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Freedom of religion and freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school: Exploring the  
impact of church schools in a religiously diverse society

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### **Abstract**

The Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity Project was established to compare the attitudes of students (13- to 15-years of age) educated within the state-maintained sector in church schools (Catholic, Anglican, joint Anglican and Catholic) and in schools without a religious foundation. Data provided by 2,385 students recruited from England, Wales and London who self-identified as either 'no religion' or as Christian demonstrated that personal factors (especially sex), psychological factors (especially psychoticism) and religious factors (especially personal prayer) were all significantly related to attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school. After controlling for sex and for individual differences in personality and in religiosity, students attending church schools hold neither a more positive nor a less positive attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school (according to various religious traditions), compared with students attending schools without a religious foundation.

*Keywords:* Church schools, religious diversity, freedom of religion, school effectiveness, multi-level analysis

### Introduction

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in December 1948. It was written in response to the atrocities of the Second World War and attempted, through its thirty Articles, to identify fundamental rights to which all human beings are entitled. In particular Article 18 deals with freedom of religion or belief, where the linkage of religion and belief may embrace non-religious worldviews.

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.

The right to freedom of religion was also embedded within the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (Council of Europe, 1950, Article 8), within the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966, Article 18), and within the European Union Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000, Article 10).

Van der Ven (2012), in his considered examination of ‘religious liberty in political perspective’, draws particular attention to the third part of Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that speaks of ‘freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief’ as referring to the *forum externum* in which individuals are entitled to manifest their religion or belief. In this sense, religion or belief is not confined to the personal and to the interior space, but may be visible within the public arena. At the same time, van der Ven (2012) draws attention to the limitations placed on the public manifestation of religion or belief. For example, the third paragraph of Article 18 in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1965) refers to some ‘limitations prescribed by law and being necessary to protect public safety, order, health, or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others. One clear and

visible sign of religion expressed within the public arena is seen in the form of wearing and displaying religious clothing and symbols. At the same time, there are also good reasons voiced for restricting certain religious clothing and symbols in specific contexts: labour rules may prohibit wearing veils in some professional contexts and prison rules may prohibit wearing a prayer chain.

### **Freedom of religious clothing and symbols**

The matter of wearing religious clothing and symbols in public spaces has been seen to be of sufficient significance for the Council of Europe to publish a *Manual on the wearing of religious symbols in public areas*. The aim of this manual is to clarify the concept of religious symbols and to provide guidance on the criteria used by the European Council of Human Rights in its case law (Evans, 2008). In essence, the case law show that the European Court of Human Rights takes a flexible approach in which it is for individuals to determine what counts for them as religious symbols, but it does not conclude that the wearing of religious symbols may not be subject to restrictions by the states. In a ruling on 1 July 2014, in a case against France, the ECHR ruled that the French ban on veiling the face in public did not breach the European Convention on Human Rights (see [http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-145466#{"itemid":\["001-145466"\]}](http://hudoc.echr.coe.int/eng?i=001-145466#{)). In this context restrictions on the manifestation of religion or belief by students (say by displaying religious clothing or symbols) need to be objectively justified, say in the pursuit of legitimate aims of promoting public safety, personal or collective health, or civic order, or of protecting the rights of others.

According to Council of Europe (2014, p. 83) different countries within Europe have different policies on the wearing of religious dress and religious symbols. BBC News (2014) provides a detailed breakdown of the situation in various countries. A brief summary of these different European laws are now given followed by a more detailed look at the situation in

France and the UK. At one end of the spectrum there are countries (for example, France, Belgium) where there are national bans in place on some religious dress and symbols in public places. A law banning the full-face veil came into effect in Belgium in 2011. At the other end of the spectrum there are countries such as The Netherlands, Turkey and Norway where there are currently no bans in force - though this may not always have been the case and may currently be subject to debate. The Netherlands did have plans to impose a ban but these collapsed when a change of government took place in 2012. In Turkey the wearing of the hijab was prohibited in 2004 in state institutions such as universities and schools (Blair & Aps, 2005, p. 7). In 2013 this ban was removed - with the exception of the judiciary, military and police. Likewise, in Norway female police officers are forbidden from wearing the hijab. With the 2014 ECHR ruling supporting France's assertion that a public ban does not violate the human rights of Muslim women, Norway is also now revisiting this wider issue (see <http://www.thelocal.no/20140702/norway-braced-for-burqa-ban-debate>). In between these two positions there are countries where there is no national ban, but where individual regions may have their own laws which place restrictions on certain items of dress (for example, Spain, Italy, Germany). Though there is no plan for a national ban in Spain, in 2010 the city of Barcelona became the first in Spain to ban the full-face Islamic veil in public buildings. Likewise, several towns in Italy have local bans on face-covering veils and the wearing of the burka. Although during 2003 in Germany controversy arose over discrimination against a female teacher who wore the hijab, there is no national law restricting the wearing of veils. However, states can change their laws locally and at least half of Germany's 16 states have banned teachers from wearing headscarves. Where bans are in place, it tends to be the full face covering rather than the headscarf which is prohibited. Finally, there are countries where there is no national ban but where policy on wearing uniforms can come into conflict with the freedom to wear such dress and symbols (for example, UK, Denmark). In 2008, the

