in the total and the 'religious project' sample, respectively). NRM correlated positively with both Controlled and Autonomous regulation (rs = .15 and .20, both ps < .01, respectively), as well as with meaning in life ($r = .16$, $p < .001$), while TRM correlated with Autonomous regulation and meaning (rs = .23 and

Table 3 Zero-order correlations for variables in Study 2

	Variables	Alpha	M	SD	Zero-order correlations						
					1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	NRM[a]	.888	1.61	2.28		.39***	.17**	.19***	−.06	−.14*	.05
2	TRM[a]	.872	2.30	2.66	.69***		−.12*	.26***	−.03	.08	.19**
3	Controlled	.809	4.31	2.05	.15**	−.02		−.07	−.15**	−.22***	−.15**
4	Autonomous[a]	.730	5.93	2.04	.20***	.23***	−.07		.09	.16**	.18**
5	Satisfaction[a]	.851	4.75	1.24	−.06	−.05	−.15***	.11*		.30***	.52***
6	Self-actualization	.602	2.93	.32	−.08	.05	−.19***	.17***	.31***		.40***
7	Meaning[a]	.630	3.14	.38	.16***	.24***	−.13**	.23***	.49***	.44***	

SWLS satisfaction with life scale, *SISA* short index of self-actualization, *MLS* meaning in life scale. Correlations for the whole sample ($N = 512$) below the diagonal and for the subsample with religiously motivated projects ($N = 337$) above the diagonal. Cronbach's alphas are from the whole sample

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

[a] Means and SDs are with the original values whereas transformed values were used for the correlations

.24, ps $< .001$, respectively), and was unrelated to Controlled regulation. Controlled and Autonomous regulation showed an opposite pattern of associations with well-being measures, with Autonomous regulation correlating positively (rs $> = .11$, all ps $< .05$) and Controlled regulation negatively (rs $<= −.13$, all ps $< .01$).

In general, the overall pattern of correlations was similar in the 'religious project' subsample as well. The association between NRM and meaning in life was nonsignificant in this subsample, while TRM related negatively to Controlled regulation ($r = −.14$, $p < .05$).

Paths analysis

We tested the proposed causal path by using Statistica 8.0 software (StatSoft Inc, Tulsa, Oklahoma). ML estimator was used to estimate the model parameters. In the first step a full regression model was built with NRM and TRM as covarying exogenous variables, and Controlled and

Autonomous regulation, SWLS (satisfaction), SISA (self-actualization), and MLS (meaning in life) as endogenous variables. Error terms of the well-being measures were set to covary. Direct paths were defined from the exogenous variables to all endogenous variables, as well as from the regulation types to the well-being measures. This model indicated good fit ($\chi^2 (1) = 3.28$, $p = .07$, ns, NFI = .996, CFI = .997) although parsimony adjusted fit index indicated that the model parsimony could be improved (RMSEA = .067, 95% CI = .00–.15). During a stepwise procedure nonsignificant paths (p < .05) were removed. The final model (see Fig. 1) indicated acceptable fit ($\chi^2 (5) = 8.66$, $p = .12$, ns, NFI = .989, CFI = .995), while being more parsimonious (RMSEA = .038, 95% CI = .00–.079). This final model accounted for 3.4% of the variance in SWLS, 7.6% of the variance in SISA, and 11.4% in MLS. We tested also a pure mediational model but the complete removal of all the direct paths from religious variables to well-being measures resulted in

