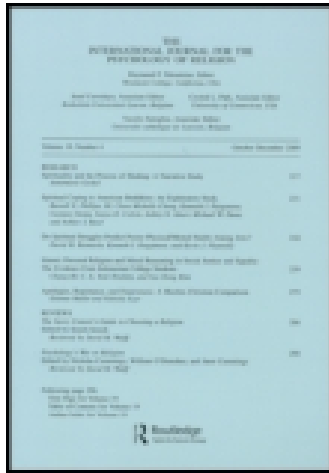


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Autonomous Versus Controlled Religiosity: Family and Group Antecedents

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RESEARCH

Autonomous Versus Controlled Religiosity: Family and Group Antecedents

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Self-determination theory distinguishes between identified and introjected internalization of religious practices, positing that the former is experienced as autonomous, whereas the latter is experienced as controlling. A study of Italian Catholic youth showed that identified internalization was predicted by (a) parents' behaviors reflecting basic autonomy support (BAS; behaviors involving perspective taking, choice-provision, and control-minimization), (b) youth-group leader BAS, (c) parents' intrinsic value demonstration (IVD), and (d) peers' IVD. Introjected internalization was predicted by (a) conditional parental regard (CR) and (b) peers' IVD. Perceived parental warmth did not mitigate the effect of CR on introjection. The study underscores the importance of two socializing behaviors rarely studied in the area of religious socialization: IVD and conditional regard. The findings also highlight the harmful nature of CR in the religion domain as a practice for which robust negative effects on internalization cannot be eliminated by more salutary parental behaviors as warmth.

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The study presented here is partly based on the first author's doctoral dissertation at the Catholic University of Milan, Italy, 2013; some of the data reported here are also presented in a monograph based on this dissertation (Brambilla, 2014).

The last decade has witnessed a growing interest in research focusing on parents and peers influence on youth's religious development (e.g., Bengtson, Copen, Putney, & Silverstein, 2009; Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, & Murray-Swank, 2003; Schwartz, 2006). As part of this trend, there is an increased understanding that it is important to pay attention not only to the content of the religious values and practices being transmitted but also to the mode in which parents transmit their faith (e.g., Boyatzis, 2005; Dollahite & Thatcher, 2008; Flor & Knapp, 2001). Consistent with these views, in the present research we focus on specific modes of faith transmission and in particular on parents' and youth groups' socializing behaviors as predictors of two different forms of youth's religious internalization.

THE INTERNALIZATION OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Religious practices can be internalized in different ways. Since Allport's (1950) writing about religiosity, we know that religious people can experience and live their faith in different ways. During the last decades, several studies tried to shed light on these multiple ways of practicing religion. In particular, studies anchored in self-determination theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000) demonstrated that it is possible to distinguish between two forms of internalization of religious practices: *introjected* and *identified* (e.g., Ryan, Rigby, & King, 1993; Soenens, Neyrinck et al., 2012).

SDT (e.g., Ryan, & Deci, 2000) distinguishes between internally regulated behaviors and externally regulated behaviors. A behavior that is enacted also in the absence of external sanctions (e.g., material regards and threats) is said to be internalized. SDT further assumes that behaviors and values can be internalized by the individual with different degrees of perceived autonomy. The lowest level of internalization is termed *introjected*. At this level, people feel pressured and compelled to enact specific practices and behaviors in order to feel worthy of the love and esteem of significant others; it is important to note that at this level people feel an internal compulsion to enact the internalized behaviours also when they are not viewed as truly valuable and worthy (e.g., Assor, Roth, & Deci, 2004; Assor, Vansteenkiste, & Kaplan, 2009).

The next, much more autonomous level of internalization is termed *identified*. In this type of internalization, people choose to enact practices and behaviors because they understand their merit and identify with them. Consequently, enactment of these practices is experienced as autonomous and self-determined. SDT also posits the existence of an even more autonomous internalization level termed "integrated." At this level, practices are enacted because they are perceived as central to who one truly is and as representing values that stand at the top of one's value hierarchy. However, SDT research often does not assess this type of internalization as a separate construct (e.g., Ryan et al., 1993). Moreover, it appears that truly integrated internalization is not likely to develop when youth still explore and cope with major identity issues (e.g., Assor, Cohen-Malayev, Kaplan, & Friedman, 2005).

The present study contrasts identified and introjected internalization of religious practices. Consistent with SDT, we seek to demonstrate that although these two modes are situated close to each other on the internalization continuum, they not only have substantially different correlates (e.g., Ryan et al., 1993) but also have different antecedents. Of importance, the current study is the first to examine the antecedents of introjected versus identified religious internalization.

Past studies focusing on internalization of religious practices have shown that identified and introjected modes of religious internalization have substantially different correlates in terms of well-being, cognitive-symbolic, and social attitudes. Thus, religious identification was found to be positively connected with psychological adjustment and well-being, whereas introjection was found to be negatively correlated with the same outcomes (Neyrinck, Vansteenkiste, Lens, Duriez, & Hutsebaut, 2006; Ryan et al., 1993). In addition, Soenens and colleagues (Soenens, Park, Vansteenkiste, & Mouratidis, 2012) found that an identified religious internalization was related positively to a symbolic and flexible approach to religion, whereas an introjected religious internalization was associated with a literal, rigid style of religious belief. Moreover, recent research by Brambilla, Manzi, Regalia and Verkuyten (2013) showed that, among Italian Catholics, introjected religious internalization was positively associated with anti-Muslim prejudice, whereas the reverse was true for identified religious internalization.

