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The effect of religion on parenting in order to guide parents in the way they parent: a systematic review

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Abstract

Religion has a growing influence on parenting, and there remains a need to understand the influence of religious values in order to inform parents, and other professional bodies, on how religious beliefs can influence child-rearing practices. A systematic review was conducted to explore relevant articles during the time period 2004–2014. The aim of the review was to explore the effect of religion on parenting, and to establish effective ways in which religious parents can be guided in parenting. The findings show that religion does influence parenting, and that with intervention aimed at increasing specific skills, parenting practices may improve.

Background

Parenting practices refer to the actual behavior of parents toward their children such as spanking, helping them with their homework, showing an active interest in their activities, and so forth. Parenting practices may be viewed as specific behavior with a view to specific socialization goals (Vermeer, Jansen, & Scheepers, 2012). Despite an increased interest in parenting in all sectors of society, the research base that informs under- standing of religion in family life remain limited (Coleman, 1997; Mahoney, Pargament, Tarakeshwar, & Swank, 2001). The horror of September 11, 2001, at the World Trade Center in New York, has reignited distrust towards those subscribing to strong religious beliefs (Nye & Weller, 2012). At the same time, this event contributed to the renewed interest of scholars, professionals, and policymakers alike in the exploration of the impact that religion has on different facets of believers' lives, especially in countries (such as the United Kingdom) that are undergoing progressive secularization (Brown, 2009; Mahoney, 2010).

Although generally suggestive of a positive impact of religiosity on parenting, Mahoney et al. (2001) pointed out that effect sizes are typically small and that studies generally suffer from methodological problems. This does, however, suggest a positive impact of religiosity on parenting. Studies that do sample parents often only include mothers so that it is unclear whether the findings replicate across parental gender (Duriez, Soenens, Neyrinck, & Vansteenkiste, 2009).

However, a study by Wilcock (2002) suggested that religion does play a role in shaping men's commitment to their children. Religious teaching, however, emphasizes that both men and women play a central role in family life. According to Volling, Mahoney, and Rauer (2009), religious fathers are involved in a culture that shapes their values and behaviors by emphasizing the importance of family relationships and a commitment to others that encourages them to be actively involved in the lives of their children.

Religious beliefs, however, continue to generate unease, lack of genuine engagement, a "low level of acceptance" (Furman, Benson, & Canda, 2004, p. 813), and disrespect amongst scholars as well as within ranks of professionals, including social workers (Hodge, 2005; Streets, 2009; Thyer & Myers, 2009; Whiting, 2008). There is a good deal of historical evidence to suggest that religion possesses the capacity to socialize, motivate, constrain, and direct human behavior (Smith, Denton, Faris, & Regnerus, 2002; Smith, 2003). These direct effects are not the only way that religion influences human action, but they are the most straightforward way (Regnerus & Smith, 2005). Despite ample evidence that global indexes of religiousness are linked to family functioning, the mechanisms by which religion uniquely influences family dynamics are not well understood or empirically documented (Pargament, 2005).

In a recent review of 75 papers about religion and family life (Howard & Lees, 2007), the most common areas for research were the transmission of religious beliefs between parents and children and identifying ways in which religious beliefs and practices informed approaches to parenting. Furthermore, professionals responsible for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children are said to have little awareness or training as to the role of religion in family life, with many professionals unsure about dealing with the influence of faith on parenting (Frosh, 2004; Gilligan & Furness, 2006; Kelly & Sinclair, 2005). Not much is known about the developmental trajectories of children reared in religious families; without this knowledge, we do not know if there are advantages or disadvantages to being brought up with religious beliefs and practices (Frosh, 2004; Phoenix & Husain, 2007).

Parent's use of religious coping and family religious behavior, defined as attendance at religious or spiritual programs, predicted several aspects of child well-being above and beyond parenting styles. These effects were small, but significant. It is interesting that family attendance at religious or spiritual programs was associated with greater child well-being, including better child health, social skills rated by a parent, and fewer internalizing behavior problems (Michelle et al., 2007). It is widely accepted that how parents relate to their children are of crucial importance not only for their children's well-being, but also for their internalization of values (Baumrind, 1996; Dudley, 2000; Eisenberg, Zhou, Spinrad, Valiente, Fabes, & Liew, 2005).

The emotional context of childrearing forms the second dimension of the integrative model of parenting (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Eisenberg et al., 2005). There is conflicting evidence as to whether parental commitment to religious beliefs is likely to result in a

harsh or warm parenting style (Gershoff, Miller, & Holden, 1999; Wilcox, 1998); Bartkowski & Wilcox, 2000; Mahoney, 2010). Padilla-Walker and Thompson (2005) established that religious values have a stronger impact on parenting tendencies than any other values that parents hold. Religion and parenting is an under-researched area (Frosh, 2004; Phoenix & Husain, 2007). In the past, practitioners have tended to consider religion as an "add-on" when exploring parenting, or believed that the value systems are similar when it comes to child rearing. However, the need to know about these influences is increasing. Parenting nevertheless may be significantly improved with interventions aimed at increasing specific skills and promoting greater understanding for the underlying motivations of a child's behavior. Various models of parent training have been developed and research continues to evaluate the effectiveness of specific programs for addressing a range of problems.

There is a need for a systematic examination of parental values and goals of parenting that acknowledges the cultural and religious diversity of citizens alongside an exploration of the impact that a distinctive religious context has on children and young people growing up (Padilla-Walker & Thompson 2005). The aim of this systematic review was to explore the effect of religion on parenting, establish effective ways in which religious parents can be guided in parenting and to critically appraise the methodological quality of the studies related to the effect of religion on parenting in order to guide parents in the way they parent.

