

European Network of Research on Religion, Spirituality and Health

Newsletter April 2006

Editorial

Dear colleagues, dear friends

First of all we would like to thank you for all your encouraging feedbacks to our first Newsletter. The attempt to establish a European Network of Research on Religion, Spirituality and Health seems to fit your interest. In a short time we gathered nearly one hundred addresses from colleagues in about twenty countries, many from Switzerland and Germany, quite a number from the Netherlands and Great Britain, only few from Austria (!), none from France, Italy and Spain. There seems to be language, cultural or other barriers.

We are happy to present the second Newsletter of the European Network of Research on Religion, Spirituality and Health and would like to thank the authors for their contributions. We specially thank Prof. Harold Koenig (from the Duke University, NC/USA) for his article on the importance of having a research network. This seems to be a crucial point in maintaining motivation, overcoming resistance and having an impact in the field.

René Hefti, M.D.

Topic

Importance of Having a Network of Researchers on Religion, Spirituality and Health

Since 1996, over 8,450 articles and research studies on religion, spirituality and mental health have appeared in literature (based on a search of the terms "religion" and "spirituality" using PsycINFO on 10/22/05). Compare this to the 11,000 total articles

that could be identified prior to 1996. Thus, nearly as much attention has been paid this area in less than 10 years as was paid during the 190-year period between 1806 and 1995. And this does not include many articles and studies on religion, spirituality and physical health. Because of such a rapid growth of academic activity, we think the field of spirituality and health is on the verge of becoming mainstream. In order to sustain such momentum, however, the field needs to develop a network of researchers, scholars and practitioners in spirituality and health in order to stimulate dialogue, collaboration, and relationship building.

Although there have been some attempts to create such synergies in the United States under the leadership of the late David B. Larson, no such network of scholars exists today either in the United States, Europe or elsewhere in the world. Given the rapid advances in spirituality and health research and an increasing theological interest in this discussion, many junior researchers, a growing number of senior investigators, and a few theologians have begun to develop academic careers in this area. These people, however, typically have little support at their home institutions, since spirituality and health research continues to be undervalued in most academic settings and there are few places that have a critical mass of like-minded researchers and theologians who are willing to work together collaboratively. Instead, researchers are operating in small isolated pockets, struggling alone in academic departments, trying to stay motivated and focused despite widespread resistance among their peers. Tremendous personal motivation is required to thrive in such an atmosphere, and few young researchers have the context and support to sustain them.

Evidence of need for a research network can be seen in the excitement and hunger of

researchers who have come to our research seminars over the past two summers (70 to 80 researchers each summer) in the United States and recently in Switzerland. These people come from all over the world seeking to develop a research career and acquire the methodological sophistication, political knowledge, and professional relationships to advance in this area. When given the opportunity to meet and communicate in person with other like-minded investigators, researchers have shown renewed vision and motivation.

A much broader network of researchers, theologians, and clinicians might include a membership society with dues, a newsletter providing information on recent research and scholarly activities, and a yearly conference where researchers can meet, present and discuss their research. This will require financial support, careful planning and leadership, as well as sustained effort and cooperation. This is both possible and necessary, although will not be easy.

Harold G. Koenig, M.D.
koenig@geri.duke.edu.

Forum

The "Structure-of-Religiosity-Test"

The "Structure-of-Religiosity-Test" (S-R-T) is a comprehensive test designed for multidimensional and comparative interreligious research in the field of religion as well as for practical use in psychotherapy. It was developed in a three-year research program, which was directed by Dr. Stefan Huber and fully funded by the Volkswagenstiftung. The basic structure of the S-R-T is defined by Glock's five dimensions of religiosity (Stark & Glock, 1968; Huber, 1996): The intellectual, ideological, devotional, experien-

