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THE FACES OF RELIGIOSITY IN POLAND

The phenomenon of religiosity is increasingly often explored by representatives of various scientific disciplines. This is particularly noticeable in the field of the psychology of religion. The issues of human religiosity have been attracting an increasing amount of interest among Polish scholars. The present article presents the main trends illustrating the development of interest in the phenomenon of religiosity in the field of psychology. Both Polish and international contexts are considered. Additionally, the papers included in the special issue of *Roczniki Psychologiczne (Annals of Psychology)* are outlined. The special issue is devoted to the problems addressed by Polish psychologists interested in the phenomenon of human religiosity.

Keywords: psychology of religion; religiosity; interest in religiosity; psychology of religion in Poland.

Religion is an important area of life for many people – it is an important element of culture as well as provides meanings and structures to human behaviors and experiences. Survey results confirm this consistently. Both in the United States and in Europe, the number of people declaring themselves as believers exceeds 70% (The Gallup Poll, 2015). Despite the undoubtedly common presence of various manifestations of religiosity in the public sphere and in the course of human life, psychology has, for many years, devoted little attention to

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research on the psychological processes underlying religious life and experience (Pargament, Mahoney, Exline, Jones, & Shafranske, 2013). After several publications at the beginning of the 20th century (e.g., Freud, 1927/2009; James, 1902/2002), systematic research on religiosity was abandoned for the next 40 years. It was not until the late 1960s that the phenomenon of religiosity began to attract scholars' attention again. From that moment until the present day there has been a systematic growth of interest in religiosity in the field of psychology.

The dynamics of interest in these issues among scholars worldwide is well illustrated by the number of keywords connected with the psychology of religion appearing in bibliographic databases. An analysis of this kind has been performed on data from the PsycINFO database. The search terms were keywords related to the psychology of religion and spirituality (SU: (religio* OR spiritual*)). We limited the search to peer-reviewed journals. Additionally, as a measure of the potential influence of the psychology of religion on science, we searched the Web of Science database, which contains publications from the ISI Master Journal List. We entered the topic of articles connected with religion/religiosity and spirituality into the search engine (TOPIC: (religio* OR spiritual*) AND TOPIC: (Psychology)) and set the time of publication at between 1945 and 2015. With regard to the period between 1945 and 1985, the database search was conducted for five-year periods; with regard to the period from 1985 to 2015, the search was performed for one-year periods. The analysis was performed on January 26, 2017. The charts below show the number of citations (cf. Figure 1). The figure shows a significant growth of the interest in the psychology of religion starting from the mid-1960s, and then from 2000 until 2015. The growth of interest in this field in the Web of Science database was delayed by about 5 years in both cases.

The next step in the analyses was to trace the interest in the psychology of religion among Polish scholars. We estimated them based on PsycINFO and Google Scholar database search results. In PsycINFO, we ran the same search as above and additionally limited it by the parameter of Location (PL: Poland). In the Google Scholar database, we ran a search for (psychologia AND (religia OR duchowość)), restricting it to studies in Polish. With regard to the years from 1945 to 1985 the search was performed for five-year periods, and for the years from 1985 to 2015 it was performed for one-year periods. We ran the searches on January 26, 2017. Their results are presented in Figure 2.