government of Denmark announced it would bar judges from wearing headscarves and similar religious or political symbols (including the Christian crucifix, the Jewish kippah and the Sikh turban) in courtrooms. Some have called for the ban to be extended to include school teachers and medical personnel.

Perhaps the most documented position is that of France which has long had a strict system of separation of State and Church and a rejection of any action or public expression of faith that might threaten the French ideal of equality or *Laïcité*. The wearing of distinctive religious dress and symbols in public schools was banned in 2004 including the wearing of veils, headscarves and turbans. Policy guidance defined these religious symbols as those ‘the wearing of which leads immediately to identification of a religious affiliation, such as the Muslim hijab, the kippah, or a cross of manifestly excessive dimensions’ (Massignon, 2011, p. 166). Massignon (2011, p.160) cites evidence from Chérifi (2005) that the 2004 law forbidding wearing religious symbols calmed conflicts in school caused by the expression of religious affiliation by certain pupils. Further surveys in France have shown that opinion shifted from 43% in favour of banning the hijab in school in 2003, to 76% in favour in September 2004 (Tévanian, 2005, cited in Massignon, 2011, p. 166). In 2010, a further act resulted in the ban on covering the face in public places whether by mask, helmet or veil and included the burka if it covered the face. France thus became the first European country to ban the full-face Islamic veil in public places.

Although there is no ban on religious dress or symbols in the UK, schools are allowed to decide their own dress codes and it is these regulations concerning school uniform which have increasingly come into conflict with the issue of religious dress and symbols. In 1990 two Muslim girls were refused entry to their classes at a Manchester school for wearing headscarves (Liederman, 2000) and in 2004 a Bedfordshire schoolgirl pursued her grievance against school uniform policy, which forbade the wearing of the jilbad, to the Court of

Appeal (Blair & Aps, 2005, pp. 7-8). In the case of the latter, the issue went first to the High Court which found in favour of the school concluding that the girl's exclusion from school was a result of her breach of school uniform rules rather than because of her religious beliefs. The case then progressed to the Court of Appeal where judges in the case, whilst emphasising that it might be possible for the school to have a lawful policy restricting the wearing of the jilbab, found the failure of the school to consider explicitly the affected pupil's human rights in reaching a decision was a breach of those rights. As Blair and Aps (2005, p. 8) conclude, having met the needs of the majority it is not simply for the minority to obey the policy and if they do not like it to choose an alternative. The infringement needs to be acknowledged and justified.

As both Blair and Aps (2005) and more recently Berry (2013) demonstrate using legal case law from both France and the UK there is both divergence and inconsistency between the approaches taken and conclusions drawn by different human rights committees and organisations (such as the Human Rights Commission and the European Court of Human Rights) and between different sections of the legal system such as the High Court and Court of Appeal. As Berry (2013) notes, the European Court of Human Rights has been willing to accept restrictions on the right to manifest religion by wearing religious attire under article 9(2) of the European Convention on Human Rights on the grounds of the 'rights and freedoms of others', (specifically gender equality, pluralism and tolerance and State neutrality) and public order and safety. However, the wide margin of appreciation afforded to States and the failure of the Convention to probe whether restrictions on the right to manifest religion are proportionate have been subject to criticism. It is not surprising that some schools and teachers may be confused as to what approach to take in the best interests of their schools and for all their pupils.



For some 13- to 15-year-old students abstract human rights issues may seem to stand at a considerable distance from their everyday experience in general and from their classroom experience in particular. This is clearly not the case, however, for freedom of religion or belief, when religion or belief is expressed in the classroom by students who openly display their religion or belief through wearing religious clothing or religious symbols, whether the Christian cross, the Muslim headscarf, burka or Niqab, the Sikh turban, kara, or kirpan, the Jewish Star of David or the kippah/yamalke, or the Hindu bindi. Here are very visible and tangible signs and symbols of religion or beliefs.

