



**A-level Religious Studies Survey: What Difference Does A-Level
Religious Studies Make?**

**Publications Arising from an Investigation of the Effects of Study upon
Students' Beliefs, Values, and Worldviews**

The development of the Francis Moral Values Scales: a study among 16- to 18-year-old students taking Religious Studies at A level in the UK

Village, A., & Francis, L. J. (2016). The development of the Francis Moral Values Scales: a study among 16- to 18-year-old students taking Religious Studies at A level in the UK. *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 37, 347-356. ISSN 1361 7672

Abstract

This article reports on the development of scales for measuring moral values in three domains: anti-social behaviour, sex and relationships, and substance use. Students studying religion at A level in 25 schools were invited to respond to 32 Likert items that referred to a wide range of moral issues and behaviours, employing a 5-point response scale. In the first study, responses from 652 students were subject to an exploratory factor analysis, which identified three factors that explained 47% of the variance. Three summated scales were produced that had very good internal consistency reliability: the anti-social behaviour scale (seven items, Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$), the sex and relationships scale (seven items, $\alpha = .84$), and the substance use scale (five items, $\alpha = .87$). In the second study, a repeat survey among the same schools a year later resulted in a second sample of 462 students. Confirmatory factor analysis indicated that the 19 items identified in the first study could be satisfactorily fitted to a model with the same three latent constructs. These constructs are recommended as a parsimonious way of assessing general moral values among adolescents.

Keywords: Moral values, students, psychometrics, religion

Exploring the trajectory of personal, moral and spiritual values of 16- to 18-year-old students taking religious studies at A-level in the UK

Francis, L. J., Village, A., & Parker, S. (2017). Exploring the trajectory of personal, moral and spiritual values of 16- to 18-year-old students taking religious studies at A-level in the UK. *Journal of Beliefs and Values*, 38, 18-31, ISSN 1361 7672.

Abstract

This study set out to explore the trajectory of personal, moral and spiritual values of students taking Religious Studies at A level in the UK. A sample of 150 students completed a battery of measures at the beginning of their period of A level study and again at the end. The data found no difference over this period of time in personal values (purpose in life, self-esteem, and empathy) in some moral values (concerning anti-social behaviour and concerning substance use) and in levels of religious exclusivism or frequency of private prayer. The areas in which significant differences were observed were concerned with attitude toward sex and relationships, religious pluralism, belief in life after death, and mystical orientation. Between the ages of 16 and 18 years, following two years' engagement with Religious Studies at A level, the participants became more liberal in their approach toward sex and relationships, less convinced about the truth claims of religious pluralism, less likely to adhere to traditional Christian teaching on life after death, and less open to mystical experience. They are also less certain of ever having had a religious experience, and less frequent in their practice of religious attendance.

Keywords: Religious education, adolescent religion, psychology of religion, A-level religious studies

Who studies religion at Advanced level: Why and to what effect?

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Abstract

This study was established to profile students currently studying religion at Advanced level (A-level) in terms of their demography, motivation, experience and attitudes. Eight specific areas were identified for examination: their personal motivation to study religion at A-level, the personal challenges posed by the subject, their personal experience of studying the subject, their growth in understanding stimulated by the subject, the impact of their study on respecting religious diversity, the impact on their personal development, the impact on spiritual and religious development, and the connection between studying religion at A level and their personal faith. Data were provided by 462 students at the end of the first year of A-level study. Key findings demonstrated that 78% of students opted for the subject because they enjoyed their earlier experiences of religious studies in school, that 80% of students have become more tolerant of religious diversity, and that only 7% of students feel that studying religion at A-level has undermined their personal religious faith while three times that number feel that it has affirmed their religious faith.

Keywords: Religious studies, A-level, motivation, religious development