Fig. 1 Final path model. *Note.* Coefficients for the "Religious-project" subsample are in parentheses. *$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$
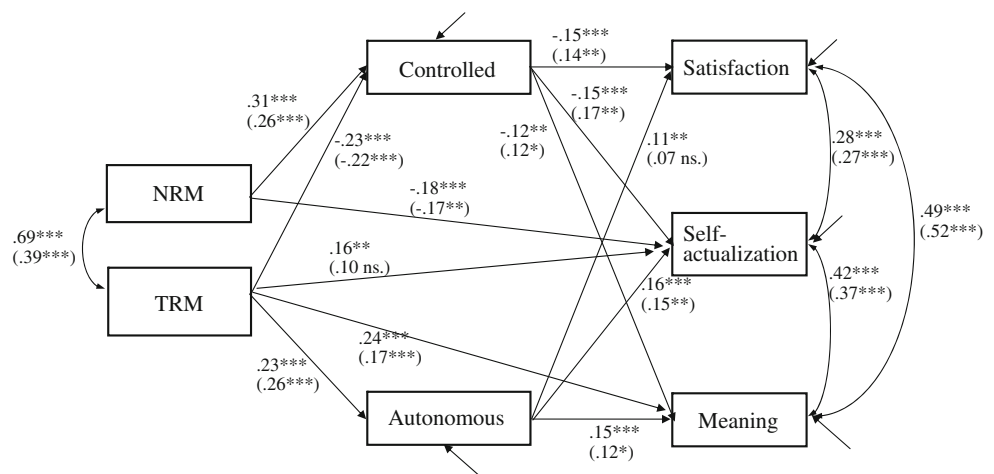
significant decrease in model fit (χ^2 (7) = 59.72, delta χ^2 (2) = 51.06, $p < .001$); therefore this solution was omitted.

Results confirmed considerable covariance between NRM and TRM. Moreover, NRM was in positive association with Controlled regulation of the projects (beta = .31, $p < .001$), while TRM related negatively to Controlled and positively to Autonomous regulation (betas = $-.23$ and .23, respectively, both $ps < .001$). Controlled regulation predicted well-being indicators negatively, while Autonomous regulation predicted them positively. There were also direct paths from religious motivation to well-being. NRM related negatively to self-actualization, while TRM related positively to self-actualization and meaning in life. Equivalence of the path coefficients was tested using a nested model approach comparing the original model with several nested models where groups of path coefficients were constrained to be equal. There were no significant differences between the following groups of path coefficients (a) from NRM to Controlled and from TRM to Autonomous, (b) from TRM to Self-actualization and from TRM to Meaning, (c) from Controlled to the three well-being measures (d) from Autonomous to the three well-being measures.

The direct, indirect, and total standardized effects of religious motivations and regulation types on well-being measures are presented in Table 4. All indirect effects are significant ($p < .021$), using an estimation of the standard error of indirect effects to calculate critical ratio for indirect effect according to Preacher and Hayes (2008). The effect of religious motivations on life satisfaction was relatively low, while TRM had the highest total effect on self-actualization, as well as on meaning in life, and the total (negative) effect of NRM on self-actualization was also strong. The final model was also tested in the 'religious motivation' subsample. Results are presented along with those from the total sample. Pattern of associations and effect sizes were comparable with the total sample, with only minor differences in path coefficients.[1]

These results give support to our initial assumptions (see hypotheses H3a–c) about the potential consequences of religious motivation for everyday projects. Specifically, NRM, that is, motivation for projects that is connected to normative, external religious factors, was more easily connected to controlled regulation, while TRM was associated with autonomous regulation. Moreover, NRM was in negative connection with well-being indices, whereas TRM was in positive connection with them. Path analysis indicated also that these associations were partly mediated by

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[1] Similarly, we ran these analyses in a subsample made up exclusively of participants who were Catholic. Once again, though, the results did not differ significantly from those presented.

Table 4 Decomposition of the effects of variables on well-being measures

	Satisfaction			Self-actualization			Meaning		
	Direct	Indirect	Total	Direct	Indirect	Total	Direct	Indirect	Total
NRM	–	−.045 (−.037)	−.045 (−.037)	−.182 (−.166)	−.045 (−.044)	−.227 (−.210)	–	−.037 (−.031)	−.037 (−.031)
TRM	–	.060 (.052)	.060 (.052)	.162 (.105)	.070 (.077)	.232 (.182)	.242 (.171)	.063 (.059)	.304 (.231)
Controlled	−.146 (−.144)	–	−.146 (−.144)	−.147 (−.170)	–	−.147 (−.170)	−.121 (−.120)	–	−.121 (−.120)
Autonomous	.113 (.074)	–	.113 (.074)	.155 (.147)	–	.155 (.147)	.151 (.124)	–	.151 (.124)

SWLS satisfaction with life scale, SISA short index of self-actualization, MLS meaning in life scale. Effects for the 'Religious-project' subsample are in parentheses (N = 337). All indirect and total effects are significant at least on level $p < .05$. For the significance of the direct effects see Fig. 1

regulation types, while there were also direct paths from religious motivations to self-actualization and meaning in life. Again, our results indicated that NRM and TRM are interrelated but distinct constructs, with different potential consequences for everyday functioning.