		Main factors of religiosity	
		Centrality scales (→ efficacy)	Content scales (→ direction)
Basic dimensions of religiosity	Intellect	(2 [or 3] general items for the centrality scale)	Quest: religious reflexivity (3 items), Single items for: meaning of life, existential question, religious search
	Ideology	(2 [or 3] general items for the centrality scale)	
	Devotion	(2 [or 3] general items for the centrality scale)	Images of God: atheistic, apersonal, personal Fundamentalism: (12 items; 4 components: social strength, religious exclusivism, moral dualism, religious pluralism[-]) Resource contents: Positive Emotions towards God (9 items); Scales for specific emotions: Forgiveness (5 items); Gratitude (2 items); Revering (4 items); Being protected (4 items); Religious Coping: Prayer for help (7 items) Experience of God's help (5 items)
	Experience	(2 [or 3] general items for the centrality scale)	
	Ritual (public)	(2 [or 3] general items for the centrality scale)	Strain contents: Negative Emotions towards God (7 items); Scales for specific emotions: Fear (9 items); Quarrel (6 items); Guilt (5 items); Parish as a social resource (5 items)

Table 1: Scales of the Structure-of-Religiosity-Test in overview

tial dimension and the dimension of public religious practice (see the rows in table 1). According to the new multidimensional model for the measurement of religiosity by Huber (2003), the measurement of these dimensions differentiates between centrality and content of religiosity (see the dark and light blue columns in table 1).

The concept of centrality is related to the efficacy of religion. The more central religion is, the greater is its impact on the experience and behaviour of a person. The Centrality Scale consists of 10 (or 15) items. Each of the 5 dimensions of Glock are operationalized through 2 (or 3) items, which measure the intensity of these dimensions on a very general level (see the dark blue column in table 1).

The concept of content is related to the direction of religion. Religious contents can be beliefs, schemas, styles, and orientations. They are always related to a certain direction that religion leads a person into. For instance, it can be assumed that the belief in a merciful and forgiving God leads a person into another direction as the belief in a wrathful and punishing God. The S-R-T comprises 24 scales and single-item measures for a variety of contents of religiosity (see the light blue column in table 1).

The Centrality Scale is applied since 1999. It is validated in numerous studies with about 5000 respondents. A first review is given by Huber (2004). The content scales are applied since 2003. They are validated in a few studies with about 2000 respondents from different religions (Christianity [n=1300], Islam [n=300], and Bahai [n=450]). Culturally adapted versions of S-R-T-Scales are available in Arab, in Czech, in Dutch,

in English, in French, in German, in Indonesian, in Italian, in Polish, in Russian, in Spanish and in Turkish. They are applicable for multicultural and inter-religious comparisons. A software for the elicitation, the analysis, and the depiction of S-R-T-data is in preparation.

Dr. Stefan Huber
stefan.huber@relpsych.de

In the Forum of the Newsletter you have the opportunity to deliver information, resources, requests or open questions.

Announcements and events

Spiritualität und Gesundheit. Interdisziplinäres Symposium

May 5, 2006

University Hospital Basel.
Organisation: David Plüss, Assistent Professor for practical Theology
pages.unibas.ch/theologie/indexNews.html

La variété des fonctions psychologiques du religieux. 100 ans après la traduction des Varieties de William James

May 12-13, 2006

University Lausanne.
Organisation: Pierre-Yves Brandt, Section des Sciences des religions, Décanat Théologie; 1015 Lausanne

Contact: Claude-Alexandre Fournier, Décanat Théologie, 1015 Lausanne, www.unil.ch/theol, E-Mail: claud alexandre.fournier@unil.ch.

Religiose Begleitung im Alter – Seelsorgerliche und gerontologische Aspekte

May 20, 2006

University Zürich

Organisation: Forum Neumünster, Theologische Fakultät und Zentrum für Gerontopsychologie der Universität Zürich

Contact: Forum Neumünster, Yvonne Müller: forum@diakoniewerk-neumuenster.ch
www.diakoniewerk-neumuenster.ch

The 2006 Conference of the International Association for the Psychology of Religion

August 27-31, 2006

Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium
Contact: Prof. Dr. Dirk Hutsebaut: dirk.hutsebaut@psy.kuleuven.be (regarding accommodation), Dr. Sebastian Murken: iapr2006@gmx.de (regarding the scientific program)
www.iapr.de/conference2006.htm

Impressum

This Newsletter will be published quarterly by the Research Institute of Spirituality and Health, Langenthal, Switzerland.

Editorial board: René Hefti, Franz Fischer, Maria Teschner.

Research Institute for Spirituality and Health
Weissensteinstrasse 30
CH-4900 Langenthal
Switzerland
Tel. +41 (62) 919 22 11
Fax +41 (62) 919 22 00
info@rish.ch
www.rish.ch