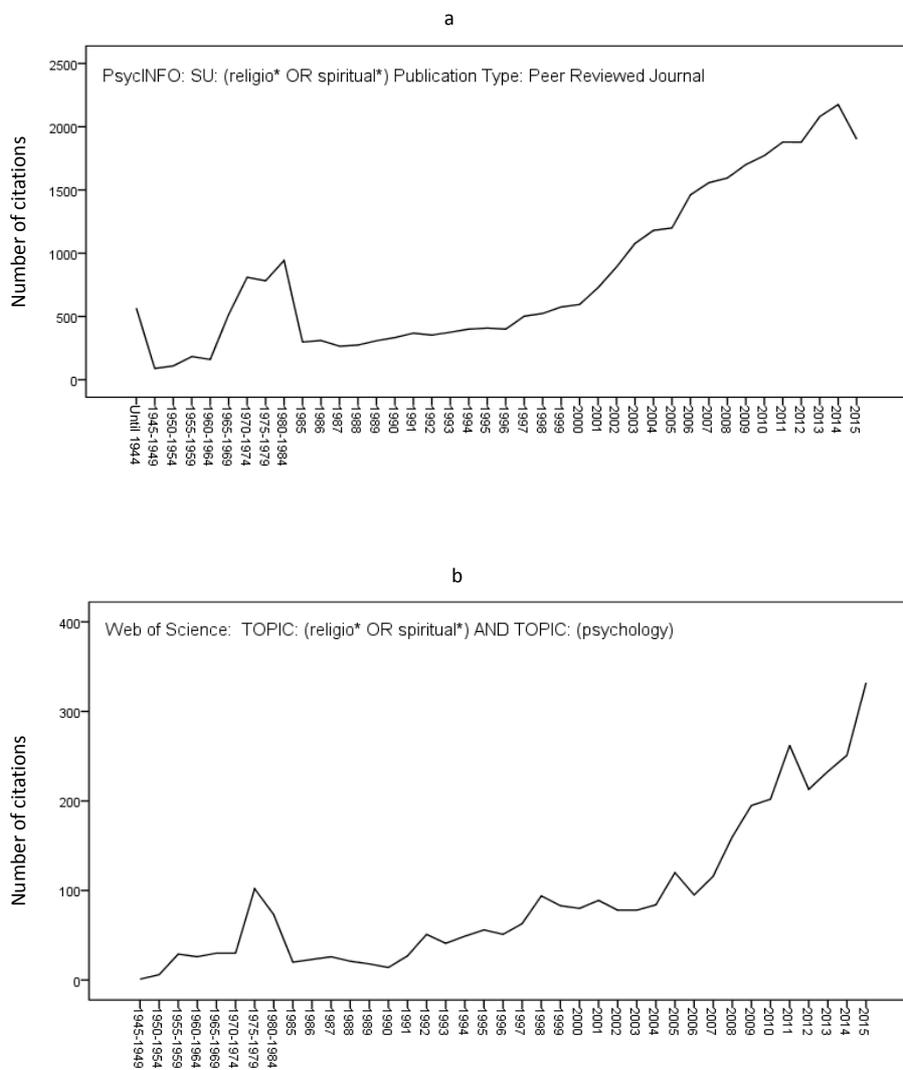


Figure 1. The number of peer-reviewed publications containing *relig** or *spiritual* as keywords in PsycINFO (a) and Web of Science (b).