The relevance of this issue for students was confirmed by the Council of Europe's recent document on policy and practice for teaching about religions and non-religious worldviews in intercultural education, *Signposts*, in chapter eight concerning human rights issues (Council of Europe, 2014). This chapter locates religious education within the Council of Europe's wider activity related to human rights education and education for democratic citizenship. *Signposts* introduces this issue in the following way.

One particular issue faced by some young people from religious backgrounds, and also frequently by their parents, is the wearing of religious symbols in public areas such as school. This was raised as a matter of debate within their own countries by several respondents to the questionnaire sent out to members of the Council of Europe Education Committee (Council of Europe, 2014, p. 83).

The relevance of these issues for students has also been confirmed by the research project known as REDCo (Religion in Education: a Contribution to Dialogue or a factor for Conflict in Transforming Societies of European Countries) that collected the views of teenagers, between the ages of 14 and 16 years, from eight European countries on teaching and learning about religious diversity in schools. The quantitative survey (Valk *et al.*, 2009, pp. 437-446) asked students whether they agreed or disagreed with two specific statements on

the wearing of religious symbols at school: Students should be able to wear religious symbols at school... discreet ones (e.g. small crosses, etc. on necklace); Students should be able to wear religious symbols at school... more visible ones (e.g. headscarves).

The data for each country related to these two questions can be found in the relevant national chapters contained in Valk *et al.* (2009) though there are inconsistencies, both in how each national team reported their data and the emphasis given to these two questions, which makes direct comparison difficult. The results showed that in all countries a majority of students did not oppose the wearing of discrete religious symbols in school. The numbers agreeing were: Russia 90% (p. 329), England 85%<sup>1</sup>, France 78% (p. 146) and Germany over 70%. For Norway, Spain and The Netherlands no percentages are given, although, the conclusions reported by the authors, based on the data, are that a majority of students in each country favoured this position.

With regard to more visible symbols and dress there were some clear national differences, which in most cases reflect the approaches taken on this issue by the respective national governments. In Norway the numbers of students agreeing with the wearing of visible symbols was 64% (p. 287), in England 55%<sup>2</sup>, in Germany less than half (p. 190), in Russia 20% (p. 329), and in France only 17% (p. 146). The Netherlands team report that a majority were in favour but to a lesser extent than the numbers agreeing to discrete symbols (p. 238) and for Spain the team report that the majority of students were against the wearing of visible symbols thus adopting a point of view in accordance with the French law of 2004 (p. 391). Thus, there are some significant differences, for example, in responses from French and Norwegian students that suggest that French students have internalised the 2004 law that only allows the wearing of discrete religious signs on school grounds in contrast to Norwegian students who are 'liberal in terms of 'visible religion' in school partly reflecting

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<sup>1</sup> recalculated from the original data.

<sup>2</sup> recalculated from the original data.

the liberal attitude prevailing in Norway in these matters' (Skeie & von der Lippe, 2009, p. 291).

### **Church schools**

The question regarding freedom of religion and of religious clothing and symbols within schools raises an interesting political question about the position of church schools within religiously diverse societies. Church schools within England and Wales have a particularly long history, because the current system of public education had its origins in the initiative of church-related voluntary societies during the first half of the nineteenth century, including the Anglican National Society in 1811, the Free Church British and Foreign School Society in 1814 and the Catholic Poor Schools Committee in 1847. When the Government first voted a budget for building schools in 1833 money was distributed through the voluntary societies (see Cruikshank, 1963; Murphy, 1971; Chadwick, 1997). Not until the Education Act 1870 did the Government establish a mechanism for building schools independently from the voluntary societies (Rich, 1970). The continuation of church schools operating alongside schools without a religious foundation was supported by the Education Act 1902, the Education Act 1944, and the Education Reform Act 1988. Since legislation following the Education Reform Act 1988 has tended to refer to church schools by the more inclusive term 'schools with a religious character', it is this nomenclature that will be consistently employed through the rest of this paper.

During the 1980s England and Wales became increasingly self-conscious of growing cultural, ethnic and religious diversity. In particular during that decade two significant reports began to question the continuing role of church schools, suggesting that such educational provision may fail to prepare students adequately for life in face of such growing diversity. First, in their report *Race and Church Schools* from the Runnymede Trust, Dummett and McNeal (1981) argued that in areas where the black community was not Christian, church

schools had the effect of preventing multiracial institutions and so were in danger of enhancing prejudice. Second, in their report *Education for All* the Government's Committee of Enquiry into the education of children from ethnic minority groups stressed misgivings about the implications and consequences of schools for established religious and ethnic groups (Swann Report, 1985).