Taken together, these findings suggest that identified internalization of religious practices is more desirable than introjected internalization. However, the antecedents of the different types of internalization of religious practices have been rarely investigated. Of interest, the need for studies focusing on such aspects of religiosity was recently noted by Vermeer, Janssen, and Scheepers (2012). These authors have investigated the effect of authoritative parenting on juvenile church attendance, finding evidence that the strongest source of influence is parents' church attendance. However, in their conclusions they highlighted the need to investigate outcomes other than church attendance, referring specifically to youth "religious style," a construct that has much in common with quality and manner of religious internalization. In the present research, we investigated potential antecedents of religious internalization (i.e., identified and introjected internalization) in the family context (parental behaviors) and in the group context (behaviors of the group peers and religious leader).

ANTECEDENTS OF IDENTIFIED AND INTROJECTED RELIGIOUS INTERNALIZATION IN THE FAMILY CONTEXT

A wide body of research indicates that identified internalization of socially expected behaviors is associated with autonomy supportive behaviour of parents and educators, whereas introjected internalization is associated with internally controlling behaviors of socializing agents (e.g., Grolnick, Deci, & Ryan, 1997; Ryan & Deci, 2000). In the area of parenting, the concept of autonomy support usually refers to parents' attempts to understand and acknowledge the child perspective, allow choice when appropriate, and minimize external controls (Grolnick et al., 1997; Niemiec & Ryan, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2002; Soenens, Park et al., 2012). Assor (2011, 2012) presented these aspects of autonomy support as more basic and showed that extensive empirical investigations demonstrate their importance as predictors of autonomous and adaptive internalization or behaviors. For example, Vansteenkiste, Zhou, Lens, and Soenens (2005) showed that this type of basic parental autonomy support was related to an autonomous (self-determined) motivation to study.

In contrast, internally controlling parenting pressures children to think or act in ways that are valued by parents by linking parents' affection and esteem to child's compliance with parents' expectations or by arousing the child's guilt or shame when the child does not comply (e.g., Assor et al., 2004; Assor & Tal, 2012; Soenens & Vansteenkiste, 2010). For example, in the

controlling practice termed conditional regard (e.g., Assor et al., 2004), parents provide more esteem and affection when children comply and less affection and esteem when children do not comply. Assor and colleagues (Assor et al., 2004) showed that conditional regard predicts introjected internalization and poor well-being in different domains.

Assor and colleagues (Assor, 2011, 2012; Assor et al., 2005) also highlighted the importance of a type of parental behavior defined as intrinsic value demonstration (IVD) not included in most past SDT-based conceptualizations and measurements of autonomy support (e.g., Grolnick et al., 1997; Ryan & Deci, 2000). This parental practice involves

a convincing modelling, . . . that naturally conveys the sense of satisfaction and growth that accompanies engagement in a behavior; adults are likely to be convincing models of a given behavior to the extent that they fully identify with the behavior and feel content and fulfilled when engaged in the action. (Assor et al., 2005, p. 111)

Thus, unlike regular parental modeling, IVD involves not only the demonstration of parental behavior but also parental identification with and/or enjoyment of the behavior.

Assor (2011, 2012) viewed IVD as a potential component of autonomy support because it highlights the intrinsic value of the demonstrated behavior and, therefore, can enhance autonomous motivation to engage in these behaviors. In line with this view, research showed that the practices of IVD, perspective taking, and rationale provision in the academic domain predicted adolescents' sense of choice with regard to studying (Roth, Assor, Niemiec, Ryan, & Deci, 2009) and a recent study by Shi, Assor and Xiangping (2013) suggested that Chinese parents' IVD promotes their children's subjective well-being by enhancing children's sense of self-congruence (Weinstein, Przybylski & Ryan, 2012). In the domain of religious socialization, Assor et al. (2005) showed that religion-oriented IVD was a positive predictor of identified religious internalization but not of introjected religious internalization.

Relative to other domains, there is very little research on the relations between autonomy-supportive versus controlling parenting and religious internalization. Specifically, research conducted by Assor et al. (2005) with Jewish-Israeli samples has focused on the two parental practices of religion-oriented conditional regard and religion-oriented IVD, suggesting that religion-oriented parental conditional regard (CR) is an antecedent of religious introjection, whereas religion-oriented IVD is an antecedent of religious identification. Although the studies reported did not examine parents' basic autonomy supporting behaviors such as taking the child perspective, providing choice and minimizing coercive control, it appears that given their high explanatory value in other socialization domains, it is time to examine their potential role in religious internalization.

Based on these findings and considerations, the present study aimed at examining the role of three socializing behaviors as predictors of religious internalization: (a) religion-oriented CR; (b) religion-oriented IVD; and (c) basic autonomy support (BAS), indicated by perspective taking, choice, and minimizing control.