Methods

Study eligibility criteria

A PRISMA flowchart (Figure 1) was created to illustrate study identification, screening, eligibility, inclusion, and analysis. A minimum of two reviewers performed the initial identification of studies, the secondary screening of studies, and final determination of eligibility and study inclusion. The types of studies that were included in this systematic review were related to the purpose of the study (a priori; i.e., "the effect of religion on parenting in order to guide parents in the way they parent"). Restricting language in systematic reviews remains controversial. Some studies have suggested that systematic reviews that include only English language publications tends to overestimate effect sizes (relative strength of the individual study's results) whereas other studies suggest that language restriction may not do so (Shea et al., 2007). Only English studies were included. Lipsey and Wilson (2001) stated that studies that are reported in languages other than English are doing so simply because of the practical difficulty of translation.

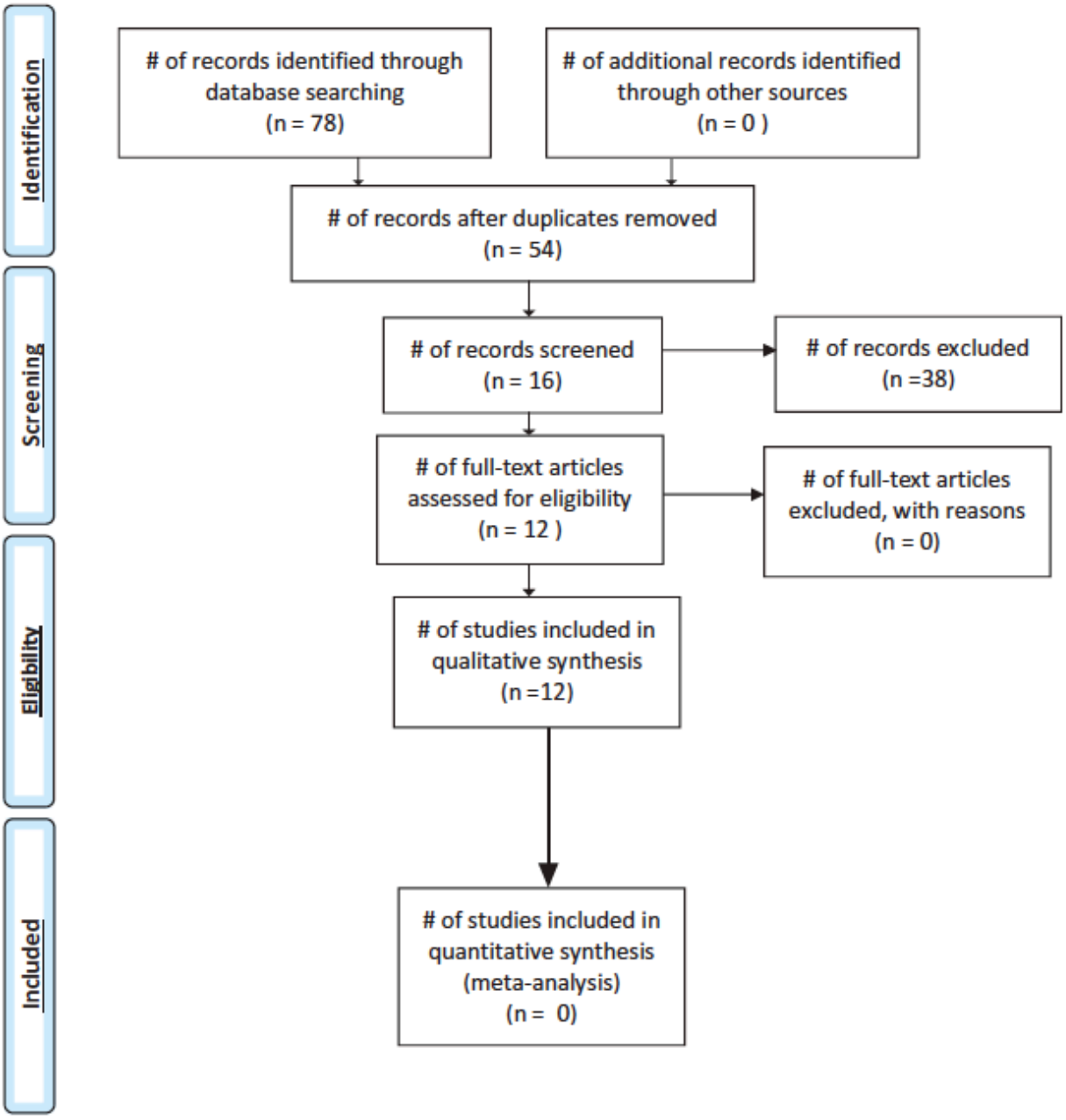

Figure 1. PRISMA Flowchart (Moher et al., 2009).

Full text peer-reviewed journals, published in English between 2004 and 2014, were included. Both primary and secondary articles were included; reference lists of studies were used to find additional articles. The full text of the report was necessary to ensure the accuracy of decisions to include or exclude studies from the reference lists of candidate studies. Duplicates were excluded. Article exclusion is applicable when authors publish more than one article—usually with different lengths of follow-up or with analysis and reporting of a different primary or secondary outcome (Harris, Quatman, Manring, Siston, & Flanigan, 2013).