The Runnymede Trust re-voiced and sharpened its critique of the place of church schools in religiously diverse society during the late 2000s in its report *Right to Divide? Faith schools and community cohesion* (Berkeley, 2008). Here was a report asking the question 'whether a school system with faith schools could also promote equality and cohesion' (p. 2). The project took as the starting point the guidance issued to schools as 'their statutory duty to promote community cohesion, introduced in 2007' (p. 3), and consulted with over a thousand people, including 'parents, pupils, professionals, and policy makers from a range of faith backgrounds as well as those who do not subscribe to any religion' (p. 1). The aim of the consultation was 'to assess whether faith schools are well placed to deliver their obligations in this regard in the following areas' (p. 4): encouraging students to share a sense of belonging; helping students develop a positive appreciation of diversity; removing barriers to inequality; and building strong partnerships between people from different backgrounds.

The six key recommendations put forward by the Runnymede Trust were, in one sense, very supportive of schools with a religious character. Such schools are supported as affirming government policies committed to increasing choice and diversity in the education sector. In another sense, however, the types of schools with a religious character being supported by the Runnymede Trust are very different from many of those currently supported within the state-maintained system in England and Wales. The first call from the Runnymede Trust is for schools with a religious character to cease to include faith criteria within their admissions policies. The argument is pitched as follows:

Faith schools should be for the benefit of all in society rather than for just a few. If faith schools are convinced of their relevance for society, then that should apply equally for all children. With state funding comes an obligation to be relevant and open to all citizens ... All parents should be given access to what faith schools claim is a distinctive ethos (Berkeley, 2008, p. 4).

The recommendation is based on the following evidence:

Our research has found that commitment to the promotion of cohesion is not universal, and for many faith schools not a priority ... Too often, there remains a resistance to learning about other faiths when faith schools are seen as the spaces in which singular faith identities and traditions are transmitted (Berkeley, 2008, p. 4-5).

If the Runnymede Trust is correct in its assertion that church schools are failing to equip young people for life in religiously diverse societies, we would hypothesise that students attending such schools will hold a less positive attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in schools. Before this hypothesis can be addressed with empirical data, however, consideration has to be given to the way in which the identification of school differences may be contaminated by other individual differences. In other words, consideration needs to be given to identifying appropriate control variables. Two categories of control variables may be of particular significance: personal and psychological factors, and religious factors.

### **Personal and psychological control variables**

Conceptually, attitudes toward religious diversity can be situated within the much larger domain of social attitudes. The long-established research tradition concerned with the exploration and explanation of individual differences in social attitudes has drawn attention to the significant predictive power of both personal factors and psychological factors. For example, in his review of the social scientific literature and new empirical evidence

concerning factors shaping adolescent values, Francis (2001) documented the significance of two personal factors in particular (sex and age) across a range of personal and social values. Before testing for school influence, it would be prudent to control for individual differences in sex and age.

In terms of psychological factors, the Eysenckian research tradition in particular has documented the connection between social attitudes and personality. Within this framework conceptualisation has distinguished between the categories of tenderminded social attitudes (emphasising, for example, social inclusivity and acceptance) and toughminded social attitudes (including, for example, social exclusion and prejudice). In two now classic brief papers, Eysenck (1975, 1976) formulated the connection between low psychoticism scores and tenderminded social attitudes. The Eysenckian notion of psychoticism as a dimension of personality found expression in the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ: Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975) alongside the two other orthogonal dimensions styled extraversion and neuroticism. The on-going relevance of the Eysenckian dimensional model of personality for predicting individual differences in social attitudes, with special reference to prejudice, has been demonstrated by Village (2011). Before testing for school influence, it would be prudent to control for individual differences in personality.

### **Religious control variables**

The two recent studies by Francis, Lankshear, Robbins, Village, and ap Sîon (2014) and by Village and Francis (in press) concerned with identifying the distinctiveness and effectiveness of Catholic and Anglican secondary schools, identified the way in which the influence of schools with a religious character on student values needs to be disentangled from the direct influence of the students' religiosity. This problem is one which can be addressed by including measures of individual differences in the students' religiosity as control variables within the multilevel model. While the assessment of student religiosity is

itself a complex matter, four variables may be routinely introduced to capture key aspects of this multidimensional construct, namely self-assigned religious affiliation, religious attendance, personal prayer, and Bible reading. Given the possible interaction between school type and student religiosity, before testing for school influence, it would be prudent to control for individual differences in terms of these four variables (self-assigned religious affiliation, religious attendance, personal prayer, and bible reading).