Parts of this model were tested by Assor et al. (2005), but no study to our knowledge has tested all three hypothesized antecedents simultaneously. Moreover, these antecedents have never been tested with non-Jewish samples. Given the absence of such research, the aim of the present study is to conduct the first test of the three-antecedent model and extend the research on the three antecedents to a non-Jewish sample.

PARENTAL WARMTH AS A MODERATOR OF THE EFFECTS OF SPECIFIC PARENTAL PRACTICES

Current research on family processes suggests that parenting style can moderate the effects of specific parenting practices on various outcomes (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Consistent with this view, it is possible that the effect of the two specific religion-oriented parental practices in our model on children's religious internalization is moderated by general features of parents' approach toward their children. In the present research, we look at the potential moderating role of parental warmth.

Warmth and closeness contribute, according to some authors, to children's willingness to accept parental values (Barni, Ranieri, Scabini & Rosnati, 2011). Therefore, it is possible that perceived parental warmth would enhance the effect of the practice of religious IVD on the internalization of religious values. However, of interest, there is also research suggesting that when parental warmth is combined with psychologically controlling parenting, it actually enhances the negative effects of controlling parenting (Aunola & Nurmi, 2005; Kanat-Maymon & Assor, 2010), suggesting that parental warmth may enhance the effect of religion-oriented CR on introjected religious internalization. Thus, in this study we also explored whether parental warmth moderates the relationships between parental practices and religious internalization.

GROUP ANTECEDENTS

Family usually is the first place where children can experience religiosity (e.g., Myers, 1996). Later on, as children grow up, they become more likely to be engaged in groups, including religious groups (e.g., Regnerus & Uecker, 2006). Very often, religious groups consist of peers led by an adult. Can religious groups and leaders influence youth's internalization of religion? We are not aware of any research directly addressing this issue, although discussions of youth religious development suggest that factors in the child environment other than the child family are likely to play an important role in religious internalization (Boyatzis, 2005; Richert & Granqvist, 2013).

Yet research guided by SDT did show that the internalization of valued behaviors and practices can be influenced not only by parents but also by important others, such as teachers (see Niemiec & Ryan, 2009), doctors (e.g., Williams & Deci, 1996), and coaches (e.g., Jöesaar, Hein, & Hagger, 2012). Specifically, these studies have shown that BAS by teachers, doctors, and coaches promotes (respectively) identified internalization of academic learning activities, health care practices, and sport activities. Consistent with these findings, we hypothesized that a similar pattern would emerge for religious internalization in religious organizations.

Although past research did not directly focus on peers' behaviors affecting religions internalization, a study by Schwartz (2006) suggested that faith modeling by peers predicts the extent to which Christian adolescents endorse their religious faith. As faith modeling has much in common with IVD, we expected that religious IVD provided by peers in the religious group will predict religious identified internalization. In sum, we hypothesized that BAS provided by the group leader and religious IVD provided by peers would predict religious identification in youths who regularly attend a religious group.

THE PRESENT RESEARCH

The present research focused on parents and youth-group practices as predictors of religious internalization in a sample of Catholic youths in North Italy. Clearly, parenting practices and their effects on internalization may differ between Catholics in different areas of the world and between Catholics and members of other denominations (e.g., Bartkowski, 2007). However, the aim of this study was not to conduct an assessment of the effects of parenting and group practices across Catholics coming from different areas, or to examine these effects across different denominations. Rather, we wanted to conduct the first test of our model of antecedents of religious internalization and extend this research to a non-Jewish sample. Conducting the study with North Italian Catholic youth allowed us to attain both objectives.

Based on the foregoing considerations, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- (1): Religion-oriented parental CR would predict introjected religious internalization, whereas BAS and religious IVD would predict identified religious internalization.
- (2): BAS by the group leader and religious IVD provided by peers would predict identified religious internalization in youth regularly attending a religious group.

The study also explored the possibility that perceived parental warmth would moderate the relation between the practices of CR and IVD and mode of religion internalization. Specifically, we examined whether perceived warmth would enhance the positive association between CR and introjection, as well as enhance the positive association between IVD and identification. Finally, we also examined whether the expected effects of parental practices on religious internalization would emerge also when controlling for group-based effects.

METHOD

Participants and Procedure

Participants were 394 Christian Catholic youth from North Italy, 17 to 31 years of age ($M = 19.29$, $SD = 2.4$) and 53% female. Although the hypotheses pertaining to parenting and moderation effects were examined for the complete sample, the hypotheses pertaining to group-related variables were examined on a subsample of participants who regularly attended religious youth groups ($n = 160$). Youth in 21 public schools and 21 Catholic youth groups were contacted by the research team and invited to complete an online questionnaire. Of the youth who accepted the invitation, 73% identified themselves as Roman Catholic and were asked to complete religion-related parts of the questionnaire. Youth who did not identify themselves as Catholics completed parts of the questionnaire that do not pertain to religion. Participation was voluntary. In response to a question assessing level of family wealth (Becker et al., 2012), 73% of the participants characterized their family as having average wealth, 20% selected the “above average” wealth option, 6% selected the “below average” option, and 1% characterized their family as very rich. Of the participants, 42% reported living in a big or medium-size city and 58% reported residing in a medium or small town. Respondents signed an informed consent form before completing the questionnaire.

Measures

Responses to all scales ranged from 1 (*not at all true*) to 7 (*very true*).