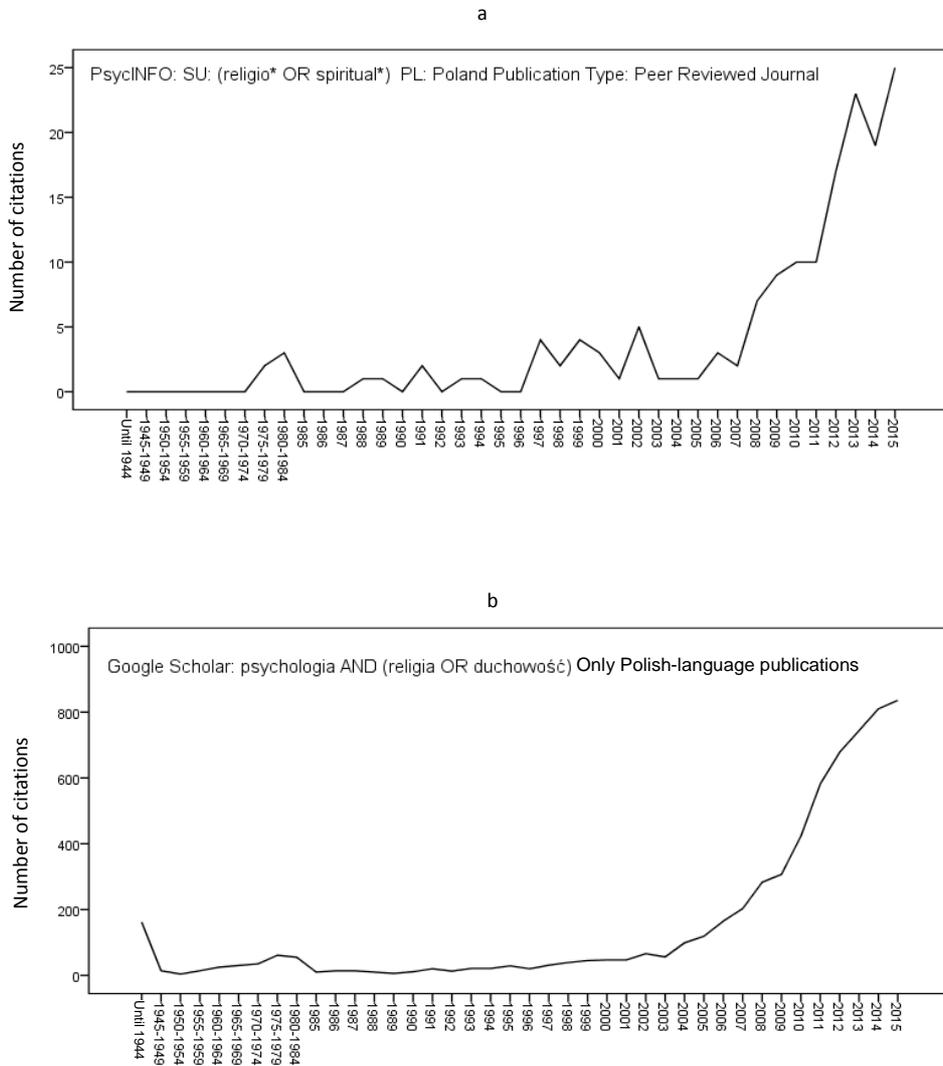


Figure 2. The number of Polish peer-reviewed publications containing keywords “religia” or “duchowość” in PsycINFO (a) and Google Scholar (b).

A comparison of the charts that illustrate publications in the psychology of religion authored by Polish scholars with those that illustrate global achievements in this respect reveals two patterns. Firstly, a smaller growth of interest in

religiosity issues can be observed in the 1960s. Secondly, there is a growth of interest in these issues in the 2000s, weaker compared to the global trends. The later growth of interest in religiosity issues in Poland is probably a by-product of the communist times, when, apart from small exceptions, these problems were not addressed in academic centers. A notable exception was the Catholic University of Lublin, whose researchers did address issues from this area in their studies despite unfavorable sociopolitical circumstances. Specific examples of this can be found in the literature on the psychology of religion. The first Polish publication in the psychology of religion recorded in the PsycINFO database is the article by Chlewiński (1981) printed in *Personality and Individual Differences*. Its author analyzed the relationship between personality and attitudes towards religion. The second Polish text recorded in international bibliographic databases is the review of Z. Chlewiński's book *Psychologia religii [The psychology of religion]*, published by Tracewicz (1984) in *Polish Psychological Bulletin*.

Currently, the psychology of religion is an area that psychologists all over the world investigate very intensively. The obtained results confirm a number of positive functions of religiosity. They also confirm that some people benefit from religiosity in various domains of their life. A large number of empirical reports consistently show that religiosity can be a source of support (Oman & Thoresen, 2005) and an important resource in the processes of coping with the stress of difficult life events (Pargament, 1997). Religious commitment reduces the frequency of risky behaviors, such as alcohol abuse (Johnson, 2013), as well as strengthens mental (Park & Slattery, 2013) and physical health (Koenig, King, & Carson, 2012).

The recent years is a time when emphasis has been placed on a new topic in the psychology of religion – namely, spirituality. Some scholars point out differences between religiosity and spirituality, while others treat the two as related (cf. Jarosz, 2010). It is likely to become an important construct used in numerous studies not only in the field of psychology but also in other disciplines of science, such as medicine.

Another confirmation of interest in issues of the psychology of religion and spirituality is the periodical conferences that bring together researchers investigating this area. One of the most well-known meetings is the conference held every second year by the one-hundred-year-old International Association for the Psychology of Religion. In Poland, the Polish Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality has existed since 2012. On its initiative, meetings are held whose aim is to promote issues of the psychology of religion and spirituality. One of such events was the 2nd International Conference of the Psychology of

Religion and Spirituality organized on June 3-4, 2014 in Lublin, Poland. Its organizers were: the Department of Social Psychology and Psychology of Religion of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin (KUL), the Institute of Psychology of the University of Gdańsk, the Institute of Religious Studies of the Jagiellonian University, and the Polish Society for the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality. Held at KUL, the event gathered together scientists from various centers in Poland and in other countries (Belgium, Latvia, and Ukraine), representing various disciplines studying religion. The participants in the event were not only psychologists but also educationalists, philosophers, theologians, sociologists, as well as specialists in religious and cultural studies. The conference aroused great interest. All the major universities and higher education institutions of Poland were represented, which shows that this field has a considerable potential that will probably be developed quite dynamically in the nearest years. A confirmation of the high potential of the psychology of religion in science was the presentation delivered at the conference by Belgian psychologist of religion Dirk Hutsebaut (2014). He pointed out the specificity of postcritical thinking in the area of religion as well as its usefulness not only in different cultures but also in different age groups.