### **Research questions**

In light of the foregoing discussion, the present analyses were established to draw on the Young People's Attitude to Religious Diversity Project to address the following three research questions. The first question employs reliability analysis to explore the internal consistency reliability of the Scale of Attitude toward Freedom of Religious Clothing and Symbols in School (SAFORCS) among a mixed group of students attending schools with a religious character and schools without a religious foundation. The second question employs correlational analysis to explore the connection between attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in schools and personal factors (age, sex), psychological factors (personality), religious factors (self-assigned religious affiliation, religious attendance, Bible reading frequency, and prayer frequency) and school factors (contrasting schools with a religious character and schools without a religious foundation). The third question employs multilevel linear analysis to explore the effects of schools with a religious character on attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school, after taking into account individual differences in personal factors, psychological factors, and religious factors, and after taking into account that students were nested within schools and within three geographical locations.

## **Method**

### **Procedure**

The Young People's Attitude to Religious Diversity Project was conducted among 13- to 15-year-old students attending state-maintained schools in each of five parts of the UK: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales *and* London. In each geographical area students were recruited both from schools with a religious character (Anglican, Catholic, or joint Anglican and Catholic) and from schools without a religious character. Within the participating schools questionnaires were administered by the religious education teachers within examination-like conditions. Students were assured of anonymity and confidentiality and given the option not to participate in the project.

### **Sample**

The present analyses were conducted on a sub-sample from the Young People's Attitude to Religious Diversity Project, drawing on information provided by 2,385 students from schools in England, Wales and London who self-identified as either 'no religion' or as Christian and who gave valid replies to the items in the analysis. Of these, 1464 (61.4%) were attending schools with a religious character and 921 (38.6%) were attending schools without a religious foundation; 658 (27.6%) were attending schools in Wales, 805 (33.8%) in London and 922 (38.7%) elsewhere in England. In terms of sex and age, 47.5% were male and 52.5% were female; 49.8% were in year nine and 50.2% were in year ten. In terms of self-assigned religious affiliation, 69.0% identified as Christian and 31.0% as 'no religion'.

### **Measures**

*Attitude toward Freedom of Religious Clothing and Symbols in School* was assessed by a ten-item scale (SAFORCS) related to attitude toward allowing pupils of various religions to wear religiously-related items in school (Table 1). Alpha internal consistency reliability (Cronbach, 1951) was .92.

*Personality* was assessed by the abbreviated version of the Junior Eysenck Personality Questionnaire Revised (JEPQR-A) developed by Francis (1996) who reported the following



Cronbach's alpha coefficients: extraversion = .66; neuroticism = .70; psychoticism = .61; lie scale = .57.

*Religious affiliation* was recorded by a checklist of world faiths and Christian denominations in response to the question, 'What is your religion?' For the current analysis all the Christian categories were collapsed into a single group and those affiliated with other world faiths were omitted, producing a dichotomous variable: no religion = 1, and Christian = 2.

*Religious attendance* was assessed by the question, 'Apart from special occasions (like weddings) how often do you attend a religious worship service (e.g. in a church, mosque or synagogue). Responses were recorded on a seven-point scale: never (1), sometimes (2), at least once a year (3), at least six times a year (4), at least once a month (5), nearly every week (6), and several times a week (7).

*Personal prayer* was assessed by the question, 'How often do you pray in your home or by yourself?' Responses were recorded on a five-point scale: never (1), occasionally (2), and at least once a month (3), at least once a week (4), and nearly every day (5).

*Bible reading* was assessed by the question, 'How often do you read holy scripture (e.g. The Bible, Qur'an, Torah)?' Responses were recorded on a five-point scale: never (1), occasionally (2), at least once a month (3), at least once a week (4), and nearly every day (5).

*Sex, age and school type* were recorded as dichotomous variables: male = 1 and female = 2; year nine = 1 and year ten = 2; schools with a religious character = 2 and other schools = 1.

## **Analysis**

A multilevel linear model was employed to allow for the fact that students were nested within schools (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992; Snijders & Bosker, 1999; Hox, 2002; Bickel, 2007). Each school was given a unique numerical code and this was employed as the

subject (grouping) variable using the mixed model procedure of IBM SPSS version 20 (Norusis, 2011).