The Christian Religious Internalization Scale (Brambilla, Manzi, & Regalia, 2014; Ryan et al., 1993). This measure includes two subscales, Introjected Motivation (five items) and Identified Motivation (six items). An illustrative introjected motivation item is, “When I turn to God, I most often do it because I would feel guilty if I didn’t.” An illustrative identified motivation item is, “God is important to me and I’d like other people to know about Him too.” Cronbach’s alphas were .76 for the Introjected scale and .89 for the Identified scale.

Perceived BAS by parents (a shortened version of the scale used by Niemiec et al., 2006). Five items measured basic parental autonomy support as perceived by children. Example items, reflecting the aspects of perspective taking, choice, and minimizing controls, respectively, are “My mother is usually willing to consider things from my point of view,” “My mother, whenever possible, allows me to choose what to do,” and “My mother insists upon my doing things her way” (reversed). Cronbach’s alphas for the five father’ items and for the five mother’ items were both .72.

Perceived parents’ religious IVD. This measure includes five items used in the religious socialization research of Assor et al. (2005) and the study by Roth et al. (2009). An illustrative item capturing actual demonstration and involvement with religious activity is “My mother/father invests time in religious activities.” An illustrative item capturing parents’ enjoyment of the demonstrated behavior is “My mother/father enjoys increasing her/his knowledge and understanding in religious matters.” Cronbach’s alphas were .94 for the five father’ items and .93 for the five mother’ items.

Perception of religion oriented parental CR (Assor et al., 2005). This six-item scale aims at tapping the perception of CR from parents in the religious domain. Example items are “My mother would give me more warmth and appreciation if I will take my religious duties seriously” and “If I change my religion, my father would be very disappointed with me.” Cronbach’s alphas was .86 for the father’ scale and .82 for the mother’ scale.

Perceived parental warmth. This variable was assessed with three items reflecting the warmth dimension as conceptualized by Kanat-Maymon and Assor (2010) and MacDonald (1992) and as assessed in Assor, Roth, Israeli, Freed, and Deci (2007). The items come from the acceptance dimension of Schaefer’s (1965) scales for assessing child perceived parental behavior. An illustrative item is “My mother clearly conveys her love for me.” Cronbach’s alphas were .87 for the father’s scale and .84 for the mother’s scale. The negative correlation between perceived parental warmth and CR is consistent with theoretical expectations and with results of previous studies (e.g., Assor et al., 2007; Kanat-Maymon & Assor, 2010). The positive but moderate correlations with BAS are also in line with theoretical expectations and previous studies (e.g., Niemiec et al., 2006). These correlation pattern supports the discriminant and convergent validity of the perceived parental warmth scale used in this study.

Leader's BAS. The same items assessing perception of parent BAS were used in relation to the youth-group leader. Item examples are "The leader of my religious group listens to how I would like to do things" and "The leader of my religious group has provided me choices and options." Cronbach's alpha was .92.

Group IVD. The five items assessing IVD by parents were changed to refer to the peers in the religious group. An example item is "People in my religious group are consistent in how they live their faith." Cronbach's alpha was .93.

RESULTS

Plan of Analysis

Following preliminary analyses, three primary analyses were conducted to address the aims of the present research. The first analysis tested our general model of parental practices as predictors of the two types of religious internalization, controlling for the effects of gender and socioeconomic status. The second analysis examined whether the aforementioned relationships are moderated by perceived parental warmth. The third analysis tested a general model of the simultaneous effects of parental practices and group-related practices on the two types of religious internalization.

Preliminary Analyses

We screened the data for univariate and multivariate outlying cases and checked the variable distributions for normality. Some variables' distributions showed problems of skew and kurtosis and were corrected using logarithmic transformation. After these transformations, the normalized estimates of Mardia's coefficient for multivariate kurtosis were acceptable (all estimates < 3). Due to high correlations between perceptions of paternal and maternal behaviors, perceptions of parental behaviors were computed as a mean of maternal and paternal indices; thus, we averaged the scores of mothers' BAS and fathers' BAS to produce one score reflecting parents' BAS, and a similar procedure was used with all other scales assessing parents' behaviors.

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations. The correlations' pattern was consistent with theoretical expectations and previous research (e.g., Assor et al., 2005; Niemic et al., 2006). For example, parents' and group BAS had positive correlations with identified internalization but not with introjected internalization.

Analyses of Parental Practices

We conducted a Structured Equations Modeling (SEM) analysis on the observed variables using the software AMOS 16 (Byrne, 2010), in which we tested the theoretical model just presented. As shown in Figure 1, the path coefficients were consistent with our predictions and the model showed good fit indices: $\chi^2(3) = 7.002$, $p = .07$, normed fit index (NFI) = .96, Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) = .96, comparative fit index (CFI) = .99, root mean square error

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlation Matrix of the Variables Examined

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Parents' basic autonomy support	—	.23**	-.20**	.26**	.00	.46**	.18*	.17*
2. Parents' value demonstration		—	.30**	.52**	.20**	.18**	.19*	.15
3. Parents' conditional regard			—	.17**	.35**	-.27**	.10	.01
4. Identified internalization				—	.46**	.16**	.35**	.40**
5. Introjected internalization					—	-.01	-.02	.16*
6. Perceived parental warmth						—	.13	.14
7. Group basic autonomy support							—	.32**
8. Group intrinsic value demonstration								—
<i>M</i>	5.17	3.94	1.64	3.91	2.42	5.92	5.31	4.45
<i>SD</i>	1.00	1.71	0.87	1.35	0.98	1.14	1.34	1.37

Note. The correlations involving Group intrinsic value demonstration and Leader basic autonomy support are based on a subsample of 160 participants who are members of religious youth groups.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$, two-tailed.

