
HEALTHY QUESTING AND MATURE RELIGIOUS REFLECTION: CRITIQUE, ANTECEDENTS, AND RELEVANCE OF ATTACHMENT THEORY?

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Gordon Allport (1950) suggested that a willingness to reflect upon and question one's beliefs was a component of mature religiosity. Subsequently, the construct and measurement of quest was developed by Batson and colleagues. There has been much helpful research based on the Batson Quest Scale but also debate surrounding the psychometric properties of the scale, and attempts to develop other questing measures. However, there has been little attempt to develop a broad, theoretically based understanding of mature religious reflection, especially in view of the plurality of religions in the global context. This paper (1) analyses the nature and limitations of Batson's quest construct; (2) examines the need for a broader understanding of religious reflection in a pluralistic religious context; (3) justifies a developmental perspective based in attachment theory for an understanding of defensive and non-defensive religious reflection; and (4) presents some research implications of a developmental attachment-questing perspective.

Religious maturity is an important current topic for both theological anthropology and theories of personality. (e.g., Roberts & Talbot, 1997; Shults, 2003). There has been considerable research and discussion concerning the nature of mature religiosity, including the contribution of religious reflection and questioning. On the one hand, questioning may imply adolescent doubt and insecurity, but on the other it may be a necessary precondition for deeper faith and integrated beliefs characteristic of religious maturity (Kojetin, McIntosh,

Bridges, & Spilka, 1987). This paper neither develops new theory, nor examines new empirical evidence. However, the aim is to contribute to future research into mature religiosity by reviewing research and analysis related to religious questioning and suggesting a theoretical approach that might best distinguish helpful and unhelpful modes of questing. It is argued that by examining questing in light of attachment theory more productive research may be conducted at the interface of psychology and theology. The article concludes with some suggestions for future research into questing as framed by attachment theory.

As a psychologist interested in cognitive and affective aspects of human personality Allport (1950), understood religious reflection to be an aspect of mature religiosity. His classical work suggested that there were six components of mature religion: (1) a complex but differentiated religious sentiment; (2) emancipation from the domination of self-interested motives; (3) consistent morality; (4) a comprehensive, unifying articulated philosophy of life; (5) a means of integrating the personality; and (6) provision of a working hypothesis for action. Moreover, two specific processes were involved in formulating a mature religious mindset: developing a sincere, devout religious commitment and willingness to question and reflect on one's current beliefs. Hence, reflecting on one's religious beliefs, through an active process of thinking, questioning, contemplating, and searching comprises a major orientation towards religious maturity. Allport conceptualized immature religion as unreflective, and only partly integrated within the personality. In contrast, people having a mature religious sentiment could locate themselves within a broader meaning context, and

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thereby critically evaluate their beliefs and behaviors. Mature religious thinking is not static, but constitutes a dynamic and comprehensive integration of religious belief within the personality. Hence, Allport suggested that ongoing religious reflection is central to mature religiosity.

Despite locating religious reflection as central to the concept of mature religiosity, Allport did not specifically explicate the nature, structure and measurement of religious reflection. Instead, Allport (1966) focused on cognitively-based orientations towards religious commitment, and in doing so contrasted intrinsically oriented believers who had developed a sincere, interiorized and mature faith with extrinsically oriented believers who exhibited an exteriorized, consensual, utilitarian and immature faith where religion is used to gain some external end (e.g., status or social support). These religious orientations were operationalized in the Religious Orientation Scale (Allport & Ross, 1967). Since these orientations do not include a specific conceptualization and measurement of religious reflection, Batson, Schoenrade and Ventis (1993) argued that,

compared with the concept of mature religion, there seems to be less emphasis in the notion of intrinsic religion on flexibility, skepticism, and resistance to absolutist thinking, and more [emphasis] on religion as a master motive that is internalized and followed fully. (p.161)

ATTEMPTS TO MEASURE RELIGIOUS REFLECTION (1) BATSON'S QUEST

Batson's concept of a questing orientation arose as a direct response to the apparent lack of emphasis on reflection as a mode of religiosity in Allport's (1950) original conceptualizations. Initial formulations of quest as a religious orientation associated with religious maturity focused on the ongoing process of questioning one's faith. Batson and Ventis (1982) argued that intrinsic religiosity overemphasized conformity and commitment as aspects of mature religion, and suggested quest to be a superior operationalization of religious maturity as it emphasizes the value of doubt, questions, and the religious 'search' over the religious 'destination'. Batson, Naifeh, and Pate (1978) described the quest orientation as one in which "religion is an open-ended process of pursuing ultimate questions more than ultimate answers" (p. 40). Religion itself is defined in cognitive-behavioral terms as a functional response to existential issues (Batson et al., 1993). Further, questing is described as,

An approach that involves honestly facing existential questions in all their complexity, while at the same time resisting clear-cut, pat answers. An individual who approaches religion in this way recognizes that he or she does not know, and probably will never know, the final truth (p.166).