Three models were fitted to the data. Model 0, the null model, had no predictor variables, and the Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) indicated what proportion of the variance in the SAFORCS scores was attributable to variations between schools. In model 1, control variables and school type were added as fixed effects. In model 2, individual-level religious variables were added to test the hypothesis that students in schools with a religious character show differences in attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school, compared with students in schools without a religious foundation, after allowing for the fact that schools with a religious character tend to have a higher proportion of religious students than do schools without a religious foundation. The schools with a religious character included Roman Catholic schools, Anglican schools and joint Roman Catholic and Anglican Schools. Since initial separate analyses indicated similar results for these three types of schools, they were combined into a single category.

### **Results**

Step one of the data analysis explored the scale properties of the SAFORCS in terms of the item-rest of scale correlations (see table 1) and the alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951). The alpha coefficient of .92 supports the internal consistency reliability of the instrument (DeVellis, 2003).

-insert table one about here-

Step two of the data analysis explored the bivariate correlations between attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school, personal variables (sex and school year), psychological variables (extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, and lie scale), religious values (affiliation, attendance, prayer, and Bible reading), and school type (see table 2). The key findings from the correlation matrix are that a more positive attitude toward

freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school is associated with being female; with higher neuroticism scores, higher lie scale scores, lower extraversion scores, and lower psychoticism scores; with self-assigned religious affiliation, and higher levels of religious attendance, Bible reading frequency and prayer frequency. It was not correlated with school type.

-insert table two about here-

Step three of the data analysis employed the mixed model regression analysis to explore the combined effect on attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school of the personal characteristics of the students (sex and age), the psychological characteristics of the students (extraversion, neuroticism, psychoticism, and lie scale scores), and of individual differences in student religiosity (self-assigned religious affiliation, religious attendance, Bible reading, and prayer frequency), while also taking into account the nesting of pupils within schools (see table 3).

-insert table three about here-

Model 0 indicated that around 4% of the variance in SAFORCS was attributed to differences between schools. Model 1 of the mixed model regression analysis indicated that attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols was more positive among girls compared with boys, positively correlated with neuroticism scores, and negatively correlated with extraversion and psychoticism scores. School type remained uncorrelated with attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols. Adding individual religious variables as predictors in model 2 significantly improve the model fit, but did not influence the effect of school type, suggesting that the individual religiosity of pupils, rather than a school's religious status *per se*, was more important in shaping attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school.

## Conclusion

This study began by identifying freedom of religious clothing and symbols in schools as a concrete way of accessing young people's attitude toward one of the fundamental agreed and accepted human rights, namely freedom of religion. This focus on freedom of religious clothing and symbols in schools had been suggested by the *Manual on the wearing of religious symbols in public areas* published by the Council of Europe in 2008 (Evans, 2008), had been reinforced by the recent report on policy and practice for teaching about religious and non-religious worldviews in intercultural education published by the Council of Europe under the title, *Signposts* (Council of Europe, 2014) and had been anticipated by the design of the quantitative strand within the European REDCo survey (Valk *et al.*, 2009).

In order to elucidate individual differences in the attitudes of 13- to 15-year-old students in England and Wales toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school, the present study set out to address three specific research questions. These three research questions were tested on data provided by a sample of 2,385 students, some attending schools with a religious character and others attending schools without a religious foundation. The first research question employs techniques of internal consistency reliability analysis to test the properties of the ten-item Scale of Attitude toward Freedom of Religious Clothing and Symbols in School (SAFORCS). The data demonstrated an alpha coefficient of .92, confirming that the instrument achieved a high level of internal consistency reliability among the group of students and that it is appropriate to employ this instrument to address the remaining two research questions.

A closer look at the differentiated endorsement of the ten different areas of religious clothing and symbols itemised in SAFORCS is also illuminating. These figures show that levels of support for freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school varies according to the items specified. The highest level of positive support (agreeing or agreeing strongly) is given to the Christian Cross (70%). More than half of the students support for Jews the Star

of David (59%), for Muslims the Headscarf (52%), for Sikhs the Turban (51%), and almost half support for Hindus the Bindi (48%). The levels then drop in respect of the Kara for Sikhs (41%), of the Kippah/Yamalke for Jews (41%), of the Kirpan for Sikhs (30%), and of the Niqab (28%) and the Burka (27%) for Muslims.