Adapted from Brambilla (2014).

of approximation (RMSEA) = .06, 90% confidence interval (CI) [.00, .12]. The explained variance was 26% for identification and 10% for introjection. It should be noted that a SEM model including paths from BAS and IVD to introjected internalization and a path from CR to identified internalization showed that none of these paths were significant. Therefore, the model presented in Figure 1 was retained.

To control for the effect of demographic variables, we assessed the same model, adding family wealth (observed variable), age (observed variable), sex (dichotomous variable), and place where participants live. The model showed adequate fit indices: $\chi^2(21) = 46.462$, $p = .001$, NFI = .88, TLI = .84, CFI = .92, RMSEA = .06, 90% CI [.04, -.08]. The

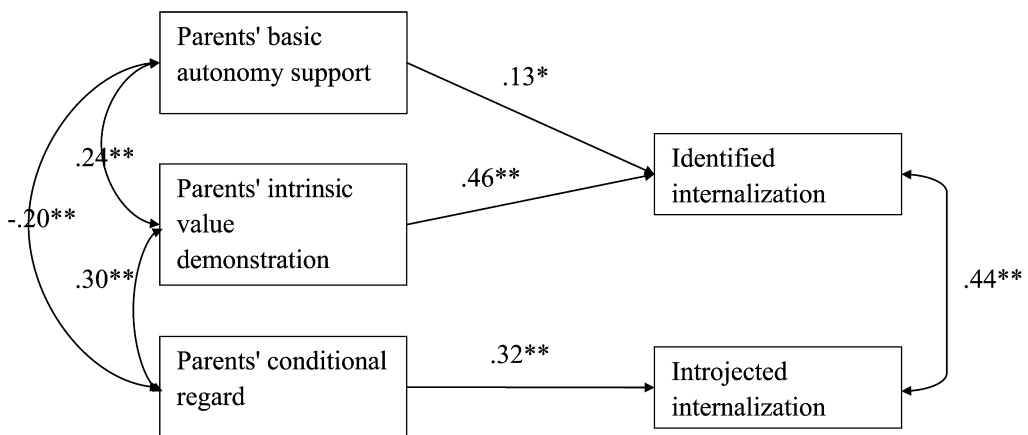


FIGURE 1 Structural model of parents' perceived practices as predictors of adolescents' religious internalization. Note. Numbers are standardized estimates; only significant paths are reported. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.

paths associated with social structural variables did not reach significance, except for the path coefficient from age to religious identification, whose magnitude, however, is limited ($\beta = .03$, $p < .001$). Most important, the effects of the three perceived parenting practices remained significant and hardly changed also after controlling for the effects of the demographic variables.

Moderating Effects

We examined the moderating effect of perceived parental warmth using multigroup SEM performed with the AMOS software on the observed variables. A median split on perceived parental warmth was used to distinguish between high and low perceived parental warmth. Then, following accepted procedures for assessing moderation effects in structural equations models (e.g., Byrne, 2004), we assessed model invariance between the two groups. As a first step, all hypothesized paths were constrained to be equal across the two groups. Examination of the critical ratios for the pairwise differences among all parameter estimates indicated a significant critical difference ratio for the path from CR to introjection when comparing the two groups. The critical ratios for the differences between the paths from IVD and autonomy support to identification were not significant.

Consequently, only the constraint pertaining to CR was released and the model was reestimated. The comparison (Byrne, 2004) between the fully constrained model and the model with unconstrained path from CR to introjection revealed that the latter model fits the data better, $\Delta\chi^2(1) = 4.083$, $p < .05$; fit indices of the fully constrained model were $\chi^2(13) = 16.439$, $p = .23$, NFI = .95, TLI = .96, CFI = .98, RMSEA = .03, 90% CI [.00, -.06]; fit indices of the model with one unconstrained path, $\chi^2(12) = 12.356$, $p = .42$, NFI = 1.00, TLI = 1.00, CFI = 1.00, RMSEA = .01, 90% CI [.00, -.06], thus showing that the relation between CR and introjection is different at different levels of parental warmth.

To further explore this moderation effect, we conducted a regression analysis in which the dependent variable was introjected internalization and the predictors were parental warmth, CR, and a multiplicative term reflecting the interaction between these two variables. All variables involved in the regression procedure were first standardized. Regression results showed that warmth interacted with CR ($\beta = 0.10$, $p < .05$). To shed further light on the nature of the interaction, we followed the Aiken and West (1991) procedure, and thus estimated two regression lines of introjected internalization on CR at two levels of on maternal warmth. Specifically, one regression line was estimated for a relatively high level of maternal warmth (1 *SD* above the mean), whereas a second regression line was estimated for a relatively low level of maternal warmth (1 *SD* below the mean). Tests of simple slopes indicated that CR had a higher positive association with introjected motivation when maternal warmth was higher ($\beta = .40$, $p < .01$) than when maternal was low ($\beta = .25$, $p < .05$). This interaction effect is displayed in Figure 2. Thus, the results of both the SEM analysis and the regression analysis were consistent with the moderation hypothesis.