In short, Batson and his colleagues view cognitive skepticism as the central component of mature religiosity.

Although Batson and colleagues developed initial and revised measures of religious questing (Batson, 1976; Batson & Ventis, 1982; Batson & Schoenrade, 1991a,b) there has been disagreement concerning the validity and dimensionality of the construct. On the issue of validity, Donahue (1985) argued that the Quest Scale was better considered as a measure of religious conflict, or agnosticism. Similarly, Kojetin, McIntosh, Bridges and Spilka (1987) suggested that Quest measures religious conflict and stress rather than an open-minded searching for truth. In response, Batson and Schoenrade (1991a) reported that Quest scores correlated as predicted (at moderate levels) with religious doubt and conflict, but argued that these correlations do not support identity between questing and religious doubts. However, there was no attempt to show how quest scores also related to openness to existential questions and openness to change.

Batson and Schoenrade (1991b) also failed to examine the construct validity of their three proposed sub-dimensions of questing. In fact, despite items being developed from the three categories (readiness to face existential questions, viewing religious doubt as positive, and openness to change), the authors claim that the Quest Scale is a unified measure. The authors report results of an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) to support their hypothesis of unidimensionality. However, EFAs (using principal components analyses in particular) capitalize on the mathematical extraction of a large common factor in all data sets. Thus, failure to find three strong factors via EFA as anticipated does not confirm the unidimensionality of the measure. Moreover, there is evidence for the multidimensionality of questing. Watson, Morris, and Hood (1989) argued that the clear independence of quest and intrinsic religiousness may be a statistical artifact that arises from the multidimensionality of the Quest scale. Specifically, Watson et al. (1989) suggested that the Quest scale contains polarizing dimensions that in a single scale cancel out any relationship between quest and intrinsic religiosity. Futterman, Dillon, Garand and Haugh

(1999) were able to demonstrate this effect empirically where the questioning items of the Quest scale were positively correlated with intrinsic measures ($r = .17$), whereas the doubting items were negatively correlated with intrinsic measures ($r = -.19$)—thereby “cancelling each other out” and resulting in an overall independence of the Quest scale and intrinsic religiousness. Furthermore, Beck, Baker, Robbins and Dow (2001) separately measured the questing dimensions of openness to change and tentativeness and found each dimension displayed different relationships with various religious variables. Taken together, these studies strongly support the multidimensionality of questing.

Apart from its potentially underestimated multidimensionality, the validity of Quest as a *religious* measure has also been raised. Questing, for example, has been found to correlate inversely with religious interest (Watson, Morris, Hood, Milliron, & Stutz, 1998), hence implying that those high on questing reject a religious search for meaning in order to pursue a nonreligious version of this search. Those scoring high on the intrinsic orientation, on the other hand, showed the greatest religious interest, compared with those scoring high on extrinsic and quest orientations. Furthermore, Watson, et al. (1998) analyzed responses to Quest items by people having an intrinsic orientation and found that two-thirds of the Quest scale items were viewed as antireligious. Again, this indicates that questing may reflect an agnostic, or anti-religious style. In a later study, Simpson, Newman, and Fuqua (2004) performed a principal components analysis of the following combined measures of spirituality: the Spiritual Well-Being Scale (Paloutzian & Ellison, 1982), the Intrinsic-Extrinsic Revised Scale (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989), the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (Hall & Edwards, 1996) and the Quest Scale. Whereas the analysis revealed a three factor solution for these scales, it also found that the Quest scale had very low communality with the three factor solution. This result indicates that Quest measures a construct that is different from other known forms of religiosity and spirituality, thus raising doubt over whether Quest is actually measuring a religious construct at all.

Whether or not Quest actually measures a religious construct, its validity as a component of *mature* religiosity has also been challenged. Kristensen, Pedersen, and Williams (2001) attempted to determine whether the intrinsic or quest orien-

tation is more closely related to religious maturity by analyzing affective, conative, and cognitive components of religious belief. People holding a “high ends” (intrinsic) orientation were found to be more likely to act upon their religious beliefs and feelings than questers, thereby implying that the traditional description of the intrinsic orientation is more strongly associated with religious maturity than questing. Similarly, findings from research into religious orientations amongst a Muslim sample (Khan, Watson & Habib, 2005) suggest that questing may be unrelated to the psychologically adaptive qualities of emotional empathy and perspective taking, qualities that would suggest psycho-spiritual maturity. Here again, intrinsic religiosity was positively related to both forms of psychological maturity, suggesting that intrinsic religiosity but not questing is related to psycho-spiritual maturity. Finally, Watson, Howard, Hood and Morris (1988) found that Quest scores declined as age increased. Hence, they suggested that questing may be a less mature form of religion due to the fact that Quest scores decrease as individuals mature and grow older. In response, Batson and Schoenrade (1991b) countered with data suggesting stability of Quest scores, but their reference was to unpublished material that does not constitute a decisive refutation.