Search strategy

For this systematic review, a widespread literature search was conducted using library and electronic databases. Online library databases and published research reports and journals available at the University of the Western Cape were accessed. Electronic databases accessed were Jstor, SAGE Journals, Wiley, Ebscohost, and PsyArticle. Electronic databases offer access to vast quantities of information, which can be retrieved more easily and quickly than using a manual search (Younger, 2004). In finding the articles, databases were accessed followed by an analysis of text words contained in the title, abstract, and in the index terms used to describe the article. Keyword descriptors were used in searching within the aforementioned online databases. Keyword searches are the most common method of identifying literature (Ely & Scott, 2007). The keywords used to identify the terms were: "effect(s) of religion on parenting."

In searching for applicable articles that are specifically related to the topic the search engines were limited to search for full text, peer-reviewed journals published in English only. The "advanced search" feature in the databases was used to set specific criteria. The time period was limited from 2004–2014 to get the most current research articles. The initial resources were selected by reviewing the article abstracts and then determining if the contents were relevant to the keywords. The same keywords were used for all databases. If the article appeared to meet the inclusion criteria, the full paper was retrieved. A detailed ongoing record of all searches was maintained in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet form which included: databases searched plus the specific years or other limitations specified; keywords used for each database; total number of articles displayed (hits) for each search strategy; and number of articles that met the inclusion criteria and that were selected. Also included were any duplicates found in the different database searches. Figure 1 shows a flow diagram of the results of the search strategy implemented.

Study and data collection processes

The process of reviewing involved the principal investigator and his super- visor, as the reviewing process should be done by two reviewers. Originally, the search was conducted by the principal investigator and sent to the supervisor, who also reviewed and screened the abstracts and titles. Mechanisms need to be in place to help resolve disagreements among reviewers. Typically, resolution is achieved through a process of discussion between the reviewers but if this is unsuccessful other reviewers can also become involved. The next stage was to examine each of the studies deemed to be relevant to the review question in order to reach some conclusions about the quality of each study included.

Table 1. Scoring Sheet for the Critical Appraisal.

Author	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Score	%	Grade %
Vermeer et al., 2012	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	5/7	71	67–100
Petts, 2009	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	5/7	71	67–100
Horwath et al., 2008	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	6/7	86	67–100
Godina, 2014.	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	4/7	57	33–66
Lees and Howarth, 2009	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	5/7	71	67–100
Bader and Scott, 2006	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	6/7	86	67–100
Mahoney et al., 2001	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	5/7	71	67–100
Regnerus and Burdette, 2006	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	5/7	71	67–100
Duriez et al., 2009	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	5/7	71	67–100
Nye and Weller, 2012	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	5/7	71	67–100
Padilla-Walker and Thompson, 2005	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	5/7	71	67–100
Furman et al., 2004	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	5/7	71	67–100

Methodological quality assessment

Rating scales that assess methodological quality provide the means to critically appraise the literature. Critical appraisal of the methodological quality of primary studies is an essential feature of the systematic review. There is no existing consensus on the ideal checklist and scale for assessing methodological quality.

Different research fields and/or different study design types have different methodological quality assessment tools. The internal validity can be influenced by selection bias, performance bias, detection bias, attrition bias, reporting bias, and other biases during the research process. Therefore, all methodological quality assessment tools are focused on these aspects, to minimize "risk of bias," as recommended by the Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of interventions (Higgins & Green, 2011). Each included study was appraised for internal validity (study quality assessment) using a standardized approach for rating the quality of the individual studies. Ideally, this should be done by at least two independent reviewers appraising each study for internal validity. However, a single commonly accepted, standardized tool for rating the quality of studies does not exist. Critical appraisal tools provide analytical evaluations of the quality of the study. A critical appraisal tool for assessing the methodological quality of studies was adapted from other research (Roman & Frantz, 2013). See Appendix for an example of the critical appraisal tool that was adapted from Roman and Frantz (2013).

Method of appraisal

An initial review was conducted by the principal investigator followed by a review of abstracts from the additional reviewers. Each reviewer had appraised the articles according to the critical appraisal tool. Results were compared and differences were discussed with a final decision thereafter. These discussions lead to decisions on which articles should be included for the final review. A rating scale was made, using the appraisal tool and a cut off score was determined.

The methodological quality scores obtained by the articles prior to final inclusion are illustrated in the table below. Generation of a PRISMA flowchart (Figure 1) that demonstrates the identification and screening of potentially eligible studies determines the final number of studies included for analysis. A flowchart of the process is presented in Figure 1 as recommended by PRISMA statement (Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009).

Results

Data extraction

Once all exclusion criteria are applied and the final list of studies is identified for analysis, there are several effective methods of extraction of study data into a coherent group of PICOS parameters. These data collection forms can be either written paper checklists or electronic spreadsheets (Harris et al., 2013). The purpose of data extraction is to describe the study in general, to extract the findings from each study in a consistent manner in order to enable later synthesis, and to extract information to enable quality appraisal so that the findings can be interpreted. Data extraction appears, at first glance, to be a relatively straightforward component of a systematic review. In practice, the approach used may have a significant impact on the review findings through shaping the range of data feeding.

Search results

Initial searches of electronic databases (Google Scholar) generated 19,300 possible articles, which were then reviewed for relevance. Eventually 10 articles were deemed of sufficient relevance and selected for data extraction. These articles were selected based on the inclusion criteria of articles that are relevant to the research keyword phrase: "the effect of religion on parenting." Only articles in English between the period 2004 and 2014 were considered. The data extraction table headings consist of demographic information such as author, study design, country, population, sample size, and description of study design as well as the objectives of this systematic review, namely, description of religion, description of parenting, and the effect of religion.