Analysis of Group and Parental Practices

This analysis was conducted on a subsample of 160 participants, obtained by selecting only participants who declared to have been involved in a religious group during the last 5 years.

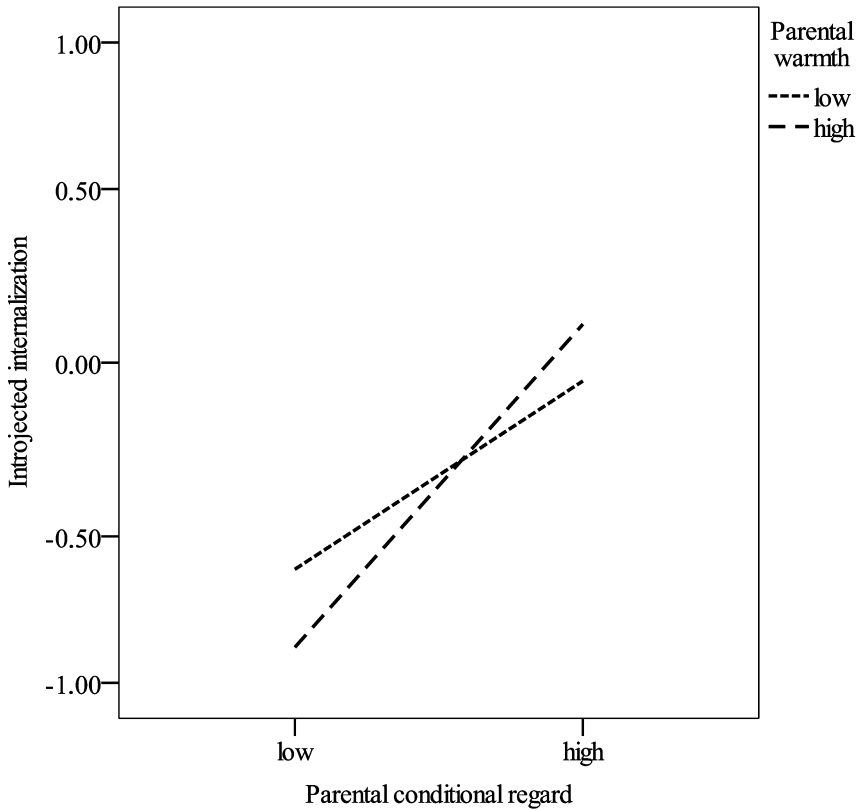


FIGURE 2 Estimated simple slopes for the regression of introjection on perceived parental warmth at two levels of parents' perceived conditional regard. *Note.* The two levels are 1 standard deviation above the mean and 1 standard deviation below the mean.

Of these individuals, 61% were female and the mean age was 19.66 ($SD = 2.73$). The mean period of attending a religious group was 8 years ($SD = 3.51$). Participants indicated a priest as the group leader in half of the cases (50%), whereas 6% said that the group has no leader, and the remaining part signalled another person. Descriptive statistics on this subsample revealed that participants perceived high levels of leader's autonomy support and moderate levels of group value demonstration; religious identification was correlated with both group variables, whereas religious introjection showed modest association with group value demonstration (see Table 1).

We conducted an SEM analysis on the observed variables, in which we tested the same model as in the first step, adding the two group variables. The model, presented in Figure 3, showed good fit indices, $\chi^2(20) = 16.702$, $p = .08$, NFI = .91, TLI = .91, CFI = .96, RMSEA = .06, 90% CI [.00, .12]. Figure 3 shows that, as expected, the new constructs included in this analysis-BAS provided by the group leader and religious IVD provided by peers-had a significant positive effect on identified religious internalization. Unexpectedly,