Mature religiosity should be associated with attitudes and behaviors consistent with core religious ideals. If mature religiosity (or its core components such as questing) is psychologically adaptive, it should not be associated with psychological disorders. Questing has been associated with principled moral reasoning, empathic helping, and low levels of racial and sexual prejudice (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991a; Batson, Schoenrade & Ventis, 1993). However, it is not an indicator of universal compassion (Goldfried & Miner, 2002) and high questing does not result in boundless peace and tranquility (Genia, 1996). Quest has been associated with identity confusion rather than attainment of an integrated identity (Watson, Morris, Hood, Milliron & Stutz, 1998). These results do not uniformly imply that questing is a mature form of religiosity. Nonetheless, the discussion thus far has relied upon the conceptualization and measurement of quest proposed by Batson and colleagues (1993). An important question is whether alternative measures of questing would clarify the construct and related theory.

ATTEMPTS TO MEASURE RELIGIOUS REFLECTION (2) OTHER QUEST SCALES

After criticizing an early 6 item Batson Quest measure, Altemeyer and Hunsberger (1992) developed a 16 item 'balanced' scale that included reverse scored items covering the opposite of questing. Factor analysis of items from all of the scales used in their study revealed that the Balanced Quest Scale items correlated better with each other than with items from other scales, although the possible dimensionality of their Balanced Quest measure was not reported. Another potential problem with the Balanced Quest measure is its high negative correlation ($r = -.79$) with religious fundamentalism, giving rise to the concern that it might represent an 'anti-fundamentalism' measure.

More recently, Beck and Jessup (2004) developed the Multidimensional Quest Orientation Scale (MQOS). Nine dimensions of questing were identified (five based on descriptions by Batson, and four others) in an attempt to sample the whole domain of questing. This is a helpful attempt to address the multidimensionality of questing, but with some significant remaining problems. First, it does not replicate Batson's three aspects of questing, making it difficult to compare findings from the MQOS with previous research into questing. Second, the nine proposed dimensions do not have theoretical justification: it is not clear how the presumed dimensions relate to any putative global conceptualization of questing. Third, the method of establishing the nine dimensions (a scree plot based on principal components factor analysis of subscale totals) does not necessarily confirm the nine dimensions as claimed: replication is required using confirmatory factor analysis with a larger sample such that items can be effectively analyzed in the context of a defined a-priori factor structure.

In brief, it is obvious that there are both conceptual and psychometric problems with the three main questing scales thus far developed to measure religious reflection as a component of religious maturity. These measures do not clearly operationalize Allport's (1950) construct of reflection as an aspect of religious maturity, nor do they give clear theoretical reasons for the dimensions chosen to represent religious reflection. Also, there is a lack of clear support for the proposed dimensionality of both (supposedly) unidimensional and multidimensional measures of questing. Furthermore, all instruments have been developed within Judeo-Christian contexts and,

hence, will almost certainly require substantial modification if they are to be used validly and reliably with non-Christian populations.

UNDERSTANDING QUESTING IN PLURALISTIC RELIGIOUS CONTEXTS

Batson's construct and associated measures of quest developed within the Judeo-Christian context. It was early recognized that the social-religious context, or ideological surround, would impact the levels of questing in a population. Studies of US seminary students training for Presbyterian ministry showed decreases in levels of questing and increases in religious orthodoxy over the period of 1970 to 1984, attributed to the ending of intense social and political turmoil of the 1960s (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991a). However, more recent work has considered how secularization and pluralism might impact the construct of quest and its measurement. Such work recognizes that questing itself is multidimensional and requires measures that are sensitive to culture and ideology.

Research using non-Christian samples in countries other than the United States suggests that a more nuanced theory of questing is needed. A study of religious quest in a Pakistani Muslim sample found different patterns of responses in comparison with previous work using American British and Iranian samples (Kahn, Watson & Habib, 2005). Quest was associated with intrinsic and extrinsic-social orientations and personal distress, but was unrelated to a measure of Muslim commitment to religion. In their discussion, the authors noted that the quest motivation "reflected an at least somewhat maladaptive motivation that was not well integrated into the Pakistani Muslim faith" (p.58). Similarly, responses to Batson's Quest Scale by Australian Muslims demonstrated poor reliability and poor fit in statistical modeling, suggesting a similar lack of integration within respondents' religiosity (Dover, Miner, & Dowson, 2007). On the other hand, a more religiously relevant measure of Islamic religious reflection yielded coherent and culturally interpretable findings concerning Australian Muslims. In contrast to the Quest Scale that probes one's skeptical stance to all religious beliefs, the Islamic Religious Reflection Scale investigates reflection within the Muslim faith, such that beliefs are scrutinized from a position of religious identification. Clearly, these Muslim studies point to the need for better measurement and theoretical understanding of questing in non-western cultures with non-Christian belief systems.