From the 10 selected articles that were appraised, data extraction followed. The data for the systematic review contains the results from individual studies. Before analyzing the data, data needs to be extracted from the primary research. The data extraction sheet identifies relevant demographic information such as authors, study design, population, sample size, and country, as well as the objectives of this systematic review. The data extrac- tion table was developed in order to orderly record the extracted information relevant to the research objectives in an orderly manner. A full summary list of these studies is given in Table 2.

Description of included studies

It is clear from the data extraction table (Table 2) that most of the research studies done on this issue are longitudinal (four) and cross-sectional (five). The research undertaken consisted mostly of systematic literature reviews in the form of longitudinal surveys and

interviews. Eight of the studies were done in the United States, one in France, and one in the United Kingdom. In most of the studies done, the majority of the population sample was White adolescents and parents from mainline Protestant, Catholic, and affiliated denominations. However, some research included other races and religions namely, Muslims, Hispanics, and African American religious families and parents. The most common areas for research were the transmission of religious beliefs between parents and children and identifying ways in which religious beliefs and practices informed approaches to parenting.

Godina (2012) researched adult participants who were brought up by Seven-Day Adventist parents. She found that there was a strong sense that parents were themselves committed to a lifestyle that was shaped by the main tenets of Adventist doctrine and were expecting the same from their children. Armet (2009) showed that parenting styles oriented to socialize children to accept religious values and norms are framed by the mutual reinforcing relationship between the family and religious institutions. Mahoney, Pargament, Murray-Swank, and Murray-Swank (2003) found the belief that family relationships are imbued with sacred qualities or connected to God, and that by studying these cognitions scientists can began to understand the ways in which religion affects family life. Volling et al. (2009) stated that when parents believe their parental role is sanctioned by God, they may use religious justification as a means of supporting what is right and wrong for their children. Petts's (2011) research results suggested that children being raised by a parent/parents who believe that religion is important to family life are associated with higher well-being. Bridges and Moore's (2002) study showed that parents' religiosity may influence behavior and beliefs that they model for their children. Power and McKinney's (2013) survey amongst college students found that parents who have a strong faith and high religious well-being are likely to transmit their religiosity to their children directly. Wilcox's (2002) study showed that religion does play a role in shaping men's commitment to their children and that religion is related to paternal involvement.

Table 2. Data Extraction Table.

Reference	Author	Study design	Population Sample size	Country	Description of study design	Description of religion	Description of parenting	Effects on parenting
1	Godina (2012)	Cross sectional	Adult participants who were brought up by one or two Seventh-Day Adventist parents who were affiliated with multicultural Adventist congregations. The age limit was 20–50.	United Kingdom	Data for this study were gathered through semistructured interviews	Religion is "a multidimensional variable that includes facets such as what people believe, feel, do, know, and how they respond to their beliefs"	Permissive discipline style, setting clear boundaries lovingly and with authority or are using an authoritarian parenting style by putting uncompromising demands on their children. Parents relate to their children and how they communicate the demands they place onto their offspring are of crucial importance not only for their children's general well-being but also for their internalization of values	There is a strong sense that parents were themselves committed to a lifestyle that was shaped by the main tenets of Adventist doctrine and were expecting the same from their children.
2	Armet (2009)	Longitudinal	NSYR conducted in 2003 and 2005. The NSYR's longitudinal telephone survey began as a nationally representative telephone survey of 3,290 English- and Spanish-speaking teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17. The baseline survey was conducted, with the teen respondents and one of their parents, between July 2002 and April 2003.	France	Longitudinal telephone survey	Religion plays an important role in adolescent identity formation by offering a transcendent worldview that grounds moral beliefs and behavioral norms in an ideological worldview that gives meaning and orients behavior.	Parenting styles oriented to socialize children to accept religious values and norms do not occur in a vacuum but are framed by the mutually reinforcing relationship between the family and religious institutions. Religious communities and traditions have shaped family formation, relations, and parenting practices.	The study found that as adolescent's personal autonomy increases (or conversely, when parent's monitoring declines), the importance of religion, but not attendance, is subject to parental influence. Older youths who value saliency are disposed to consider religion important for their own reasons rather than as a function of parental control. When a religious value is volitional and not forced, it is a better measure of internalization than religious practices.

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Table 2. (Continued).

Reference	Author	Study design	Population Sample size	Country	Description of study design	Description of religion	Description of parenting	Effects on parenting
3	Wilcock (2002)	Longitudinal	Initial survey: 1987–1988; 1,019 adults age 19 and over. Follow-up survey: 1992–1994; 1,019 primary respondents who were residential fathers of school-age children (ages 5–18).	United States	Longitudinal survey	Conservative Protestant affiliation. Mainline Catholic affiliation.	Father's role as the primary breadwinner and head of household. Men's roles as husbands and fathers.	The literature on paternal involvement indicates that such involvement is positively associated with a range of beneficial child outcomes. Religion measured by affiliation and church attendance may be indirectly linked to child outcomes through its association with paternal involvement. The study suggests that religion does play a role in shaping men's commitments to their children.
4	Mahoney et al. (2003)	Longitudinal	Marital relationships of 97 couples who were randomly recruited through child birth records. A nationally representative sample of two-parent families with young children with similar demographic characteristics (i.e., mostly White with some college education). Second investigation focused on the sanctification of parenting based on 77 middle- class, White mothers who were randomly recruited by phone from the community by using childbirth record.	United States	Longitudinal survey	Religion is distinctive because it incorporates peoples' perceptions of the "sacred" into the search for significant goals and values. Sacred refers to the holy, those things that are "set apart" from the ordinary and deserve veneration and respect. Supernatural entities (e.g., God, Christ, Buddha) and transcendental powers (e.g., Holy Spirit, karma) represent the core class of sacred objects in religions.	Use of sacred adjectives such as "miraculous" and "divine" to describe the process of becoming and being parents. Sanctification of the parent–child relationship is fostered by the meaning that many religions attach to conceiving and giving birth, events commonly portrayed as being blessings from God and fulfilling a primary spiritual purpose of marriage.	Believing family relationships are imbued with sacred qualities or connected to God. Such perceptions are substantively religious in content. By studying the implications of these cognitions, social scientists can begin to understand the unique ways in which religion affects family life.