The current issue of *Roczniki Psychologiczne (Annals of Psychology)* contains five articles describing selected studies presented during this two-day conference. The authors of the studies come from different academic centers, including the Institute of Psychology of the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin, the Institute of Psychology of the Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński University, the University of Finance and Management in Warsaw, and the University of Silesia in Katowice.

The first article, by W. Chaim, is titled “The theory of psychological types in the psychology of religion and spirituality” (Chaim, 2017). Its aim was to answer the following questions: Can certain psychological types have stronger inclinations for religiosity (spirituality) than others? and: Is psychological type linked with the manner of experiencing religiosity or spirituality? The author reports the results of various studies, hoping that they will help psychologists of religion and spirituality to better understand the patterns of human behavior. The purpose of the presented review of research is to introduce to the reader, at least partially, the broad spectrum of studies linking religiosity and spirituality with the theory of psychological types.

The second article, by A. Gołąb, bears the title “Belief and unbelief in God among Polish scholars and their views on the relationship between science and religion” (Gołąb, 2017). The author presents the results of a study conducted

among Polish academics with a doctoral degree and habilitation, representing disciplines such as chemistry, geography, mathematics, informatics, or medicine. He describes the tested scholars' towards faith. He also discusses the respondents' views on the relationship between science and religion as well as interprets them in the light of the typology proposed by Barbour. In his paper, Gołąb (2017) states that most of the scholars tested can see no conflict between science and faith. However, about a dozen percent of the respondents expressed the conviction that it is difficult to reconcile the claims of science with the contents of the religious doctrine. The author also observes that there are respondents who believe that science and religion should be treated as independent areas of inquiry. The smallest group of respondents expressed a belief in the need for dialog between religion and science.

The next paper, written by B. Zarzycka, D. Ziółkowska, and J. Śliwak, is "Religious support and religious struggle as predictors of quality of life in Alcoholics Anonymous: Moderation by duration of abstinence" (Zarzycka, Ziółkowska, & Śliwak, 2017). The subject of the study is the consequences of religious support and faith-related strain to the quality of life in people addicted to alcohol. The authors investigated three types of religious strain: negative affect towards God, religious sense of guilt, and negative social interactions connected with religion. A value of the article lies in the use of Religious Comfort and Strain Scale developed by Yali, Exline, Wood, and Worthington (Zarzycka, 2014), relatively new in Polish research. The obtained results revealed that the length of abstinence moderates the relationship between religious support and religious struggle in the group of people addicted to alcohol – in the initial stage of abstinence, a decrease in religious sense of guilt is a factor increasing the sense of quality of life, while in the case of abstinence maintained for a long time support derived from faith increases quality of life in addicted individuals.

M. Nowosielski and R. Bartczuk present an article titled "A structural analysis of deconversion processes in adolescence: The construction of the „Adolescent Deconversion Scale" (Nowosielski & Bartczuk, 2017). The authors present a proposal of using the theory of deconversion, developed by Streib, in research on religious crisis in adolescence. The phenomenon of deconversion comprises all changes in personal religiosity that consist in abandoning the current ways of experiencing and expressing religiosity as well as in adopting different forms of belief (both organized and privatized) or unbelief. The theory of deconversion provided a perspective for developing a new assessment method – the Adolescent Deconversion Scale. This instrument makes it possible to measure the following deconversion processes characteristic of adolescence: (1) abandonment of

faith, (2) leaving the religious community, (3) experience of transcendental emptiness, and (4) moral criticism. Analyses of psychometric properties confirmed the acceptable reliability and validity of the Adolescent Deconversion Scale.

The last article, authored by J. Polak and D. Grabowski, is “Preliminary psychometric characteristics of the Polish version of the Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10-PL) by Everett Worthington and colleagues” (Polak & Grabowski, 2017). The article presents the theoretical basis and psychometric properties of the Polish adaptation of this method. The authors have found the results obtained in the Polish sample to be consistent with those obtained in American samples. The high internal consistency and high test-retest stability of the scales have also been confirmed.

The statistics from academic databases cited in this paper attest to an increasing interest in religiosity and spirituality issues. In the case of the literature published worldwide, mainly in English, the subject of religiosity is treated equally with other areas of psychological research, and the results of these investigations are published in journals of increasingly high scientific significance. In Poland, however, it seems there is still much to be done in the field of the psychology of religion and spirituality. The psychology of religion in Poland still has to catch up with the West. It is therefore particularly pleasing that more and more scholars choose to address religiosity issues in their analyses. Let us hope that the present special issue of *Annals of Psychology*, devoted to the psychology of religion, will be at least a small contribution to the development of this field of research in Poland.

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