Further, they raise questions about the nature and measurement of religious questioning from insider and outsider perspectives.

Both studies of Pakistani and Australian Muslims refer to secularizing processes impacting quest. Secularization reduces the legitimacy of religious worldviews (Chaves, 1994) and promotes a plethora of private religious beliefs (Luckmann, 1967). For the Pakistani Muslims in a highly religious society (and possibly in reaction against global secularization) it was suggested that questing was not strongly associated with other religious dimensions because there were fewer immediate challenges to traditional religious belief (Kahn et al., 2005). In contrast, Australian Muslims live in a highly secular, privatized society (Bouma, 2006) but there is little scope for dissension from the conservative Muslim orthodoxy (Rozario, 1998). Hence, it is harder for Australian Muslims to identify with their religious and cultural heritage whilst holding to a highly questioning stance. The different social contexts of Pakistani and Australian Muslims (largely non-secularized and secularized, respectively) nonetheless appear to produce a broadly similar *psychological* orientation of holding to relatively orthodox beliefs in an intrinsic or extrinsic but non-questing manner. The measurement of questing in such contexts of reacting to secularization would require understanding of the meaning of the different dimensions of quest for the local situation, together with appreciation of interactions of quest with intrinsic and extrinsic orientations and orthodoxy of belief.

Outcomes of Questing

Although earlier studies examined social attitudes, such as prejudice, as outcomes of questing (Batson et al., 1978; Batson et al., 1993), recent studies of quest dimensions have placed more emphasis on outcomes related to psychological well being (Beck, 2006; Beck, Baker, Robbins, & Dow, 2001; Beck & Jessup, 2004; Hunsberger, Pratt, & Pancer, 2002). These later studies mark a change from emphasizing cognitive aspects and outcomes of quest to issues of affect. However, findings must be considered in light of operational definitions, the broader context of religious pluralism and, as discussed above, the interaction of other religious orientations, and beliefs.

The questing dimension of doubt was weakly and inconsistently linked to higher distress but did not add to the prediction of lowered adjustment after a

two year period in a study of high school students (Hunsberger et al., 2002). On the other hand, tentativeness (defined as experiencing doubt with respect to religious issues, in the sense that one's beliefs might be incomplete or mistaken, and emphasizing religious questions) was positively associated with existential well-being in a Christian college sample and unrelated to religious well-being (Beck et al., 2001). A later study found tentativeness to be unrelated to both sub-scales of spiritual well-being (Beck & Jessup, 2004). The slightly negative findings of the Hunsberger et al. (2002) study may relate to its use of questions reflecting the content of doubt (such as doubts about the existence of God, infallibility of scriptures etc.) rather than a style that accepts doubts, as in the Beck et al. (2001) study. Together, these studies suggest that the doubting component of quest may not have a deleterious effect on youth. It is possible that the capacity to entertain doubt is functional in a context of religious pluralism, although further research examining doubt in the context of other religious and personality variables is needed.

On the other hand, the quest dimension of change (defined as valuing change of beliefs and using religious reflection) was associated overall with lower levels of spiritual well-being, comprising both religious and existential well-being (Beck et al., 2001; see also Beck & Jessup, 2004). These results point to the utility of studying the separate dimensions of quest. However, a key finding was that the effect of change depended on the level of intrinsic religious orientation: in the presence of high intrinsic levels change had little effect on well-being, but when intrinsic levels were low then high change led to decreased spiritual well-being (Beck et al., 2001). Hence, individuals whose religious faith is central to their lives appear to be able to hold a reflective stance without deleterious effects on their psychological health.

Thus far, some evidence concerning the nature of quest as a form of mature religiosity has been examined. Some aspects of questing, such as tentativeness and change, do not appear strongly related to a sense of well-being that might be expected to accompany mature faith (Beck et al., 2001) and the degree to which quest is associated with personal religious integration (Khan et al., 2005; Dover et al., 2007) and a coherent identity (Watson et al., 1998) is debatable. If quest is a component of mature religiosity it should not be antithetical to the intrinsic orientation that depicts one who has formed a sincere, devout religious commitment (Allport, 1950).