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Table 2. (Continued).

Reference	Author	Study design	Population Sample size	Country	Description of study design	Description of religion	Description of parenting	Effects on parenting
5	Volling et al. (2009)	Longitudinal	58 two-parent families with a preschool child were recruited as part of a study examining parenting and children's prosocial behavior. Families were recruited from birth records, newspaper advertisements, and bulletins at local churches, day cares, and preschools. Families participated in two laboratory visits, each lasting approximately 3 hours, occurring about a month apart from one another.	United States	Assessment of family functioning including observations of children's helping behavior, cooperative play, sibling jealousy, and a clean-up task. Parents also received questionnaires to take home at both visits.	Christian traditions, as well as in other monotheistic world religions, parent–child relationships ideally embody divine love and reflect a covenant with God.	Religious teachings, however, emphasize that both men and women play a central role in family life. Religious fathers are involved in a culture that shapes their values and behaviors by emphasizing the importance of family relationships and a commitment to others that encourages them to be actively involved in the lives of their children.	When parents believe their parental role is sanctioned by God, they may use religious justification as a means of supporting what is right and wrong for their children or they may jointly communicate messages to their children about moral responsibility due to religious convictions that reinforce their children's regret for wrongdoing. Beliefs in the sanctification of parenting were positively related to parental induction and children's conscience. Must be cautious, however, in assuming that religion always exerts a positive impact on parenting and family life. To explore fully the sociocultural influences on children's development, future research on the role of religion in the socialization of children's moral emotions and the development of rule-compatible conduct is needed. To explore fully the sociocultural influences on children's development, future research on the role of religion in the socialization of children's moral emotions and the development of rule-compatible conduct is needed

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Table 2. (Continued).

Reference	Author	Study design	Population Sample size	Country	Description of study design	Description of religion	Description of parenting	Effects on parenting
6	Mahoney (2010)	Cross sectional	184 studies—57 quantitative studies and 23 qualitative studies addressed couples' relationships, and 80 and 24, respectively, dealt with parent-youth and family issues (e.g., divorce).	United States	Systematic literature review (meta-analysis)	Spirituality is defined as "the search for the sacred." In brief, the core of "the sacred" involves perceptions of the divine, God or transcendent reality, but may extend any aspect of life that takes on divine character and significance by virtue of its association with the core.	Family relationships involve decisions about the roles that men and women will play across the family life cycle. How conservative religious subcultures may reinforce traditional attitudes about spousal roles in households of married heterosexuals with children	Overall, the findings imply that higher general religiousness helps to form (e.g., marital unions) and maintain (e.g., lowers divorce risk) traditional family bonds. Findings related to formation include getting married, wanting and investing time in forming a parent–child relationship, and structuring spousal roles. Findings on maintenance include the quality of marital and parent-youth bonds, and the risk of divorce, domestic violence, infidelity, and child physical abuse.
7	Petts (2011)	Longitudinal	4,898 children born to both married and unmarried parents between 1998 and 2000. Of the 3,165 families in which both parents were interviewed at the three-year follow-up, 1,218 families were excluded because they did not complete either the three- or five-year child surveys. Also, 107 families who were not part of the 18-city subsample were excluded because they were not asked all of the questions of interest for this study. Finally, 123 families in which children reside with a biological parent and the parent's cohabiting partner were excluded because there are no indicators of religion for the cohabiting partners.	United States	Longitudinal birth cohort study (systematic literature review)	Religiosity is a concept that encompasses a number of beliefs and behaviors that may vary in whether and how they influence well-being.	Married parents, single mothers, and cohabiting parents	Results suggest that being raised by a mother who believes that religion is important to family life is associated with higher well-being among young children raised by married parents. In contrast, having only one parent who believes religion is important to family life is associated with lower well-being among children raised in cohabiting or single-parent families. Moreover, having parents with strict religious beliefs is associated with increased internalizing problem behavior, but is also associated with a decrease in externalizing problem behavior for children raised by cohabiting parents.

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Table 2. (Continued).

Reference	Author	Study design	Population Sample size	Country	Description of study design	Description of religion	Description of parenting	Effects on parenting
8	Bridges and Moore (2002)	Cross sectional	—	United States	Literature review	Defined spirituality as behaviors, cognitions, and emotions that arise as part of an individual's search for connection with a divine being, a higher power, or an ultimate truth. Religion or religiousness may also involve a search for the spiritual, as it is undertaken within a collective (i.e., a church or some other type of religious community) that provides guidance, validation, and support for the methods with which that search is conducted.	Authoritarian parenting styles	Parents' religiosity may influence the behaviors and beliefs that they model for their children. Prior to adolescence, parental religiosity and spirituality may have a more powerful impact on child well-being than does the child's own self-reported religiosity.

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Table 2. (Continued).