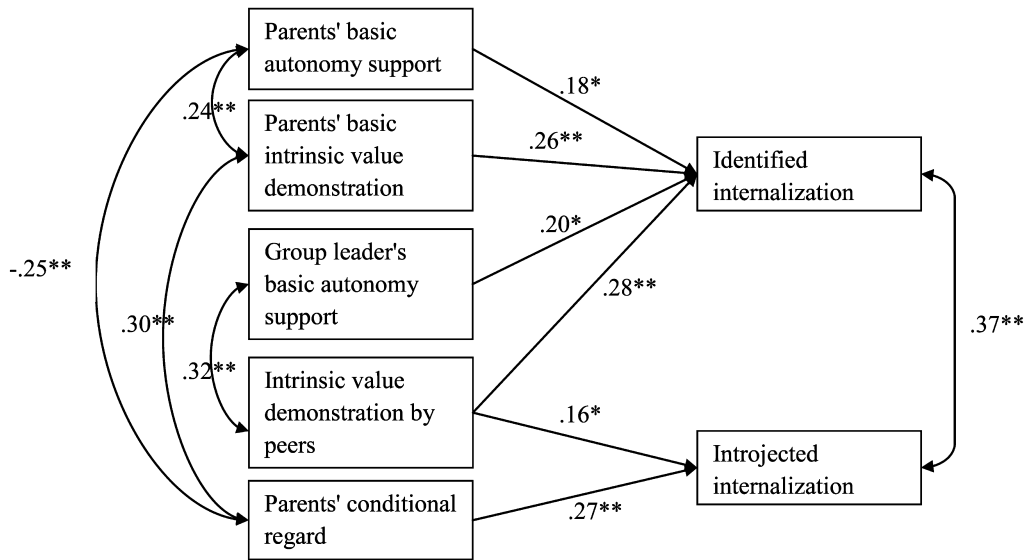


FIGURE 3 Structural model of parents' and group-related perceived practices as predictors of adolescents' religious internalization. *Note.* Numbers are standardized estimates; only significant paths are reported. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$. Translated from Brambilla (2014).

group value demonstration also had a small, yet positive and significant, effect on introjection. Of importance, the three parental practices examined in the first analysis (IVD, BAS, and CR), were found to have the expected effects on identification and introjection also when controlling for the effects of the two group variables. The explained variance was 27% for identification and 10% for introjection.

It should be noted that a SEM model including also paths from basic parent and group-leader autonomy support, and parent value-demonstration to introjected internalization and from parent CR to identified internalization showed that none of these paths were significant. Therefore, the model presented in Figure 3 was retained.

DISCUSSION

The findings pertaining to parental practices suggest that the practices of BAS and, in particular, IVD, predict religious identification, whereas CR predicts introjection. These results confirm the theoretical model proposed by Assor (e.g., Assor, 2011; Assor et al., 2005) and suggest that the parenting practice of IVD indeed has a significant role in promoting autonomous value internalization.

Analysis of the joint effects of group-based and family-based practices on youth's religious internalization mostly supported the proposed model, with both parents and peers' practices emerging as significant predictors. Specifically, leaders' BAS and group IVD both predicted religious identification, and these effects occurred also when the impact of parenting was

considered. These findings therefore suggest that religious groups and leaders can have a unique contribution to the identified internalization of religion.

The finding of a small yet significant association between group IVD and religious introjection was not expected. Generally, IVD is found to promote autonomous rather than controlled internalization (e.g., Assor, 2012; Assor et al., 2005; Roth et al., 2009). However, it is possible that in the context of religion-based peer groups, the perception of peers who are highly (and even intrinsically) engaged in institutionally valued religious activities is also experienced as pressuring and somewhat controlling. Thus, the presence of peers who perform (wholeheartedly) activities that are valued by leaders and parents may in itself create an internal pressure to engage in these activities in order to be appreciated by significant others. Ironically, then, it appears that the presence of autonomously motivated actions in one's environment may sometimes undermine one's autonomous functioning.

The results concerning adolescents' perceptions of parents' autonomy-support versus control as predictors of religious internalization are consistent with findings by Soenens, Neyrinck et al. (2012), who showed a similar pattern with regard to perceptions of God. Conceptually similar findings were also obtained by Vergouwen (2001), who found that authoritative parents foster "autonomous-reflexive faith," and authoritarian parents are inclined to nurture "synthetic-conventional faith." According to Fowler (1981), synthetic-conventional faith involves uncritical and conformist adoption of the community's faith; autonomous-reflexive faith involves critical evaluation of prior beliefs to achieve a personal appropriation of religious tradition.

Streib (2001) presented a modification of Fowler's theory, focusing on the notion of religious styles. The more advanced styles (i.e., individuated-systemic or dialogical-religious) appear to share important attributes with the more autonomous modes of internalization according to SDT. For example, the tendency to rationally reflect on one's religious beliefs and behavior suggests that people characterized by these styles are likely to experience a more autonomous form of internalization of religious practices and beliefs. Of interest, Streib (2001) suggested that people with an individuated-systemic style tend to be overly rational, and therefore less capable of experiencing and appreciating the symbolic and emotional meaning of religious practices and texts. However, those with the more advanced dialogical style are more capable of experiencing a "second naïveté" (Ricoeur, 1981), which emerges when one temporarily puts aside rational scepticism, thereby connecting to symbols which one does not fully analyze rationally. From an SDT perspective, it is reasonable to assume that people reaching integrated religious internalization (e.g., Assor et al., 2005), but not identified internalization, are able to reach this type of second naïveté because they are able to connect rational-critical considerations with emotional aspects of their self that feel authentic and true, and do not require much analyzing or explanation.

The finding that increased perceived parental warmth predicts a stronger association of CR with religious introjection is of special interest because it suggests that CR, when linked together with parental warmth, can be harmful for autonomous religious value internalization. Similar negative effects of such coupling were already observed by Kanat-Maymon and Assor (2010) and Aunola and Nurmi (2005). Thus, it appears that perceived parental warmth cannot mitigate the negative effects of controlling parenting practices, and in fact it may even enhance these negative effects. In that sense, parental CR emerges as a harmful practice the robust negative effects of which cannot be eliminated by more salutary parental behaviors. Of interest, the pattern depicted in Figure 2 further underscores the maladaptive nature of CR as, at least in

our study, high levels of CR actually appear to cancel the counterintrojection effect of high parental warmth.