Research finding a significant negative association between quest and intrinsic orientations casts doubt on the 'mature religion' claim (Watson et al., 1998.). Further, the utility of high levels of quest for psychological well-being appears to depend upon concurrent high levels of intrinsic commitment (Beck et al., 2001) suggesting that any useful theory of quest must include accounts of interactions with related religious orientations.

It has also been argued that productive research into mature religiosity should include questing because of its acknowledged theoretical relevance in the writings of Gordon Allport (1950,1966). Care should be taken in choosing a measure of quest. The Batson Interactional Quest Scale has been used since 1976 but psychometric problems relate to its reliability as a measure of the different dimensions of questing and its validity as a measure of mature religious questioning. More recent measures of quest have either unknown or unjustified dimensions. New measures of religious reflection lack established psychometric properties, but draw attention to the social and cultural context of questing, including secularization. Finally, studies of the psychological outcomes of questing and mature religious reflection point to the need to examine interactions of quest with other religious styles, such as intrinsic orientation. In the next sections the focus will shift to the precursors of questing, and the potential use of attachment theory as a developmental framework for the study of quest.

Antecedents of Questing

Originally, the antecedents of religious questing were held to be general social influences on the development of religious beliefs, and religious experiences (particularly those associated with existential issues and critical life events) that change cognitive structures (Batson et al., 1993). Hence, those displaying high levels of quest were hypothesized to have experienced life crises and as a result, developed more complex cognitive structures with respect to religion. In contrast, it was suggested that those who scored high on the intrinsic orientation used orthodoxy as a source of answers to existential crises and failed to develop complex religious schema. Research supports the view that those high in religious orthodoxy have a selective decrease in cognitive complexity for religious, but not for secular issues (Pancer, Jackson, Hunsberger, Pratt & Lea, 1995). However, Batson and colleagues (1993) did

not suggest why some people might be more likely to respond to crises in ways that might give immediate relief (orthodox answers) as opposed to the struggle to embrace complexity.

In response to this theoretical gap, Burris, Jackson, Tarpley and Smith (1996) reported research that suggested three broad pathways to questing. One is a socialization model, where people are trained to use critical, objective styles of thinking. The second is a direct stress model in which trauma precipitates increased questing. A third model includes diathesis, where a predisposition towards critical and objective thought, or a predisposition towards self-directed coping because of social isolation, interacts with traumatic experiences to produce a questing style. However, Krauss and Flaherty (2001) pointed out that the research design confounded the effects of trauma and contradiction in a simulated condition of tragedy. Their amendment of the Burris et al. (1996) study included separate tragedy and religious contradiction conditions; within the tragedy condition (a newspaper article on the death of an infant) there was a religiously salient version inviting a cognitive response to the issue of trust in God when tragedy occurs, and a non-religious version inviting an emotional response of empathy. Results supported the direct stress model, that exposure to tragedy directly impacts quest levels, but not exposure to religious contradictions. The importance of emotion in the response to tragedy was underscored by a significant association between less positive mood following the experimental manipulation and increases in quest scores (Krauss & Flaherty, 2001).

Although Batson and colleagues (1993) originally hypothesized that cognitive variables such as cognitive complexity would be important mediators of socialization and life experiences on questing, later research suggests that emotional variables might be more important in mediating the effects of life trauma on quest. However, it is not clear exactly how and why negative mood, empathy and other emotionally related variables found to be associated with questing (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991a; Batson et al., 1993) might operate. The Krauss and Flaherty (2001) study only tested a contrast between cognitive and emotional antecedents of quest, and did not include a diathesis condition such as a measure of self-chosen isolation from social groups. It used the Batson and Schoenrade (1991b) Quest Scale and could not examine different dimensions of questing. Nonetheless, it included measures of

intrinsic and extrinsic orientation, and it appeared that both initial higher levels of questing and increased questing were related to low initial intrinsic orientation. Perhaps, as Krauss and Flaherty (2001) suggest, those low in intrinsic orientation were open to questioning because they were less defensive, using less self-deception and impression management. Such an explanation is consistent with Beck's (2006) finding that religiously defensive people who endorse beliefs in special divine protection, special insight, divine solicitousness, special destiny and denial of randomness score lower on Batson's Quest Scale, although some of these qualities are characteristic of religious fundamentalism (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992). Perhaps the influence of religious fundamentalism on defensiveness should first be controlled before considering the relationship between intrinsic religiosity and defensiveness. In sum, the findings raise questions about the role of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural defences against negative mood in the antecedents of questing.