Reference	Author	Study design	Population Sample size	Country	Description of study design	Description of religion	Description of parenting	Effects on parenting
9	Power and McKinney (2013)	Cross sectional	College students attending a southeastern university and seeking extra credit in their psychology courses participated in the study. Potential participants were able to read a description of the study online before deciding to participate.	United States	An online survey system; questionnaires	Strong intrinsic Christian faith	Religiosity is a broad construct and was defined as having strength of religious faith, religious well-being, and an intrinsic orientation.	Parents who are motivated intrinsically toward their religiosity, have a strong faith, and have high religious well-being are likely to transmit their religiosity to their children directly. Perceived parental religiosity was associated with perceived positive parenting practices, which in turn was associated with emerging adult religiosity. The relationship between perceived parental religiosity and emerging adult religiosity being direct as described above, perceived positive parenting practices appeared to indirectly facilitate the transmission of perceived parental religiosity to child.
10	Wilcox (2002)	Longitudinal	1987–1988 NSFH1, a nationally representative survey of 13,017 adults age 19 and over. Follow-up survey in 1992–1994 (NSFH2)	USA	One-on-one interaction, dinner together, and youth-related activities.	Conservative Protestant and Catholic affiliations	Residential fathers are defined as biological, adoptive, or stepfathers that are living with their children at the time of the survey.	Religion does play a role in shaping men's commitments to their children. Study indicates that religion is related to paternal involvement in all three areas that were examined: one-on-one engagement, dinner with one's family, and volunteering for youth-related activities.

Note. NSYR = National Study of Youth and Religion; NSFH = National Survey of Families and Households.

The systematic review results

The aim of this systematic review was to explore the effect of religion on parenting in order to guide parents in the way they parent. Parents' religiosity may influence the behaviors and beliefs that they model for their children. Particularly in the years prior to adolescence, parental religiosity and spirituality may have a more powerful impact on child well-being than does the child's own self-reported religiosity (Bridges & Moore, 2002; Petts, 2011). It has been recognized that parents have a significant part to play in shaping the faith identity of children and engaging them in religious activities (Armet, 2009, Mahoney, 2003). Most parents saw religion as a way of life that was transmitted between generations. They considered it part of their par- enting responsibility to pass on their faith (Horwath, Lees, Sidebotham, Higgins, & Imtiaz, 2008).

Parental church attendance and religious saliency may result in more cohesive family relationships. Positive effects are especially likely if religious congruence already exists between parents and child (Mahoney et al., 2001). When parents believe their parental role is sanctioned by God, they may use religious justification as a means of supporting what is right and wrong for their children or they may jointly communicate messages to their children about moral responsibility due to religious convictions that reinforce their children's regret for wrongdoing (Volling et al., 2009).

The literature on paternal involvement indicates that such involvement is positively associated with a range of beneficial child outcomes. A study by Wilcock (2002) suggested that religion plays a role in shaping men's commitment to their children. Religious teachings, however, emphasize that both men and women play a central role in family life. Religious fathers are involved in a culture that shapes their values and behaviors by emphasizing the importance of family relationships and a commitment to others that encourages them to be actively involved in the lives of their children (Volling et al., 2009).

Religion is a broad construct and plays an important role in adolescent identity formation by offering a transcendent worldview that grounds moral beliefs and behavioral norms in an ideological world view that gives meaning and orients behavior (Volling et al., 2009). Other types of religiosity, such as extrinsic orientations and spirituality, may demonstrate different effects. In particular, both Duriez et al. (2009) and Mahoney (2010) noted different findings based on different types of religiosity.

Parenting styles oriented to socialize children to accept religious values and norms do not occur in a vacuum, but rather are framed by the mutually reinforcing relationship between the family and religious institutions. Religious communities and traditions shape family formation, relations, and parenting practices (Armet, 2009). Further, parenting also is a broad construct and is defined as parents' attempts to raise children to be competent adults. Definitions of parental competence are shaped not only by broad cultural standards but also by immediate family circumstances (e.g., poverty, family structure) and membership in various subcultures (e.g., ethnic, religious). Overall, the findings imply that higher general religiousness helps to form (e.g., marital unions) and

maintain (e.g., lowers divorce risk) traditional family bonds.

Findings related to family formation include getting married, wanting and investing time in forming a parent–child relationship, and structuring spousal roles. Findings on family maintenance include the quality of marital and parent–youth bonds, and the risk of divorce, domestic violence, infidelity, and child physical abuse (Mahoney, 2010). Results suggest that being raised by a mother who believes that religion is important to family life is associated with higher well-being among young children raised by married parents. In contrast, having only one parent who believes religion is important to family life is associated with lower well-being among children raised in cohabiting or single-parent families. Moreover, having parents with strict religious beliefs is associated with increased internalizing problem behavior, but is also associated with a decrease in externalizing problem behavior for children raised by cohabiting parents (Petts, 2011).

Discussion

While studies found positive correlations between religious conservatism, strict parenting, and nurture, they are limited in that no specific religious outcomes were measured (Armet, 2009). Children's affective discomfort about wrongdoing was also related to both parents' use of positive socialization strategies that involved praising the child's good qualities and making their approval conditional on the child's good behavior. These findings fit with prior theory and research indicating that parents' use of induction, gentle discipline, and a focus on reparation promote the child's emerging moral awareness (Grusec, 2006; Hoffman, 2000; Kochanska, 2002; Zahn- Waxler, Radke-Yarrowm, Wagner, & Chapman, 1992). Consistent with the previous research, there is some evidence suggesting that religious homo- gamy may be beneficial for young children regardless of family structure (Bartkowski, Xu, & Levin, 2008). Specifically, having two parents who frequently attend religious services is associated with lower levels of externalizing problem behavior. Having two parents who are religiously active increases the likelihood that children are exposed to and engaged in a moral community that may help to reinforce both parental and religious teachings, deterring young children from engaging in problem behavior (Myers, 1996; Smith & Denton, 2005; Petts, 2011). However, being raised by parents from different religious backgrounds appears to provide some benefits for children (Petts, 2011).