General discussion

The psychology of motivation and the psychology of religion have several common themes (Barrett et al. 2005; Duriez 2003; Neyrinck et al. 2005) and certainly one of them is an interest in the structure and the characteristics of everyday functioning. Our study aimed at this common field by analyzing everyday pursuits. Specifically, in two cross-sectional studies with Hungarian adults we sought to explore the relationships between different religious motivations as present in everyday goals and dimensions of religiosity, as well as their potential consequences for psychological functioning in terms of goal self-integration and well-being. To our knowledge, this was the first time that different religious motivations were studied specifically on the level of everyday goals.

Religious motivations in everyday pursuits

We proposed that everyday goals may be partly motivated by religious reasons, and distinguished between two kinds of motivation, each of which was implicitly present in previous literature about the ways religion is related to everyday functioning (Koenig et al. 2001; Pargament and Mahoney 2005; Silberman 2003; Silberman et al. 2005; Tix and Frazier 2005). Following the expectations and norms of a church/faith community was conceptualized as normative religious motivation (NRM), while striving for the transcendent reality and spiritual communion through everyday goals was conceptualized as transcendental religious motivation (TRM). Our results show that many people pursue their everyday projects to some extent because of religious motivations, although a considerable number of respondents in our samples did not assign any religious motivation to their projects. When these motivations are present, there are also individual differences in the strength of these motivations.

One important implication of our results is that while religious motivation is indeed present in the everyday goals of individuals, it is not a uniform phenomenon as previously treated in the concepts of personal strivings with spiritual/religious content (Emmons 1999), sanctified goals (Mahoney et al. 2005), or spiritual/religious motivations for personal goals (Tix and Frazier 2005), but can be divided into at least two broad categories as normative and transcendental religious motivation. TRM seems to represent a similar position to goal sanctification, that is, acting out of an inner search for the sacred. In contrast, although projects motivated by church norms and expectations may have sanctified properties to a certain extent, this relationship was explained by a considerable amount of shared variance between NRM and TRM, suggesting that NRM may be conceptually different from previous models of religiosity and goal striving.

Background of religious motivations

Although closely interrelated in the actual lives of individuals, normative and transcendental religious motivations for personal projects may have their background in different kinds of religiosity. As supported by our results, NRM as a reason for everyday goals is more closely tied to extrinsic religious orientation and to introjected regulation of religious behavior. In contrast, striving for spiritual communion through personal projects may originate more from an intrinsic religious orientation, where regulation of religious behaviors is more fully internalized. Furthermore, while NRM had an association with religious beliefs (Inclusion of Transcendence) that was as strong as TRM, this association was completely explained by TRM's positive relationship to Inclusion. This means that a tendency toward NRM alone has almost nothing to do with the strength of religious beliefs. In contrast, thinking of everyday projects as motivated by external religious agents involves a rather rigid cognitive style regarding religious issues (Literal interpretation), and thus, as previous research has shown, possibly more closed thinking and a need for social approval (Duriez 2003; Duriez et al. 2004). This interpretation is also in line with our finding about the positive link between social-extrinsic religiosity and NRM.

This does not necessarily mean, however, that the projects of people with deeper belief and symbolic processing would go against or violate the norms supported by a church or faith community. These people may agree with or even be inspired by religious rules. However, they are able to transform these rules into an inner search for the sacred, and thus not represent these projects as motivated by external religious factors. Recall our initial example of the project 'To solve my family conflicts'. This striving may be regarded as a consequence of a rule or expectation of a church community, since the promotion of family life is emphasized by many religions. At the same time many couples see their family relationships as having sacred qualities (Mahoney et al. 2009) and therefore their motivation to resolve conflicts may be partly motivated by their relationship to the sacred. In this vein, while they pursue something that is promoted as highly desirable by their faith community, their subjective experience may be that their motivation is mostly or exclusively spiritual, that is,

TRM. The integration of these strivings with the core concepts of the self may therefore be essential.