A Developmental Framework for the Antecedents of Quest

Understanding more fully the antecedents of religious questing requires a broad theoretical framework that can encompass the development of cognitive and affective styles, personal identity, religious orientations and religious beliefs that are used in dealing with life trauma. In addition, the ideological surround of religion in societies having different degrees of secularization must be considered. The importance of developmental and social sensitivity for understanding quest is emphasized by Watson et al. (1998,): "Each personal quest for meaning, therefore, necessarily unfolds as the social construction of self-identity with an ideological surround" (p.153). Presently lacking in theories of questing is a developmental framework that can incorporate cognitive-affective elements of relevance to identity formation.

A powerful approach that has promise for grounding quest in cognitive-affective development is attachment theory. Attachment theory posits that an infant's developmental experiences with a caregiver are laid down in cognitive-affective representations, or internal working models, that guide subsequent expectations about attachment figures and their own responses in attachment relationships throughout the lifespan (Bowlby, 1969). Internal working models comprise representations of oneself as worthy

of support and care in stressful situations, and of the other as responsive and available to provide protection (Bowlby 1969; Bretherton, 1987; Collins & Read, 1994; Main, Kaplan, & Cassidy, 1985).

Attachment representations have been related to many of the antecedents and outcomes of questing discussed above, including cognitive competence and complexity, the regulation of negative emotion in the context of severe stress, and self consistency. In a review of studies of cognitive competence in childhood and adolescence, Leve, Pears and Fisher (2002) argued that secure attachment experiences provide a basis for cognitive competence by means of parental scaffolding, where parents give structure and guidance to the child in their problem solving. Further, secure attachment is related to cognitive complexity in adolescence, as measured by the attainment of principled moral reasoning (Van Ijzendoorn & Zwart-Woudstra, 1995). It was argued that secure attachment relationships provide a context of low anxiety in which the child or adolescent may freely explore the world and develop a sense of basic trust in their own judgment. These findings suggest that secure human attachments might allow for the development of cognitive complexity that can be exercised through questing in times of life crisis.

A core function of attachment relationships is the regulation of emotion (Schore, 2003). In the second year of life, as the caregiver takes on more of a socializing role, the child struggles to moderate the emotional effects of social teaching, experienced as shame. Initially, the caregiver reduces high arousal through mutual gaze as a means of restoring positive affect, thus teaching that the transition from negative to positive arousal can be occasioned by such 'interactive repair'. The interaction is internalized as an 'affect regulating symbolic (as opposed to earlier presymbolic) interactive representation' (Schore, 2003, p.20). The emotional regulating effect of secure attachment explains why some individuals are able to confront affectively charged life events in all their complexity and work towards a full and coherent explanation of distressing situations.

By extension of the emotion-regulating function, secure attachment can promote self consistency. According to Reimer (2005,): "Shame affectively mediates the child's ability to integrate moral reasoning with self in a manner that enhances self-consistency" (p.264). Through positive shaming (stemming from a secure attachment bond), representations of the other as able to provide regulation are linked

with representations of the self as able to regulate emotion in a manner consistent with 'good' moral choices. Subsequently, moral situations similar to those that occasioned initial socialization through shaming evoke reduced anxiety and avoidance, thus allowing for more consistent expression and metacognition of the moral self. In this way, secure attachment is posited to provide emotional regulation of shame and hence allows for development of a consistent sense of identity as a 'good' person. Such self consistency is important if questing is a relatively enduring orientation, or cognitive style.

From the above discussion of the antecedents of questing, it is clear that secure attachment relationships may allow for healthy questing as an ongoing style and as a response to particular life crises. However, attachment theory can also suggest reasons for the development of idiosyncratic, non-affiliated and solitary forms of religion that have been associated with questing (Burris et al., 1996). The quality of care-giving by an adult can prompt associated attachment behaviours in children; in particular, parents who consistently rebuff a child seeking help and comfort may engender an anxious-avoidant attachment style in their child, where the child becomes emotionally avoidant and self contained (Ainsworth, 1972, 1973; Bowlby, 1988; Sroufe & Waters, 1977). Hence, less adaptive parenting styles may promote anxious-avoidant attachment styles in their children, leaving them vulnerable in life crises: "Because they lack both the emotional and the consensual support for world-view maintenance that social groups can provide (see Fisher & Fisher, 1993), self directed attempts to resolve ensuing existential conflicts— that is, questing—may be the only recourse" (Burris et al., 1996, p.1075).

The foregoing argument suggests that security of human attachment relationships may be foundational for the development of a questing style that is associated with variations in cognitive complexity, affect regulation, self consistency, and social-emotional isolation. However, it does not address the religious quality of questing. The argument, then, must be extended to consider the possible effects of attachment to God upon a questing orientation.