The goal of the study was to have a better understanding of the effect of religion on parenting and whether parents' beliefs have an effect on the way they parent. Overall, results provide evidence that different aspects of parental religiosity may have positive and negative consequences for young children's well-being, and that these relationships may be conditioned by the family structure in which children reside. Religiously heterogamous families may have a greater level of tolerance and respect for others that helps children to feel secure and contributes to positive developmental behavior early in life (Petts & Knoester, 2007). There is a good deal of historical evidence to suggest that religion possesses the capacity to socialize, motivate, constrain, and direct human assumption, values, preferences, moral commitments, choices and behaviors (Smith et

al., 2002; Smith, 2003). Despite ample evidence that global indexes of religiousness are linked to family functioning, the mechanism by which religion influences family dynamics is not well understood or empirically documented (Pargament, 2005).

It is widely accepted that how parents relate to their children and how they communicate the demands they place on their offspring are of crucial importance not only for their children's general well-being but also for their internalization of values (Baumrind, 1996; Dudley, 2000; Eisenberg et al., 2005). There is conflicting evidence whether parental commitment to religious beliefs is likely to result in a harsh or warm parental style (Bartkowski & Wilcox, 2000; Mahoney, 2010). Padilla-Walker and Thompson (2005), established that religious values that parents hold have a stronger impact on parenting tendencies that any other values parents hold. In a study conducted by Horwath et al. (2008) on the role of religious faith and religious practices on the parenting of adolescents, participants in the parents' focus groups frequently spoke of the influence their own parents continue to exert on them in adult life. They continually referred to ways in which their parents' religious beliefs had influenced their own approach to parenting and life choices.

It is noteworthy that although research on the beneficial effects of religiousness among adolescents has increased over the past decade, substantial gaps remain in our understanding of the role of religiousness in coping with family-related distress such as harsh parenting (Mahoney, 2013). Prior research suggests that parents shape their children's regulatory styles through sensitive caregiving in the absence of hostility (Eisenberg et al., 2001). Accordingly, it is expected that adolescents who receive harsh parenting would show poor self-control due to their experiences of poor-quality attachment, lack of warmth, and limited modeling.

Shor (1998) found that verbal abuse, such as swearing at a child, was not tolerated as it was considered to cause potential negative consequences for the child, whilst Bartkowski and Wilcox (2000) found that corporal punishment was advocated by Conservative Protestants over and above shouting at children. Harsh parenting, such as threatening, yelling, or screaming in response to misbehavior, is thought to contribute to more frequent externalizing behaviors that normalized violence or aggression (Catalano & Hawkins, 1996). On the other hand, a community sample found that higher sanctification of parenting was linked to less spanking by biblically liberal mothers, though more spanking by biblical conservatives (Murray-Swank, Mahoney, & Pargament, 2006). Biblically conservative parents cannot how- ever, be assumed to be excessively harsh. In fact, in a national survey, such parents reported yelling at their children less often than other parents (Bartkowski & Wilcox, 2000). Studies demonstrate that harsh discipline is linked to behavior problems ranging from conduct disorder to depression and low self-esteem. For instance, researchers found that the use of harsh discipline by either parent in a two-parent household was related to greater adolescent depression and externalizing behavior (Bender et al., 2007). In contrast, according to Hoskins (2014) authoritative parents score high in responsiveness and demandingness and exhibit

more supportive than harsh behaviors. Adolescents with authoritative parents are less prone to externalizing behaviors, and specifically are less likely to engage in drug use than individuals with uninvolved parents (Hoskins, 2014). Conversely authoritarian parents are low in responsiveness yet highly demanding. The authoritarian parenting style is associated with parents who emphasize obe- dience and conformity and expect that rules be obeyed without explanation in a less warm environment (Baumrind, Larzelere, & Owens, 2010). Although literature on adolescent self-control in relation to harsh parenting is currently not available, research on children indicates that harsh parenting and potential for abuse are associated with poor self-control, which in turn is associated with internalizing and externalizing problems for children (Kim-Spoon, Cicchetti, & Rogosch, 2013; Schatz, Smith, Borkowski, Whitman, & Keogh, 2008).

According to Howarth and Lees (2010), traditionally and most notably in the United States, religious parents have tendency to be perceived as authoritarian in their approach to parenting, demanding obedience from their children in line with the requirements of their particular faith (Gunnoe, Hetherington, & Reiss, 1999). However, Gunnoe et al. (1999) and Wilcox (1998), in studies of predominantly Christian families in the United States, found no association between religiosity and authoritarian parenting.

However, it appears that religious beliefs alone are unlikely to influence parenting style. For example, Danso, Hunsberger, and Pratt (1997) concluded that the right-wing authoritarian values and beliefs of "fundamentalist" [sic.] Christian participants in their study had a considerable influence on their child-rearing attitudes.