Religious motivations, self-integration and well-being

Our results are in line with several previous pieces of research that point to the importance of integrating the religious aspects of life with one's self (Neyrinck et al. 2006; O'Connor and Vallerand 1990; Ryan et al. 1993; Sheldon 2006). However, our present research is unique since we explored the level of everyday goals and not specifically religious behaviors or pursuits. Results confirmed that personal projects have different likelihoods of being regulated in an autonomous and integrated way according to the level to which they are motivated by normative and transcendental religious reasons. The more an everyday project is pursued because of transcendental religious motivations (e.g. a search for the sacred), the more it may be felt as congruent with the self and therefore integrated more fully with it. Moreover, path analysis indicated that self-integration may be regarded as a mediator process in the association between religious motivations and well-being measures. Promotion of self-integration may be one way in which TRM is connected to better psychological functioning, while integration of projects with NRM may be more problematic, and so less supporting for the individual's well-being.

At the same time this partial mediation also implies that promoting (or thwarting) self-integration is not the only way in which religious motivations may affect well-being. Internally motivated religious pursuits may give purpose and meaning to life (Park 2005). Moreover, they may provide a coherent framework even for experiences and strivings that are remote from one another, thus preventing the fragmentation of the self (Emmons 1999, 2005), and may promote self-control through building self-regulatory strength (McCullough and Willoughby 2009).

Concerning well-being indicators individually, the total effect of the religious variables was the weakest in the case of life satisfaction, indicating that subjective evaluation of one's well-being is only weakly tied to motivational aspects of religiosity. Similarly, subjective well-being and life satisfaction were mostly found to be in weak association with other measures of religiosity (Diener and Clifton 2002; Hackney and Sanders 2003). In contrast, self-actualization and meaning in life were found to be more closely related to transcendental religious motivation, with the highest total effects in path analysis, while the unique feature of self-actualization was that it was predicted equally but in a reversed manner also by NRM. These associations are in line with previous research about the potential of religiosity in finding one's life meaning (Chamberlain and Zika 1992; French and Joseph 1999;

Steger & Frazier, 2005). The results may also indicate that among several aspects of positive functioning, self-actualizing tendencies (e.g. acceptance of one's emotions and having authentic relationships) may be the most sensitive to the way the individual uses his/her religious beliefs in everyday projects. While pursuing goals primarily because of normative religious motivation may be detrimental for one's self-actualization, transcendental religious motivation may enhance it (cf. also Hackney and Sanders 2003; Neyrinck et al. 2006), and the striving for the transcendent reality may help people to live more autonomous and authentic lives.

Limitations and future directions

Our findings should be considered in the light of certain limitations. First, our results represent cross-sectional relationships and in this regard are unsuitable for drawing direct causal inferences. A longitudinal design could further elaborate our findings. Second, the nature of our samples (non-representative convenience sampling) may raise concerns about the generalizability of our results. Third, our newly developed measures for religious motivation may be limited since we assessed only two aspects of religious motivations. Further studies may address these issues by using more refined conceptualizations (e.g. by distinguishing between different kinds of NRM for the projects). Fourth, although in the marginally acceptable range, the relatively low internal consistency estimates of some of our measures may also raise concern about the reliability of the results. Finally, the denominational background of the respondents was mainly Catholic. Some findings suggest that, at least in North America, denomination may moderate the link between religious orientation and well-being (Tix and Frazier 2005). Moreover, while institutionalized norms and prescriptions may be particularly explicit in the Catholic Church, more subtle forms of normative pressure may be present also in other religious communities. Although our general assumptions on the nature of normative religious motivation may also apply to settings other than the Catholic Church, the denominational context of religious motivations may be an independent aspect of research in future studies.

Conclusions

Our results imply that not all kinds of religious motivations for everyday goals and activities are equally beneficial, or are beneficial at all. Although normative and transcendental religious motivations were positively connected in the actual projects of our respondents, they had different correlates and, possibly, also different consequences in

psychological functioning. This emphasizes the need for autonomous regulation of church prescriptions and norms in believers, which might be achieved simply through general autonomy support (e.g. Koestner et al. 2006) or might also require specific interventions such as spiritual counseling (Richards and Bergin 2002). In fact, autonomous regulation seems to be the centerpiece for the realization of any individual pursuit and well-being, whether or not a person's motivation for these pursuits is for religious reasons.

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