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Centrality of religiosity versus civic involvement. The case of Poland

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ABSTRACT

The article is an expression of search for the motivational role of religiosity in individuals' civic activity. Mature civic attitude is shaped by the person's values, individual and communal needs, and experience. The main thesis of the presented study is that the relation between religiosity and human will in many points overlap with the factors which determine the citizen's activity for the benefit of the community. Stefan Huber's Centrality of Religiosity Scale emphasizing the primary importance of the motivational value of religiosity and an original scale measuring civic involvement were used in the study (N = 732). The study proved that religiosity mostly serves as a civic involvement predictor among women from the middle age group. Although a higher level of civic involvement was found in men, religiosity did not prove to be a significant factor explaining its higher level, which means that the determinants for it need to be sought in other spheres.

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1. Introduction

The determinants of civic involvement are the subject of empirical research for scholars of various disciplines: political science, psychology, sociology and history. Among all the factors, religiosity is a special determinant. Its uniqueness mainly results from its being comprehensively connected to humans and their motivational sphere. Human religiosity is a very complex issue. Mature religiosity involves both internal states of an individual (their experiences, emotions, beliefs regarding the nature of the world, good and bad) and the external manifestations of those states (aims and directions of behavior). Thus, religion as an internalized value of a believer is bound to permeate all the elements of the person's activity: thoughts, feelings, views and behaviours. These theses are fully expressed in Stefan Huber's Centrality of Religiosity Scale used in this study, in which the motivational value of religiosity is considered to be of primary importance. Religiosity receives the status of ability to perceive and construct the world with consideration of religious meanings. Not only their content but also their place in the human's cognitive system are verified through the analysis of religious constructs. This article is an expression of search for the motivational role of religiosity in individuals' civic activity. Mature civic attitude is shaped by the person's values, individual and communal needs, and experience. It may be conjectured that the comprehensive relation between religiosity and human will in many points overlap with the factors which determine the citizen's activity for the benefit of the community.

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2. Religiosity and its dimensions

Religiosity is the person's subjective, individual attitude to the system of truths which involves the person's whole personality (Kuczkowski, 1993). Hill and Hood (1999: 5) define religiosity as “phenomena that include some relevance to traditional institutionalized searches to acknowledge and maintain some relationship with the transcendent.” Religiosity may also be described as an individual level of faith in God, characterized by godliness and devotion: the higher godliness and devotion, the stronger faith in God (Syukri Salleh, 2012: 266). In this context, as Muhammad Syukri Salleh (ibidem) observes, religiosity would be tantamount to religiousness, orthodoxy, faith, belief, piousness, devotion, and holiness – but they are actually not exactly equivalent to religiosity. Instead, as rightly argued by Holdcroft (2006: 89), they are just the reflections of the dimensions of religiosity. Thus, most scholars studying religiosity point out its particular dimensions (Fukuyama, 1960; Lenski, 1961; King, 1967; Glock, 1972), or elements (Verbit, 1970).

For the focal point of this article, two concepts of religiosity are especially significant – one by Gordon W. Allport (Allport and Ross, 1967) and one by Stark and Glock (1970; Glock and Stark, 1965). The former, theoretical approach dominates in psychology, and the latter is of greater importance for sociologists. The significance of these concepts results from the fact that they were synthesized in the approach by Stefan Huber (2003), constituted in the form of the instrument used in the presented study.

Gordon W. Allport – as a psychologist of personality – took interest in the function of religiosity in the structure and dynamics of human's personality. Based on his own concept of mature religion (Allport, 1950), in cooperation with Michael J. Ross he formed a theoretical continuum in which a person's religiosity can be placed between the poles of external and internal religious orientation. He attributes an instrumental role to the external one, perceiving it as a tool used to achieve one's own goals. An individual can then mostly see the social functions of religion, practices occasionally and only out of motivations of secondary importance (Donahue, 1985: 418–423). For people with external religiosity, religion has an instrumental value: it helps feel the sense of security, achieve the desired social position or particular interests. Such religiosity is immature, it is not a central value for the person. Religious motivation is not stable, depends on many external factors which determine the way it is used to pursue individual interests. Internal religiosity, on the other hand, is a significant guide in the individual's life. In this case religion serves as a system which makes the understanding of the world easier; it becomes a kind of theory of life. Other needs of the individual are either harmonized with the faith or treated as having secondary importance. Religious norms are internalized and naturally permeate one's behaviours. Such religiosity is reflexive. Living according to its principles, the person pursues deeper values and is eager to participate in the community (Kahoe, 1985: 408–412). This kind of religiosity is mature, it reflects a stable system of motivation. A classic differentiation between internal and external religiosity is the conclusion that an externally motivated person uses their religion, while an internally motivated one lives with it (Allport and Ross, 1967: 434).

For Stark and Glock (1968, 1970) religiosity is a multidimensional structure, originally manifested through five relatively autonomous dimensions: the intellectual, ideological, ritualistic, experiential, and consequential dimension. The intellectual dimension is the individual's knowledge of the basic principles of faith, religious dogmas, the history of the religion, sacraments, holy books and traditions. The ideological dimension can be defined as the expectation that religion should involve a specific system of religious dogmas and views. The ritualistic dimension involves worship and prayer through which people express their religious engagement. It also involves activities resulting from the sense of belonging to a certain community, and a certain ritualized imagination of the transcendence. It is manifested among other things in public church service participation. The experiential dimension is associated with one's subjective experiences and feelings as part of personal contact with the supernatural sphere. Whereas the first four dimensions are directly related to religious involvement, the last one is closely connected with the results of beliefs, practices, experiences and knowledge. Soon Stark and Glock (1970) eliminated the consequential dimension from the model and split the ritualistic dimension into public and private practice, thus maintaining five dimensions.

The psychological concept of religiosity understood as a system of personal religious constructs, developed by Stefan Huber (2003), is a synthesis of all the above approaches. It is based upon four fundamental assumptions:

1. Human's experiences and behaviours are controlled by the system of personal constructs. From this perspective, religiosity is the ability to perceive and construct the world with consideration of religious meanings, psychologically based on the system of religious constructs.
2. The strength of one's experiences and behaviours understood as the function of the system of personal constructs depends on centrality in one's personality.
3. The direction of the person's experiences and behaviours understood as the function of the system of personal constructs depends on the content and meanings by which it is formed.
4. Hence, the person's religious experiences and behaviours are the function of centrality and content specificity of the system of personal religious constructs.

The developed multidimensional model of religiosity involves the motivational status of religiosity which was the point of interest for Allport, as well as the four dimensions of religious involvement identified by Stark and Glock (Zarzycka, 2007: 139). The structure of religiosity as understood by Huber includes five dimensions: *intellect*, *ideology*, *private practice*, *public*

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