Some researchers have questioned whether higher levels of religiosity may lead to a more controlling parenting style. Danso et al. (1997) suggested that a greater parental goal of strong religious values for their children may mean that the parents are more likely to stress obedience. These researchers have hypothesized that very religious individuals may have a tendency toward a more rigid parenting style, and would thus parent in such a manner (Howarth & Lees, 2010). In turn, strict parenting may inhibit the develop- ment of a healthy religious identity (Armet, 2009). In preventing a child from questioning and struggling would be to prevent them from developing a deep and mature commitment to their heritage (Fisherman, 2002). Christian parents it appears, commonly use an authoritarian parenting style, thereby impeding the child's religious development, and possibly resulting in harmful emotional outcomes as well.

Conversely the vast majority of research has found the authoritative parenting style to be a consistent predictor of positive adolescent outcomes. Although the research overwhelmingly indicates that parenting behaviors, such as parental warmth and control are associated with positive adolescent outcomes, studies using ethnically diverse samples have found variations in the relationship between parenting style and adolescent outcomes (Brody, Kogan, Chen, & Murry, 2008). Research also suggests that parenting style and parental discipline behaviors affect adolescents differently based on cultural values among different ethnic groups within different types of communities. As mentioned

earlier, authoritarian parenting practices in ethnic minority groups often have fewer negative effects on adolescent outcomes since it is considered normative and a valued socialization mechanism (Brody et al., 2008).

Parents are the "primary socializing agents for their children" (Flor & Knapp, 2001, p. 627). Studies indicated that a child's religiosity tends to be similar to that of their parent and that membership of a religious community encourages social conformity (Flor & Knapp, 2001; Gunnoe et al., 1999). There is, however, a notion that children and their parents should be treated as separate individuals. In order to achieve this, differences in child rearing, due to family structure, religion, culture, and ethnic origins, should be respected and understood (Department of Health; Home Office & Education & Employment, 2000). For example, the dominant religious beliefs of a society are likely to have a significant influence on structures, traditions, rituals, and ways in which life is conducted within that society (Gilligan & Furness, 2006). In terms of mechanisms of internalizing parental behavioral standards, religion is a potential vehicle for internalization that has been largely overlooked in the research (Flor & Knapp, 2001). Based on the conflicting evidence on parental religious beliefs, parenting styles, and child outcomes, the mechanisms through which these behaviors are internalized could be a point of departure for future research endeavors.

Hence, in light of the aforementioned studies there is clear evidence in terms of previous and current research that there is conflicting evidence whether parental commitment to religious beliefs is likely to result in harsh or warm parental styles. This is due to the fact that there are other factors such as culture, ethnicity, religious background, parental styles, character and upbringing, community structures, as well as family values, that play a significant role on how religion effects parenting and the religious upbringing of a child.

Implications for practice

Adolescence is a period of enormous adjustment for both teenagers and families. As children transition from childhood to adulthood, they go through many physical, emotional, and behavioral changes. Not surprisingly, many parents describe adolescence as the most difficult and anxiety-provoking period of their children's life. Although this systematic review was limited to focus on parental socialization patterns that were reinforced by their religious beliefs, there are obvious limitations to this approach. Having recognized these limitations, studies that emphasize a more inclusive social ecology, including family, friends, school, and the extended community, still find that parents continue to be the primary influence in shaping their children's religiosity, even when considering changes in maturity and increased autonomy that accompany young adulthood (Boyatzis & Janicki 2003; Regnerus, Smith, & Smith, 2004).

However, it would be short sighted to ignore the influence of social networks in the development of religiosity during adolescence. Friendship networks do

matter and will continue to be a fruitful area of study, especially in areas of ambiguity. Gunnoe and Moore (2002, p. 621) for example, found that parent–peer influences were inverted to the degree that peer religiosity was a better predictor for adolescents while young adults were influenced by parents. Religion does not seem to be high on the list of priorities when it comes to scholars and professionals, especially those responsible for the welfare and safeguarding of children. The latter seems to lack awareness or training as to the role of religion in family life with many being unsure about dealing with the influence of faith on parenting. Beliefs in the sanctification of parenting were positively related to parental induction and children's conscience, however caution should be taken not to assume that religion always exerts a positive impact on parenting and family life (Volling et al., 2009).

Volling et al. (2009), further stated to explore fully the sociocultural influences on children's development, future research on the role of religion in the socialization of children's moral emotions and the devel- opment of rule-compatible conduct is needed. When families believe that their relationships are imbued with sacred qualities or connected to God, by studying the implications of these cognitions, social scientists can begin to understand the unique ways in which religion affects family life (Mahoney et al., 2003).

Conclusion

Religion, a broad construct plays an important role in adolescent identity formation. Parents' religiosity may influence the behaviors and beliefs that they model for their children. Particularly in the years prior to adolescence, parental religiosity and spirituality may have a more powerful impact on child well-being. Furthermore, religion does play a role in shaping men's commitments to their children. Religious fathers shape the values and behaviors of their children by emphasizing the importance of family relationships when they are actively involved in the lives of their children. Religious communities and traditions in turn shape family formation, relations, and parenting practices. Participants in the parents' focus groups frequently spoke of the influence of their own parents that continue to exert on them in adult life. They continually referred to ways in which their parents' religious beliefs had influenced their own approach to parenting and life choices.

It is clear from the systematic review that a lot of research has been conducted in terms of how religion affects parental styles and parenting relationships and also children and adolescents' well-being and behavior. The systematic review has shown that despite an increased interest in parenting in all sections of society, the research base that informs our understanding of religion is limited. It further shows that with interventions aimed at increasing specific skills and promoting greater understanding for the motivations of a child's behavior, parenting may significantly improve. Parenting skills are not innate and the task of parenting presents a significant challenge. Parenting nevertheless may be significantly improved with interventions aimed at increasing specific skills, and promoting greater understanding for the underlying motivations of a child's behavior.

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