Previous research has shown that identified religious internalization is associated with better psychological adjustment (e.g., Ryan et al., 1993) and reduced prejudice toward other religions (Brambilla et al., 2013). Therefore, identified religious internalization can be viewed as a personal and social asset. Accordingly, the parenting, group, and leader practices explored in the present studies suggest ways in which different socializing agents can jointly contribute to improved personal well-being and positive intergroup relations by promoting an identified and autonomous mode of being religious.

The present and former SDT-based studies of religious internalization were conducted with samples representing several of strands of Christianity in the United States (Protestants, Catholics, Evangelical; see Ryan et al., 1993), Catholics in Belgium (e.g., Neyrinck et al., 2006) and North Italy (this study and Brambilla et al., 2013), and Orthodox Judaism in Israel (Assor et al., 2005). Future research would have to determine whether introjected and identified religious internalization has similar correlates, outcomes, and antecedents in other strands of Christianity and Judaism in various countries and, of more interest, in other religions. There is some research on some strands of Islam suggesting that identified and introjected religious motivation are likely to have similar correlates also, although the measures used do not directly assess identified and introjected internalizations (e.g., Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2011; Ghorbani & Watson, 2006; Watson et al., 2002).

However, it is still possible that religious internalization processes would not show the same regularities in religions and cultures that are very different from the Monotheistic religions of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. Of special interest in this case is the concept of introjected motivation. A central feature of introjected internalization is the inner compulsion to abide by religious practices and beliefs because otherwise one experiences loss of self-esteem, guilt, and at times also self-derogation (see Assor et al., 2005; Assor & Tal, 2012). The sense of guilt and self-derogation experienced in the introjection of Monotheistic religions is likely to be especially potent and harmful because it is based not only on messages conveyed by family and community but also by a powerful, omniscient, divine entity whose authority is beyond any doubt or questioning (see Assor et al., 2005; Ryan et al., 1993). In some strands of Judaism and Christianity, the introjected religious internalization is further strengthened by the belief that lack of religious observance even hurts God and/or humankind.

In contrast to these Monotheistic religions, it is possible that in many strands of Buddhism, guilt-based religious introjection might be considerably less powerful and less harmful. Although Buddhism clearly suggests observance of fairly specific and often demanding practices, the motive for adopting these practices is that they are expected to minimize suffering and are essentially very useful and sensible (e.g., Rahula, 1974). Most important, there is no reliance on the dictum of a divine authority, and in many Buddhist schools students are invited to examine for themselves whether the recommended practices are good and useful (e.g., Bechert & Gombrich, 1991). Of course there are often admired teachers and teachings and an influential community of practitioners (“Sangha”), which may nevertheless promote introjected internalization, but this may still be less powerful and less harmful given its earthly nature. The perceptions of sin and guilt in Hindu practices also appears to be quite different than that of the Judeo-Christian tradition, perhaps also resulting in less harmful effects of introjection (e.g., Cush, Robinson, & York, 2008).

Further research may examine if the consequences and antecedents of religious introjection in the case of Buddhism (and other non-Monotheistic religions such as Hinduism) are similar to those found in Christianity and Judaism. Cross-cultural research on the correlates of introjected internalization in domains other than religion indicates that there is some evidence that introjection has similar correlates in a number of very different cultures (e.g., Assor et al., 2009; Deci, Assor, Keren-Pariente, & Roth, 2007; Vansteenkiste et al., 2005). However, it is possible that although the correlation pattern of religions introjection in Buddhist denominations would be similar to the Christian pattern, it might also be weaker, resulting in less negative effects of introjection.

Some practical implications for family relationships may be derived from this study. First, the findings highlight the importance of combining BAS with parental modelling that demonstrates the intrinsic merit of the religious behaviors and values parents wish to transmit. Such modelling can help adolescents feel that they truly wish to endorse the religious principles and behaviors valued by their parents. Second, the moderating effect of parental warmth can shed light on a potential risk, at least for the Italian families, of confusing the warmth given to children with the CR practice. Thus, it appears important to promote parents' capacity to give warmth and affection without making their affection contingent on compliance with their religious expectations.

The present studies of course have several limitations. First, all the variables examined in this study were assessed via adolescents' self-reports. Although past research did support the validity of adolescents' reports of the parenting practices examined in this study (Assor et al., 2007; Roth & Assor, 2012; Roth et al., 2009), future research may need to rely on additional informants. Second, the lack of longitudinal design precludes inferences about likely causal relations; therefore, future research may also need to use longitudinal designs. Third, the small number of items of the scale assessing IVD did not allow us to separate between a subscale assessing simple modelling (demonstrating the valued behavior) and a subscale assessing modelling that is accompanied by a sense of intrinsic satisfaction. A further limitation of the present study is that the study involved youth affiliated with one religion (Catholicism) in one country (Italy). Future studies would have to examine the relations found in the present research in other denominations, and a variety of countries and cultures.

Overall, the findings highlight the importance of the two specific religion-focused socializing practices of CR and IVD, as well as the more basic practice of autonomy support. Future research may examine how these practices affect the trajectory of religious internalization and behavior as youth move from adolescence to adulthood, perhaps trying to disentangle the relative influence of family versus group-related practices at different life stages.

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