The second research question employed correlational analysis to explore the connection between attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school and personal factors (age, sex), psychological factors (personality), religious factors (self-assigned religious affiliation, religious attendance, Bible reading frequency, and prayer frequency), and school factors (contrasting schools with a religious character and schools without a religious foundation). The correlational data demonstrated that personal factors (especially sex), psychological factors (especially psychoticism) and religious factors (especially personal and public practices) are all associated with individual differences in attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school. The correlational data did not, however, find any significant association between attitude toward religious clothing and symbols and type of school attended. These findings, overall, are sufficient to demonstrate that there are consistent patterns in students' attitudes toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school, predicted by a combination of personal, psychological and religious factors, sufficient to confirm that the individual differences are not entirely random and that any serious scientific attempt to trace connections between attitudes in this area and type of school attended properly need to control for such personal, psychological and religious factors.

Looking more closely at the significant correlations with attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school the following points emerge. First, in terms of sex differences, females adopt a more accepting attitude than males to freedom of religion, but this simple association is also contaminated by the differences between males and females in

terms of personality and religiosity. Females record higher levels of religious attendance and prayer, as consistent with the broader review of sex differences in religiosity by Francis and Penny (2013). Females also record higher levels of neuroticism and lower levels of psychoticism, as consistent with the standardisation data reported for these variables by Eysenck and Eysenck (1991).

Second, there is no significant association between attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school and age (measured in terms of school year, distinguishing between year nine and year ten). If schools are engaged in human rights education and education for democratic citizenship during these years as suggested by the Council of Europe (2014) in *Signposts*, this finding of no effect is worth closer scrutiny.

Third, in terms of psychological factors, the major association between attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school and personality is traced to the dimension of psychoticism. This finding is consistent with Eysenck's broader theory linking low psychoticism scores with tenderminded social attitudes and high psychoticism scores with toughminded social attitudes (see Eysenck, 1975, 1976) and with Francis' conclusion that psychoticism is the major dimension of personality associated with individual differences in religious attitudes more generally (see Francis, 1992).

Fourth, in terms of religious factors, among Christian and non-religiously affiliated students, frequency of religious attendance, frequency of personal prayer and frequency of Bible reading are all positively associated with greater acceptance of the rights of other religious groups to display religious clothing and symbols in school. This finding is consistent with the broader findings generated by the Young People's attitudes to Religious Diversity Project that, overall, students committed to the Christian tradition are more supportive of religious diversity than religiously non-affiliated students (see Francis, Croft, Pyke, & Robbins, 2012; Francis, Penny, & Pyke, 2013; Francis, ap Siôn, & Penny, 2014;

Francis & Village, 2014; ). At the same time it is important to note that all three measures of religious practice are both intercorrelated and also correlated with self-assigned religious affiliation as Christian. This is consistent with Francis' observations that self-assigned religious affiliation is a valid (if not efficient) measure of religiosity in the absence of indices of belief and practice (see Francis, 2003).

The third research question employed multilevel linear analysis to explore the effect of schools with a religious character on attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school, after taking into account individual differences in personal factors, psychological factors, and religious factors, and after taking into account that students were nested in schools. After taking these factors into account the multilevel linear model demonstrated that none of the variance in students' attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school can be attributed to attending schools with a religious character. Students attending Catholic, Anglican, or joint Catholic and Anglican secondary schools hold neither a more positive attitude, nor a less positive attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school, compared with comparable students (in terms of personal, psychological, and religious factors) attending schools without a religious foundation.

This finding of no association between attitude to freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school and attending a school with a religious character challenges the theory proposed by the Runnymede Trust report, *Right to Divide?* (Berkeley, 2008) that schools with a religious character prepare students less adequately than schools without a religious foundation for life in a religiously diverse society. In this sense the data did not find the hypothesised negative correlation between attending a school with a religious character and attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school.

Taking the measure of attitude toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school as a key issue for human rights education, for education for democratic citizenship, *and* for religious education, as well as a key barometer for understanding students' attitudes toward living in a religiously diverse society, the first core finding of this study raises an interesting challenge both to the opponents of and to the supporters of schools with a religious character in England and Wales. If the Runnymede Trust is correct in the claim that schools with a religious character prepare students less well than schools without a religious foundation for life in religiously diverse societies, the Runnymede Trust may still need further robust data to substantiate that claim. Equally, however, if the Churches are correct in the claim that schools with a religious character give serious attention to religious education (see Church of England, 2014), and if the claim is correct that religious education enhances community cohesion, the Churches may still need further robust data to substantiate those claims. At present the evidence of the current study concurs with that of the earlier study published by Francis and Village (2014), employing a different dependent variable, but drawing on the same data, namely that in England and Wales today schools with a religious character are a source neither for good nor for ill in terms of shaping student attitudes either toward freedom of religious clothing and symbols in school or toward religious diversity more generally assessed.