Within different social contexts people develop cognitive-affective schemas or internal working models for processing material relating to self and other, schemas that encapsulate one's sense of self and act as a filter for religious and other beliefs (Kirkpatrick, 1992). There are empirical and theological reasons to suggest that God acts as an attachment figure for

religious individuals (Kirkpatrick, 1992, 1998; Miner, 2007). People who have a secure attachment style, with positive internal working models of self and others, have a stronger sense of a loving God than those with preoccupied and fearful styles (Kirkpatrick and Shaver, 1992). Further, there is strong evidence of a correspondence between secure attachment to parents or romantic partners and secure attachment to God, together with conflicting evidence regarding the compensatory effects of attachment to God for insecure human attachments (Brokaw & Edwards, 1994; Granqvist, 1998; Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999; Hall & Brokaw, 1995; Hall, Brokaw, Edwards, & Pike, 1998; Kirkpatrick, 1997; McDonald, Beck, Allison, & Norsworthy, 2005). There is also preliminary evidence of positive religious correlates of secure attachment to others and God, consistent with the development of spiritual maturity. Security of adult attachment relationships is associated with higher levels of Faith Maturity in a sample of seminary students (TenElshof & Furrow, 2000). In addition, Hall (2004) draws upon attachment theory and object relations theory to argue that spiritual maturity, or realized religion, depends upon implicit and emotionally laden experiences of relationship with God and others. Theory and research related to attachment to God thus provide an important explanatory framework for styles and qualities associated with religious maturity.

As well as postulating how schemas of self and others (including God) arise, and how these in turn contribute to psychological and spiritual maturity, attachment theory prompts distinctions between defensive and non-defensive styles. It is expected that those who are securely attached are able to regulate emotion and deal non-defensively with life experiences but those who are insecurely attached are threatened by intensely negative (or positive) emotions and respond with defensive cognitions and behaviour (Hall, 2004). Since quest, intrinsic and extrinsic orientations are cognitive styles, it is reasonable to suppose that they may be held defensively or non-defensively. Defensive responses, then, would be marked by excessiveness or absence of affect and behaviours that indicate anxiety (Freud, 1896/1962). For example, a person who is committed to her faith and secure in her attachment relationship with God may be able to regulate negative affect in times of difficulty and remain open to continued questioning of her orthodox beliefs. This would constitute non-defensive questing, but within an orthodox belief

context (as such, related to the concept of religious reflection from an 'inside' perspective proposed by Dover et al., 2007). Security of attachment to God would also allow for an intrinsic or extrinsic commitment to be held non-defensively. On the other hand, a person who holds a weakly intrinsic commitment to his faith and is insecure in his attachment to God may be overwhelmed by negative affect in crisis, responding with a questing orientation marked by religious doubt and avoidance of commitment. This would constitute defensive questing, and may involve rejection of orthodoxy. If the distinction between defensive and non-defensive questing is significant, then research should consider questing in the context of attachment security, other religious orientations and religious orthodoxy via mediated models.

Since attachment theory has been applied relatively recently to human-divine relationships there is little research relating religious attachment and questing. However, two recent studies explored relationships between religious orientations and security of attachment to God. Although the intrinsic orientation was associated with a secure attachment relationship with God (low anxiety and avoidance) there was no significant direct relationship between quest orientation as measured by Batson's Interactional (Quest) Scale and security of attachment to God (Rowatt & Kirkpatrick, 2002). Similarly, Beck (2006) found insignificant relationships between the anxiety and avoidance dimensions of attachment to God and Batson's Interactional Quest Scale. However, when the exploration dimension of Beck's Multidimensional Quest Orientation Scale was examined, attachment security was associated with increased exploration and attachment avoidance with decreased exploration. Exploration together with secure attachment was associated with Christian orthodoxy, whereas religious exploration together with avoidant attachment was associated with rejection of orthodox beliefs. Findings point to the importance of using specific, dimensional measures of quest and appropriate correlates, such as orthodoxy. Further, given significant interactions between questing and intrinsic religiosity (Beck et al., 2001), it would be helpful to include measures of intrinsic religiosity in future research.

SUMMARY AND RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

This article has examined the concept of quest as a form of religious reflection that promotes religious

maturity. At present there is a substantial body of research relating to quest as a cognitive orientation, and promising new studies of questing and religious reflection from a social-emotional perspective. Research examining the direct effects of unidimensional questing upon social attitudes indicative of religious maturity, as originally defined by Allport (1950), is supplemented by studies examining antecedents and correlates of multidimensional approaches to questing upon emotional outcomes. In order to retain the distinctiveness of previous work it may be necessary to label the newer constructs and measures as indicators of religious reflection from a variety of perspectives. Further, the more recent approach to questing and religious reflection requires a theoretical framework that is suited to an affective and developmental stance: attachment theory is suggested as an appropriate foundation. The theoretical and empirical review of questing and religious reflection has informed the following conclusions:

1. The conceptualization of quest is clear but there are problems with its operationalization by Batson and colleagues (Batson & Schoenrade, 1991; Batson et al., 1993). In particular, concerns have been raised about the unidimensionality of the measure, its depiction of a religious orientation, and its association with spiritual maturity.
2. Alternative measures of quest (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Beck & Jessup, 2004) do not fully address concerns about the construct's dimensionality and breadth of application.
3. Measures of quest or other forms of religious reflection must be sensitive to the cultural and ideological surround (Dover et al., 2007; Khan et al., 2005; Watson et al., 1998).
4. A complete theory of questing, or religious reflection, must specify antecedents, mediating variables and outcomes relevant to spiritual maturity. In addition to cognitive variables (with antecedents of socialization into religious beliefs, cognitive complexity as a mediating variable, and prosocial attitudes as outcomes of questing) a broader theory should include emotional and social considerations.
5. Attachment theory is a viable basis for understanding the antecedents of religious orientations used in a defensive and non-defensive manner. Secure attachment relationships are related to positive antecedents of quest such

as cognitive complexity, self consistency, and healthy moral identity (Leve et al., 2002; Reimer, 2005; Van Ijzendoorn & Zwart-Woudstra, 1995). Insecure attachment relationships marked by avoidance are theoretically consistent with decreased social identification found to be associated with questing (Burris et al., 1996).

6. Including God as attachment figure may help to explain the particularly religious developmental aspects of antecedents of questing.

In light of these conclusions a number of research implications can be outlined. The central recommendation is to examine questing in the context of individual differences in attachment security. Studies should examine both the main effects and the interaction of spiritual attachment (measured dimensionally as anxiety and avoidance of attachment to God, or the degree to which God functions as an attachment figure) and questing (again measured dimensionally) upon outcomes consistent with spiritual maturity. If the interaction hypothesis is correct, then questing associated with secure attachment to God should be related to indicators of maturity, such as prosocial attitudes and behaviors, and questing associated with insecure attachment to God should be related to lower scores on indicators of spiritual maturity. Such research would be the first step in establishing a distinction between defensive questing (related to insecure attachment and less mature spirituality) and non-defensive questing (related to secure attachment and mature spirituality).

Related research questions would include linkages between dimensions of questing and security of attachment with respect to outcomes. Of particular interest would be whether doubting or tentativeness as a style of belief, compared with the valuing of change are differentially linked to security of attachment and thence to psycho-social and spiritual outcomes. The new multidimensional measures of questing and religious reflection should be used together with Batson's Interactional Quest Scale so results can be interpreted in light of three decades of work using Batson's construct. In addition, levels of intrinsic orientation, religious fundamentalism and religious orthodoxy should be examined as religious variables that might impact the relationship between attachment security and non-defensive questing. Non-religious variables that might also contribute to variation in questing and/or psycho-spiritual maturity should also be examined; for example, age, gender, and personality.

The salience of specific psycho-social and religious variables as outcomes of questing has been raised and is an important research consideration. Religious maturity should be associated with broader psychological health, and a variety of health indicators should be used as outcome measures, including Axis I and Axis II symptoms, self-reported well-being, happiness and other positive states.

Allport (1950) defined religious maturity itself as multidimensional, and each dimension should be linked to questing in future research. Since religious maturity is complex, non-defensive questing should be associated with measures of cognitive complexity. Regarding the dimension of other-directed focus (rather than self-focus), non-defensive questing should be related to a range of pro-social attitudes and behaviours including low levels of prejudice, high altruistic care, and endorsement of other-centred values. If religious maturity involves consistent morality, non-defensive questing should be associated with moral thinking, valuing and behaviour across a range of situations and across the lifespan. High questing, in conjunction with secure attachment, should also be associated with the religious maturity dimension of a unifying philosophy of life, assessed as a core of consistent central beliefs (allowing for revisions in light of further experiences and evidence). The dimension of personality integration should be explored, with studies of non-defensive questing related to measures of personal integration such as consistency of self-concept, consistency across beliefs, affect, values and action intentions. Finally, if religious maturity involves appropriate working hypotheses for action, non-defensive questing should be related to positive behavioural intentions in face of challenging and complex situations.

In short, future studies should include measures of: attachment styles with respect to significant humans and God; quest and religious reflection that are relevant to the religious-cultural context; intrinsic and extrinsic orientations, religious fundamentalism and religious orthodoxy because of their interactions with questing; other mediating variables as theoretically relevant; and outcome measures of affect and behaviour consistent with ideals of mature spirituality. Such work would greatly increase understanding of questing and religious reflection as religious orientations, and provide penetrating analyses of their contribution to religious maturity.

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