The present study has concentrated specifically on England and Wales because the place of schools with a religious character within the state maintained system of education has been shaped by a common history and a common legislative framework. The Young People's Attitude to Religious Diversity Project has the capacity to address similar questions on data collected in Northern Ireland and Scotland. Such analyses may well help to explore the generalisability of the findings from England and Wales.

#### **Note**



Young People's Attitudes to Religious Diversity Project (AHRC Reference: AH/G014035/1) is a large scale mixed methods research project investigating the attitudes of 13- to 16-year-old students across the United Kingdom. Students from a variety of socio-economic, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds from different parts of England, Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland, with the addition of London as a special case, took part in the study. Professor Robert Jackson was principal investigator and Professor Leslie J Francis was co-investigator. Together they led a team of qualitative and quantitative researchers based in the Warwick Religions and Education Research Unit, within the Institute of Education at the University of Warwick. The project was part of the AHRC/ESRC Religion and Society Programme, and ran from 2009-12.

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Table 1

*Attitude toward Freedom of Religious Clothing and Symbols (AFORCS)*

	DS %	D %	NC %	A %	AS %	IRC
Cronbach's Alpha = .92						
Christians should be allowed to wear crosses in school	4	6	20	37	33	.17
Muslims should be allowed to wear the headscarf in school	17	14	18	33	19	.76
Muslims should be allowed to wear the Burka in school	23	21	28	18	9	.64
Muslims should be allowed to wear the Niqab in school	21	18	33	18	10	.68
Sikhs should be allowed to wear the Turban in school	15	12	22	33	18	.81
Sikhs should be allowed to wear the Kara in school	16	12	32	27	14	.83
Sikhs should be allowed to wear the Kirpan in school	18	15	36	20	10	.70
Jews should be allowed to wear the Star of David in school	11	7	23	38	21	.69
Jews should be allowed to wear the Kippah/Yamulke in school	14	10	35	27	14	.79
Hindus should be allowed to wear the Bindi in school	14	11	28	32	16	.79

Note: DS = disagree strongly; D = disagree; NC = not certain; A = agree; AS = agree strongly; IRC = Item-rest of scale correlation

Table 2 *Correlation matrix of dependent and independent variables*

	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2
1 SAFORCS	.18***	.19***	.18***	.05*	.06**	-.24***	.10***	-.07***	-.01	.16***	-.01
2 School type	.34***	.21***	.18***	.40***	-.02	-.01	.01	.01	.03	.04*	
3 Sex	.06**	.05**	.03	.05*	.12***	-.27***	.26***	.04	-.01		
4 School year	-.02	-.04	-.03	.01	-.07***	-.03	.01	.03			
5 Extraversion	-.06**	-.06**	-.10***	-.03	-.17***	.10***	-.15***				
6 Neuroticism	-.01	.04*	.00	.00	-.04*	.01					
7 Psychoticism	-.16***	-.11***	-.13***	-.07**	-.33***						
8 Lie scale	.01	.03	.05*	.01							
9 Religious affiliation	.48***	.40***	.34***								
10 Bible reading	.62***	.67***									
11 Prayer frequency	.60***										
12 Religious attendance											

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . AFORCS = Attitude toward Freedom of Religious Clothing and Symbols. For sex, 1 = male, 2 = female; for year, 1 = year 9, 2 = year 10; for religious affiliation, 0 = no religion, 1 = Christian; for school type, 2 = schools with a religious foundation, 1 = schools without a religious foundation.



Table 3

*Mixed model regression of Attitude toward Freedom of Religious Clothing and Symbols*

		Model 0	Model 1	Model 2
Intercept		27.78***	29.49***	27.46***
Sex (female)	Male		-1.76***	-1.73***
Year (Year 10)	Year 9		0.37	0.27
Location (Wales)				
	England		0.93	0.69
	London		1.58	0.98
Extraversion			-0.29*	-0.24
Neuroticism			0.34**	0.33**
Psychoticism			-1.34***	-1.25***
Lie			-0.06	-0.08
Religious affiliation	Not religious			0.62
Bible reading				0.43
Prayer				0.48**
Attendance				0.22
School type	Religious		0.30	0.82
Log-2		17306.0	17142.3	17108.4
Deviance			163.7	33.9
Residual		81.5	76.3***	75.5***
Intercept		3.1	2.4**	1.6*
ICC		4%	3%	2%

Note. Grouping variable: school. Table gives unstandardized parameter estimates for fixed effects. Reference categories are in parentheses. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .