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The Complexity of Quest in Emerging Adults' Religiosity, Well-Being, and Identity

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The construct of quest as measured by the Quest Scale raises complexities that this study addressed with online surveys measuring religiosity, ego identity, and well-being of graduates from two Christian colleges. Intrinsic questers (those above the scale midpoint in intrinsic and quest scores but below the extrinsic midpoint) made up over half of those high in intrinsic religiosity and did not differ in Christian orthodoxy, religious identity, religious coping, or well-being from the pure intrinsic (those high in intrinsic religiosity). Indiscriminately pro-religious questing individuals (those high in intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity and quest) were less religious and showed poorer coping than intrinsic questers. Quest appears to be a reasonable measure of religious orientation, improving prediction of Christian orthodoxy, religious identity, and religious coping, and was more highly correlated with ego identity exploration than with stress. In association with intrinsic religiosity quest does not appear to indicate weak religiosity or poor well-being. Instead, intrinsic questers may pursue a distinctive developmental trajectory, a path of existential searching by which emerging adults manage the demands of contemporary culture while maintaining a mature faith.

Keywords: *quest, intrinsic religiosity, identity commitment, emerging adulthood, well-being.*

INTRODUCTION

Quest is the “open-ended, responsive dialogue with existential questions raised by the contradictions and tragedies of life” (Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis 1993:169) that, according to Batson and his colleagues, should characterize mature religiosity. Yet, the Quest Scale (Batson and Schoenrade 1991a, 1991b), by which quest is commonly measured, does not positively correlate with other measures of religious orientation or with well-being, as one would expect (Donahue 1985; Milevsky and Levitt 2004). Thus, quest represents an intriguing measure of religious orientation. We propose to explore quest during emerging adulthood, a time of intense existential questioning and exploration in many arenas of life, including faith and identity (Smith 2005). Not surprisingly, individuals in this stage of life show higher levels of quest (Hood and Morris 1985), making this a fruitful time to explore quest and its relationships with other measures of religiosity, as well as with well-being and ego identity.

Three measures of religious orientation have commonly been used: the intrinsic and extrinsic scales (Allport and Ross 1967) and quest. Of these, intrinsic orientation is the most commonly

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measured dimension (Hill and Hood 1999). In explaining intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity, Allport and Ross assert: “the extrinsically motivated individual *uses* his religion, whereas the intrinsically motivated individual *lives* his religion” (1967:434). Those who are intrinsically motivated find their “master motive in religion” (Allport and Ross 1967:434), whereas those who are extrinsically motivated are driven by values that are instrumental and utilitarian. In contrast to both of these, a religious orientation of quest is marked by complexity, doubt, tentativeness, and openness to alternatives that characterizes some individuals’ experience of religion. The Quest Scale that we used was developed by Batson and Schoenrade (1991a, 1991b) in response to psychometric concerns with the Batson (1976) scale, the most common earlier measure (Hill and Hood 1999), and was designed to measure these qualities. However, questions remain about what the revised scale measures, particularly because it fails to positively correlate with other measures of religiousness (Donahue 1985).

Each measure of religious orientation is more complicated than generally understood and thus deserves further attention (Graham, McDonald, and Klaassen 2008). For example, intrinsic religiosity may actually capture high levels of religious commitment (Donahue 1985) or, alternatively, ethical absolutism (Watson et al. 1998) rather than mature religiosity. Nevertheless, quest as a measure has been subject to even greater scrutiny. For example, Watson and colleagues (1998) suggested that quest might reflect a heroic “leap of faith” in the face of mystery; on the other extreme of possibilities, others wondered if quest instead measures agnosticism or doubt (Donahue 1985; Watson, Morris, and Hood 1989). Some have associated quest with the personality variable of openness (Burris 1994; Simpson, Newman, and Fuqua 2010); others have questioned whether the measure taps into identity development (Boyatzis and McConnell 2006). We hope to explore whether quest is a reasonable measure of religious orientation by examining whether it helps to predict other measures of religiosity.

The three measures of religious orientation have all been examined in association with well-being and identity development, and quest has been studied in association with trauma. Intrinsic religiosity, for example, predicted improved well-being in earlier research (Milevsky and Levitt 2004; Paloutzian 1996; Williamson and Sandage 2009) whereas extrinsic religiosity and quest have been shown to bring potential costs (Donahue 1985; Milevsky and Levitt 2004; Williamson and Sandage 2009). Ego identity commitment was positively related to intrinsic religiosity (Lee, Miller, and Chang 2006). When the relationship between identity development and quest was examined, Batson (1976) predicted a positive relationship with quest but Klaassen and McDonald (2002) failed to find this relationship as predicted and Watson and Morris (2005) demonstrated a more nuanced relationship. When the relationship between quest and trauma was examined, Calhoun and colleagues (2000) concluded that posttraumatic growth was related to a quest orientation to trauma. We hope to better describe quest by measuring its associations with well-being and ego identity, as well as stress (rather than trauma).

THEORETICAL DIMENSIONS OF QUEST

Orthogonal to Other Religious Orientation Measures

One important question within the literature is the relationships among the three measures of religious orientation: intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest. If they are orthogonal or at least not highly correlated, then a categorical analysis may be possible, allowing the kinds of conclusions about quest that might help to understand this complex measure. Categorical analysis is justified, we believe, because in this sample being high or low in religiosity leads to distinctive experiences for these individuals. Categorical analysis, however, brings costs, primarily in the loss of statistical power that comes from converting continuous to categorical data and the potential distortion of data (Burris 1994; Cohen 1983).

Allport (1966) originally argued that intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity were inversely related to each other, but later evidence led Allport and Ross (1967) to revise this assumption and hypothesize an orthogonal (i.e., independent) relationship. Batson (1976) also presumed an orthogonal relationship when he developed his three-dimensional means-ends-quest model from which his measure of quest is derived. Nevertheless, research has not clearly supported orthogonality (Hilty, Morgan, and Hartman 1985), and others (Burris 1994; Donahue 1985) have proposed that there may be a curvilinear relationship between scores on the intrinsic scale and scores on the extrinsic and quest scales. With a curvilinear relationship, scores below the midpoint on the Quest Scale correlate positively but those above the midpoint correlate negatively with intrinsic religiosity. We have chosen to favor a categorical analysis, and there is precedent for this choice. For example, Burris (1994) used midpoint splits to demonstrate differences with high and low religious orientation measures on a range of variables such as impression management and self-deception.

When participants are categorized by midpoint splits, those above the midpoint in intrinsic religiosity and quest, and below the midpoint on extrinsic religiosity, are called "intrinsic questers." This category may seem an unlikely one because an intrinsic has been described as a "true believer" (Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis 1993:163). He or she would presumably therefore have already resolved questions about his or her beliefs and would not expect them to change. However, Beck has argued that quest's "existential engagement is compatible with religious belief" (2006:143–44) and that one mode of faith is expressed by being "willing to sit with or even embrace the confusions, doubts, and anxieties of belief." People with high intrinsic religiosity and quest, earlier called existential questers (Beck 2006) and committed questers (Graham, MacDonald, and Klaassen 2008), have been described as having "greater awareness of the existential functioning of [their] beliefs" in the face of such experiences as "human suffering and death" (Beck 2006:208, 214). This perspective can however be distinguished from true doubt (sometimes called "hard" quest) (Beck and Jessup 2004) by being grounded in strong faith, even a strongly orthodox faith.

A Positive Predictor of Other Measures of Religiosity and Well-Being

A second puzzle within quest is that, despite conceptualizations of quest as a measure of more mature religiosity (Batson and Ventis 1982), quest is generally negatively correlated with other measures of religiosity (Donahue 1985). To explore this puzzle further, three additional measures of religiosity were chosen to assess the impact of religious orientation on religiosity: Christian orthodoxy, religious identity, and religious coping. Intrinsic religiosity is positively related to each of these characteristics, although earlier research has found that whereas the relationship with orthodoxy and religious identity is consistently positive, the relationship with religious coping is more mixed (Hunsberger and Platonow 1986; Pargament et al. 1992; Watson and Morris 2005). The association of quest with each of these is less clear. Quest was found to correlate negatively or not at all with Christian orthodoxy (Beck and Jessup 2004), negatively with religious interest (Watson and Morris 2005), and sometimes positively with components of religious coping (Pargament et al. 1992). We propose that a categorical analysis of quest, if statistically defensible, would help to clarify the relationship of quest with these religious variables.

Quest also negatively predicts spiritual and psychological well-being, including life satisfaction (Genia 1996; Williamson and Sandage 2009). In contrast, religiosity, including intrinsic religiosity, is generally associated with better coping (Pargament, Ano, and Wachholtz 2005), improved well-being (Milevsky and Levitt 2004; Williamson and Sandage 2009), and higher life satisfaction (Mela et al. 2008). The implications of well-being for extrinsic religiosity are more mixed (Milevsky and Levitt 2004).

A Measure of Identity Exploration or Existential Struggle

A third complication with the Quest Scale is what it measures. Some have suggested that quest is associated with identity exploration and demonstrated some relationship with identity (Klaassen and McDonald 2002; Puffer et al. 2008; Watson and Morris 2005; Watson et al. 1998). If so, quest may peak during times of identity instability, thus making emerging adulthood a particularly informative time to explore the parallels between quest and identity. Alternatively, several studies have attempted to explore Batson's (1976) prediction that quest is a result of existential struggle with tragedy and conflict (Burris et al. 1996; Calhoun et al. 2000; Krauss and Flaherty 2001). Consistent with this hypothesis, research has documented increases in individuals' questing when faced with tragedy and family conflict (Burris et al. 1996; Calhoun et al. 2000) and in some cases subsequent posttraumatic growth (Calhoun et al. 2000).

THE CURRENT STUDY

The current study was conducted with highly religious emerging adults who were alumni of two Christian liberal arts colleges. Within this context, some indications of the "ideological surround" (Watson et al. 1998) of quest may be provided by analysis of some of the "nonempirical, normative, and sociological assumptions" that characterize this unique subculture. Such environments are marked by ongoing discussion of faith and belief, and take religious values seriously (Freitas 2008). In contrast to the notion that such colleges are highly conformist and inimical to questioning, the explicit religious orientation of the college may give students more permission to openly share and debate their questions and even their doubts. Within this environment, we expected that those high in each of the religious orientations would potentially have a distinctive experience in comparison to those low in the same orientation, providing justification for categorizing the sample on these dimensions. We expected that our population would provide sufficient numbers of individuals who are high in intrinsic religiosity and also high in quest. With a large sample, we hoped to refine current descriptions of individuals with these religious orientations by using measures of their everyday lives.

If analysis supported the use of midpoint splits (following Burris 1994; Donahue 1985; MacCallum et al. 2002), we planned to define eight subgroups of participants using intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest scores. Emerging adults who are, for example, high in intrinsic religiosity but low in extrinsic religiosity and quest (i.e., the pure intrinsics) could be compared to those who are high in intrinsic religiosity and quest but low in extrinsic religiosity (i.e., the intrinsic questers). "Pure extrinsics" are those who are high in extrinsic religiosity but low in intrinsic and quest scores; in comparison, "extrinsic questers" are those who are similarly high in extrinsic and low in intrinsic religiosity, but high in quest. "Pure questers" are those who are high in quest scores but low in both intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. The remaining two groups are defined in a way that parallels the other concepts: the "indiscriminately pro-religious" are high in intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity but low in quest, and the "indiscriminately pro-religious questers" are high in intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity and in quest.

In the current study, we also explored the association of quest with identity development and with life stress. As identity commitments are made, quest may decline and well-being may improve. Further, quest may be particularly low, and well-being high, when identity is achieved (Erikson 1968). Finally, although we do not measure trauma in the current study, we do measure stress and assess whether quest increases with stress.

HYPOTHESES

We explored the religiosity, ego identity, and well-being of individuals with various religious orientations. Due to the complexity of our variables, we generated many predictions that might

clarify the nature of religiosity in emerging adults and the relations between different types of religious orientations. We predicted that quest would be significantly correlated with intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity (i.e., would not be orthogonal).

Second, we hypothesized a significant three-way interaction among the measures of religious orientation. This taxometric finding would allow using midpoint splits to explore the distinctive patterns of scores above and below the scale midpoints. Burris (1994) observed that it is reasonable, for example, for those high in intrinsic religiosity to have a “purer” orientation (i.e., be lower in both extrinsic religiosity and quest and thus have scores that were negatively correlated) but for those low in intrinsic religiosity to have correspondingly low extrinsic and quest scores and thus scores that are positively correlated with extrinsic religiosity and quest. A significant interaction would allow further exploration of patterns such as these.

We expected that quest scores would predict lower scores on other religiosity variables: Christian orthodoxy, religious identity, and religious coping. Further, consistent with earlier research on the effects of quest on measures of religious orientation, well-being, and identity, we expected that the intrinsic questers (i.e., the emerging adults high in intrinsic religiosity and quest but low in extrinsic religiosity) would have poorer well-being and less well-developed ego identities than those high in intrinsic religiosity and low in quest and extrinsic religiosity (the pure intrinsics). Consistent with Allport and Ross (1967), we predicted that the indiscriminately pro-religious (i.e., emerging adults high in intrinsic and extrinsic but low in quest) would differ from pure intrinsics in having lower well-being and a less well-developed ego identity. In a parallel way, we expected that the indiscriminately pro-religious questers (i.e., those high in all three measures) would differ from the intrinsic questers. Consistent with the definition of quest, we predicted that the identity statuses of those high in quest would show more instances of moratorium (i.e., exploration) than of identity achievement (commitment and exploration) and foreclosure (commitment) than those low in quest.

Because of quest’s demonstrated associations with trauma (Calhoun et al. 2000; Klaassen and McDonald 2002; Krauss and Flaherty 2001), we also predicted that quest would be significantly correlated with stress.

METHOD

Participants

All recent and two-year alumni in 2008 and recent, two-year, and four-year alumni in 2010 at two Christian colleges, one in the Midwest and one in the Northeast, were contacted and asked to complete an online, hour-long survey (hosted by Zoomerang in 2008 and SurveyMonkey in 2010). A total of 1,246 responded (28 percent; 481 in 2008, and 765 in 2010), some of whom completed the surveys twice ($n = 284$) and some only once ($n = 678$). Graduation year data are not examined further. Because the data could be more easily interpreted if the samples were comparable on the variables of interest, differences on all measures were compared by multivariate analyses of variance (as described below) in the responses of those who took the survey once and those who took the survey twice. If the subsamples were not found to be significantly different on the religiosity variables of interest, the data from those who completed the survey once could be combined with those from those who completed the survey twice.

The sample (M age = 23 years, range 20–30) was largely Caucasian (92 percent), female (70 percent), and Protestant (93 percent, predominantly self-identified as “nondenominational,” Anglican/Episcopal, and American Baptist; 3 percent reported they had no affiliation). On several basic measures of religiosity, participants indicated they were highly religious. For example, religion was “very important” to 83 percent of the participants, 99 percent reported they were

“moderately to extremely” interested in religion, and 84 percent reported attending church at least once a week.

Procedure

Alumni offices at the two colleges provided the names and email addresses of graduates, designated by number and not name. Alumni from May in a particular year included graduates from the prior December and subsequent August. Alumni were sent an email with a distinctive link to the survey and, if they accessed the survey and agreed to participate, were given information about confidentiality.

Measures

In the surveys, participants provided basic demographic information (e.g., age, marital status) and completed three measures of religious orientation.

Quest

The Quest Scale (Batson and Schoenrade 1991b) consists of three subscales: openness to change, self-criticism and perception of religious doubt as positive, and readiness to face existential questions without reducing their complexity. Each subscale is made up of four items rated on a nine-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 9 = *strongly agree*). We used the total score ($\alpha = .84$), not subscale scores, as the measure of quest, consistent with the recommendation of Simpson, Newman, and Fuqua (2010).

Intrinsic and Extrinsic Religiosity

Intrinsic orientation ($\alpha = .81$) was assessed by the 14 intrinsic items on the 42-item Intrinsic/Extrinsic Scale—Revised (Gorsuch and Friesen 1998¹). Each item (e.g., “I try hard to live my life according to my religious beliefs”) was rated on a five-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Extrinsic religiosity was measured with the remaining 28 items on the Intrinsic/Extrinsic Scale—Revised (Gorsuch and Friesen 1998), with each item (e.g., “I go to church because it helps me make friends”) rated on the same five-point scale.

Christian Orthodoxy, Religious Identity, and Religious Coping

Three additional scales assessed components of religiosity that measure the impact of religious orientation on one’s religious beliefs and engagement with the world. The Christian Orthodoxy Scale (Fullerton and Hunsberger 1982; $\alpha = .98$) had 24 statements, rated on a seven-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*), that assess the degree of acceptance of beliefs (e.g., the divinity of Jesus, life after death, efficacy of prayer) that define an orthodox Christian faith (Hill and Hood 1999). Religious identity (Cohen and Hill 2007; $\alpha = .93$) was derived from summing responses to two questions: “How important a part of your identity is your religion or faith?” and “If someone wanted to understand who you are as a person, how important is your religion or faith in that?” Responses to these questions were rated on seven-point scales (1 = *not at all important*, 7 = *very important*). On the four-item Religious Coping Scale (from the COPE) (Carver, Scheier, and Weintraub 1989; $\alpha = .85$), respondents answered such questions as “I try to find comfort in my religion,” using a four-point scale (1 = *I usually don’t do this at all*, 4 = *I usually do this a lot*), and their responses were summed.

¹This version of the I/E scale—Revised was used at the suggestion of Richard Gorsuch via personal communication.

Ego Identity

Identity was measured by the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ) (Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, and Geisinger 1995), which assesses identity in eight areas (e.g., values and family) and provides separate scores for exploration ($\alpha = .74$) and commitment ($\alpha = .80$). Participants responded to 16 commitment and 16 exploration items on a seven-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). To derive identity statuses, commitment scores above 62 (as recommended by Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, and Geisinger 1995) were categorized as high commitment and those at or below 62 as low commitment; exploration scores above 66.5 were categorized as high exploration and below 66.5 as low exploration. High scores in both areas defined the ego identity status of identity achievement (rank = 4); a low score in commitment but high score in exploration defined identity moratorium (rank = 3); a high score in commitment but low score in exploration defined identity foreclosure (rank = 2); and a low score in both areas defined identity diffusion (rank = 1) (Marcia 1966).

Well-Being

We assessed five outcomes: perceived stress, stress, coping, general life satisfaction, and faith satisfaction. The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) (Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein 1983) ($\alpha = .87$) asks participants to respond to questions about their feelings about stress (e.g., “In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control the important things in your life?”) on a five-point scale (0 = *never*, 4 = *fairly often*). We used the PSS measure in addition to a measure of stressful experiences because earlier studies (Cohen, Kamarck, and Mermelstein 1983) indicated that those who are coping well perceive themselves as under less stress, which potentially attenuates the predictive usefulness of the stress measure. We derived stress and coping from the Brief Stress and Coping Inventory (BSCI) (Rahe and Tolles 2002) with 10 sections. Five sections measured stress (e.g., life events and recent life changes) and five coping (e.g., health habits and social support). Stress items consisted of weighted yes/no answers (except one section of life events with a rarely, sometimes, or often scale), summed within each section, “transformed [for each section] into derived [quartile] scores” (Rahe and Tolles 2002:65), and summed across the five sections. Among the coping scales, health habits were assessed using weighted yes/no answers and the remaining scales by three-choice answers (i.e., rarely, sometimes, or often). Responses to coping items were summed, as were responses to stress items (ranges 0 to 15). Cronbach’s alphas were derived for each section with scaled results (as in the original study):² life events (.53), social support (.76), responses to stress (.69), life satisfaction (.57), and purpose and connection (.78). Published alphas are .71, .83, .71, .64, and .84, respectively (Rahe and Tolles 2002). The final two well-being measures were the General Life Satisfaction Scale, “How satisfied are you at present with your life as a whole?” (Fujita and Diener 2005), and the Faith Satisfaction Scale, a parallel question created for this study, “How satisfied are you with your faith life at this point?” Each was rated on a seven-point scale (1 = *extremely dissatisfied*, 7 = *extremely satisfied*).

Data Analysis

The sample was made up of 678 alumni who participated once and made up the cross-sectional sample as well as 284 alumni (119 from 2008 and 175 from 2006) who participated in the study twice. Analyses, as explained next, indicated no significant differences between these two groups, allowing the formation of a large sample consisting of 475 recent alumni,

²We are concerned about these low alphas but chose the measure for its specificity about life characteristics that assess stress and coping. We also recognize there is debate about the usefulness of Cronbach’s alpha in measuring internal consistency. Indeed, Sijtsma (2009:119) concludes, “alpha is not a measure of internal consistency.”

577 two-year alumni, and 194 four-year alumni. To assess whether this was appropriate, we first tested these two samples for differences on the variables of interest (intrinsic, extrinsic, quest, Christian orthodoxy, religious identity, religious coping, commitment, exploration, perceived stress, stress, coping, general life satisfaction, faith life satisfaction).

Using the resulting data set, we then examined correlations among the variables and used regression analyses to explore whether quest contributed to the prediction of religiosity (i.e., Christian orthodoxy, religious identity, and religious coping). We entered standardized intrinsic religiosity, extrinsic religiosity, and quest scores into multiple regression analyses, with main effects entered as step 1; main effects and two-way interactions as step 2; and main effects, two-way interactions, and the three-way interaction as step 3. These analyses also allowed us to examine whether we were statistically justified in creating subgroups by intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest scores (Burris 1994; Donahue 1985; MacCallum et al. 2002).

We then identified types of religious orientation categories by midpoint split and explored religiosity, ego identity, and well-being for each category. Finally, we derived ego identity statuses as recommended by Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, and Geisinger (1995) and compared the ego identity statuses of individuals in each of the religious orientation categories.

RESULTS

Intrinsic Religiosity, Extrinsic Religiosity, and Quest

Whereas 98 percent of the sample scored below the extrinsic religiosity scale midpoint (84), 6 percent of scores were below the intrinsic religiosity midpoint (42), and 39 percent below the quest midpoint (60). As shown in Table 1, intrinsic scores were negatively correlated with extrinsic and quest scores, and extrinsic scores were positively correlated with quest, all at $p < .001$.

Correlations were derived within groups of high and low scorers on the intrinsic religiosity measure by subdividing scores on the scale midpoint, as suggested by Donahue (1985) and Burris (1994). Intrinsic religiosity correlated negatively with extrinsic and quest ($-.17$ and $-.20$, respectively, $p < .01$) for participants ($n = 1,170$) whose intrinsic score was above the midpoint, and positively but not significantly ($.16$ and $.05$, respectively) for participants ($n = 76$) below the midpoint.

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, and ranges of religious orientation, ego identity, and well-being measures, and correlations of religious orientation scores with ego identity and well-being

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	Intrinsic	Extrinsic	Quest
Intrinsic	53.98	7.08	23–70			
Extrinsic	54.50	13.45	28–140	-.21**		
Quest	62.87	15.66	20–105	-.27**	.27**	
Commitment	63.84	9.88	25–92	.34**	-.11**	-.41**
Exploration	67.88	8.90	24–91	-.14**	.00	.41**
Perceived stress	24.08	7.43	7–53	-.08**	.10**	.13**
Stress	9.61	2.57	0–15	-.03	.03	.08**
Coping	9.10	3.10	0–15	.29**	-.18**	-.18**
General life satisfaction	5.12	.72	1–7	.10**	-.05	-.07*
Faith satisfaction	4.68	1.27	1–7	.32**	-.18**	-.19**

Note: $N = 1,246$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Correlations with Identity and Well-Being

Correlations were as expected, as shown in Table 1. When correlations were significant, intrinsic religiosity was positively correlated with ego commitment and well-being measures, and negatively correlated with exploration and perceived stress. Extrinsic religiosity was negatively correlated with ego identity commitment and well-being, and positively correlated with perceived stress. Quest was similarly negatively correlated with ego identity commitment and well-being measures and positively correlated with exploration, stress, and perceived stress. Quest was more highly correlated with commitment and exploration ($-.41$, $.41$, respectively) than stress or perceived stress ($.08$, $.13$, respectively). Correlations of commitment and exploration with quest scores below the midpoint ($-.24$, $+.23$, respectively) and above the midpoint ($-.29$, $+.26$, respectively) did not differ from one another.

Christian Orthodoxy, Religious Identity, and Religious Coping

Religiosity scores in the sample were high. For religious identity, the mean score in the current study was 12.42 out of 14 ($SD = 2.28$), and for religious coping the mean was 12.90 out of 16 ($SD = 2.41$). The mean score on Christian orthodoxy was 157.70 out of 168 ($SD = 20.94$).

When predicting religious identity by intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest orientation scores (see Table 2), the three-way interaction was significant, $F(7, 1,238) = 318.23$, $p < .001$, with small R^2 change (.004), allowing subdivision of the sample by midpoint splits. Significant main effects and two-way interactions, $F(3, 1,242) = 719.83$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .63$, and $F(6, 1,239) = 365.88$, $p < .001$, R^2 change = .004, respectively, were then explored. As expected, intrinsic religiosity predicted higher religious identity, and extrinsic religiosity and quest predicted lower religious identity. Surprisingly, as measured by the three-way interaction, low intrinsic religiosity in combination with low extrinsic religiosity and low quest predicted lower religious identity than expected. When the significant two-way interactions were examined, high intrinsic religiosity in combination with low extrinsic religiosity predicted higher religious identity than expected, and low extrinsic religiosity in combination with low quest also predicted higher religious identity than expected. The latter relationship dropped out, however, in Model 3.

When predicting religious coping, although main effects will be examined in the next section, it is worth noting that intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest orientations each contributed to the final model of religious coping, $F(3, 1,242) = 366.33$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .47$, with no significant interactions (see Table 3). Extrinsic religiosity did not contribute to the prediction of religious coping in Model 1. Finally, for Christian orthodoxy (see Table 4), although the three-way interaction was not significant, each main effect except extrinsic religiosity and each two-way interaction except

Table 2: Summary of step-wise regression analysis for variables predicting religious identity

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Intrinsic	.71	.02	.71**	.69	.02	.69**	.70	.02	.70**
Extrinsic	-.19	.02	-.19**	-.18	.02	-.18**	-.19	.02	-.19**
Quest	-.07	.02	-.07**	-.06	.02	-.06**	-.07	.02	-.07**
Intrinsic \times Extrinsic				.05	.02	.06**	.07	.02	.08**
Intrinsic \times Quest				.03	.02	.03	.03	.02	.03
Extrinsic \times Quest				.04	.02	.04*	.03	.02	.03
Intrinsic \times Extrinsic \times Quest							-.06	.02	-.07**

Note: Intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest scores are standardized. $N = 1,246$. ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Table 3: Summary of step-wise regression analysis for variables predicting religious coping

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Intrinsic	.63	.02	.63**	.63	.02	.63**	.63	.02	.63**
Extrinsic	-.04	.02	-.04	-.05	.02	-.05*	-.05	.02	-.05*
Quest	-.13	.02	-.13**	-.12	.02	-.12**	-.13	.02	-.13**
Intrinsic \times Extrinsic				-.00	.02	-.00	.00	.02	.00
Intrinsic \times Quest				-.00	.02	-.00	-.00	.02	-.00
Extrinsic \times Quest				.03	.02	.03	.03	.02	.03
Intrinsic \times Extrinsic \times Quest							-.01	.02	-.02

Note: Intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest scores are standardized; $N = 1,246$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

Table 4: Summary of step-wise regression analysis for variables predicting Christian orthodoxy

	Model 1			Model 2			Model 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Intrinsic	.59	.02	.59**	.27	.12	.27**	.51	.02	.50**
Extrinsic	-.04	.02	-.04	-.03	.02	-.03	-.03	.02	-.03
Quest	-.21	.02	-.21**	-.24	.02	-.24**	-.24	.02	-.24**
Intrinsic \times Extrinsic				.01	.02	.01**	.01	.02	.01**
Intrinsic \times Quest				.19	.02	.19**	.19	.02	.19**
Extrinsic \times Quest				-.06	.02	.07	-.07	.02	-.07
Intrinsic \times Extrinsic \times Quest							-.01	.02	-.01

Note: Intrinsic, extrinsic, and quest scores are standardized. $N = 1,246$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$.

extrinsic by quest improved its prediction, $F(3, 1,242) = 370.73$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .47$, and $F(6, 1,239) = 215.63$, $p < .001$, R^2 change = .04, respectively.

Pure Intrinsic, Intrinsic Questers, and Indiscriminately Pro-Religious Questers

Religiosity groups were developed by midpoint splits in the three measures of orientation, that is, by subdividing the sample into those at and above the true midpoint of the scale and those below the midpoint on each of the three measures: intrinsic religiosity, extrinsic religiosity, and quest. Pure intrinsic ($n = 472$; high in intrinsic and low in extrinsic and quest) and intrinsic questers ($n = 667$; high in intrinsic and quest and low in extrinsic) were defined by the scale midpoints, as were pure extrinsic ($n = 1$; high in extrinsic and low in intrinsic and quest), extrinsic questers ($n = 9$; high in extrinsic and quest and low in intrinsic), and pure questers ($n = 73$; high in quest and low in intrinsic and extrinsic). The indiscriminately pro-religious ($n = 1$) were defined as those high in intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity (and low in quest), consistent with Allport and Ross (1967), and the indiscriminately pro-religious questers ($n = 17$) were high in all three measures. Pure intrinsic made up 41 percent and intrinsic questers, 58 percent of those who scored high in intrinsic in this sample (which includes the pro-religious, pro-religious questers, intrinsic, and intrinsic questers). Those who scored below the midpoint in all three scales were described as the disengaged ($n = 6$). Because of the small numbers in these cells, the pure extrinsic, extrinsic questers, indiscriminately pro-religious, and disengaged were removed from further analysis.

Table 5: Means and standard deviations for religious orientation, ego identity, and well-being measures by group, with univariate F values and Tukey contrasts

	Pure Intrinsics (<i>SD</i>)	Intrinsic Questers (<i>SD</i>)	Pro-Religious Questers (<i>SD</i>)	Questers (<i>SD</i>)	F value (3, 1,225)
<i>n</i>	472	667	17	73	
Christian Orthodoxy	165.54 (7.66)	159.02 (14.13)	151.34 (18.93)	107.01 (37.13)	335.20 ^{**} , ^a
Religious Identity	13.26 (1.34)	12.59 (1.71)	10.29 (2.20)	7.30 (3.00)	270.48 ^{**} , ^a
Religious Coping	13.91 (2.08)	12.96 (2.38)	11.94 (2.90)	7.19 (2.59)	182.56 ^{**} , ^b
Commitment	67.97 (9.39)	61.92 (9.08)	59.87 (8.01)	57.13 (10.01)	54.86 ^{**} , ^c
Exploration	64.21 (8.79)	69.90 (7.91)	70.35 (8.63)	72.52 (8.48)	52.03 ^{**} , ^d
Stress	9.36 (2.51)	9.72 (2.59)	9.47 (3.36)	10.33 (.47)	3.33 [*] , ^e
Perceived Stress	23.01 (7.04)	24.70 (7.57)	26.49 (7.57)	25.22 (7.76)	6.06 ^{**} , ^e
Coping	9.71 (2.92)	8.99 (3.05)	7.12 (3.02)	7.16 (3.31)	18.99 ^{**} , ^f
Life Satisfaction	5.16 (.70)	5.09 (.73)	5.00 (.61)	5.07 (.79)	1.22
Faith Life Satisfaction	4.90 (1.16)	4.63 (1.27)	3.88 (1.22)	3.92 (1.43)	17.06 ^{**} , ^g

Note: ^{**} $p < .01$; ^{*} $p < .05$.

^aTukey ($p < .05$) indicated that pure intrinsics and intrinsic questers scored reliably higher than the pro-religious questers, and did not reliably differ from one another. Pro-religious questers scored reliably higher than the questers.

^bTukey ($p < .05$) indicated that the pure intrinsics and intrinsic questers did not reliably differ from each other on religious coping, and the intrinsic questers and pro-religious questers did not differ from each other. The pure intrinsics reliably differed from the pro-religious questers. Pro-religious questers scored reliably higher than the questers.

^cTukey ($p < .05$) indicated that the pure intrinsics scored reliably higher on commitment than the intrinsic questers and pro-religious questers. Neither the Intrinsic questers and the pro-religious questers, nor the questers and pro-religious questers, reliably differed from each other. Questers were reliably lowest in commitment.

^dTukey ($p < .05$) indicated that the pure intrinsics scored lowest in exploration, and the intrinsic questers, pro-religious questers, and questers scored reliably higher (and did not differ from each other).

^eTukey ($p < .05$) indicated that the groups did not reliably differ from each other on the measures of stress and perceived stress.

^fTukey ($p < .05$) indicated that the pure intrinsics and intrinsic questers did not differ from one another, but that they scored higher on the coping measure than did the questers and pro-religious questers, who did not differ from one another.

^gTukey ($p < .05$) indicated that the pure intrinsics and the intrinsic questers scored reliably higher in faith life satisfaction (and did not reliably differ from each other) than the questers and pro-religious questers, who also did not reliably differ.

Exploration of differences among pure intrinsics, intrinsic questers, pro-religious questers, and questers showed that members of these groups reliably differed on several measures, multivariate $F(30, 3,654) = 33.50, p < .001$. Tukey *post hoc* analyses at $p < .05$ indicated which religiosity groups differed from the others. Means, standard errors, multivariate F values, and the results of Tukey *post hoc* tests are shown in Table 5. The comparison between pure intrinsics and intrinsic questers is of particular interest. Intrinsic questers showed higher exploration and lower commitments than the pure intrinsics (commitment: $F(3, 1,225) = 54.86, p < .001$; exploration:

$F(3, 1,225) = 52.93, p < .001$), but did not show significant differences in Christian orthodoxy, religious identity, or coping.

The indiscriminately pro-religious questers, in comparison to the intrinsic questers, were less orthodox, had weaker religious identities, and showed lower coping skills and lower faith life satisfaction. They were, however, equally likely to use religious coping and to show ego identity exploration and commitment.

Questers (i.e., those low in intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity, and high in quest) showed the lowest religiosity scores and the least ego identity commitment. Although their stress scores did not differ from other groups, their coping scores and faith life satisfaction were the weakest among the groups except for the indiscriminately pro-religious questers.

Ego Identity Status of Pure Intrinsic, Intrinsic Questers, and Questers

The ego identity statuses (Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, and Geisinger 1995) of pure intrinsic, intrinsic questers, and questers were then examined by chi-square. The ego identity statuses of the remaining groups were removed from the analysis because the expected values for at least half of the ego identity status categories of extrinsics, extrinsic questers, pro-religious, and pro-religious questers were less than 5.

Ego identity statuses reliably differed among the three groups, $\chi^2(2, N = 1,139) = 140.84, p < .001$. Pure questers showed the highest exploration scores with 54.8 percent in moratorium and 21.9 percent identity achieved; intrinsic questers also showed high levels of exploration with 37.5 percent in moratorium and 29.2 percent identity achieved; and pure intrinsic showed the lowest levels with 15.9 percent in moratorium and 26.3 percent identity achieved. In contrast, pure intrinsic were more likely to have made an ego identity commitment without exploration, i.e., to be foreclosed (intrinsic: 47.5 percent; intrinsic questers: 20.5 percent; questers: 8.2 percent). Thus, whereas almost half the pure questers were in moratorium, almost half the pure intrinsic were in foreclosure.

DISCUSSION

The Quest Scale (Batson 1976) has generated controversy since its development and continues to receive attention, perhaps because other measures of religious orientation fail to capture the questioning and searching components of faith that quest scales purport to measure. In this sample of religious Christian emerging adults, we documented that quest can coexist with intrinsic religiosity: over half of those high in intrinsic religiosity also reported high levels of questing. We also showed that quest relates to other measures of religiosity, including orthodoxy, identity, and coping, as well as well-being. Our findings did not support the orthogonality of these measures of orientation, consistent with the findings of others (Burris 1994; Donahue 1985), but it is worth noting that Batson (Batson 1976; Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis 1993) depended on their orthogonality for the development of the Quest Scale. Thus, our findings challenge the orthogonality of the orientation measures, suggest an interrelatedness among the measures that deserves study, and show that the Quest Scale is a useful measure of religious orientation.

Quest as Predictor of Other Religiosity Measures

Quest is a unique component of religiosity and increases our ability to predict other religiosity measures, including Christian orthodoxy, religious identity, and religious coping. For example, high quest alone predicted lower religiosity, but intrinsic questers, who combined high quest with high intrinsic religiosity, showed orthodox Christian faith and strong religious identity and

religious coping. Similarly, high quest predicted poorer well-being but intrinsic questers showed solid religious coping skills.

Quest as Associated with Stress and Identity Exploration

Quest did not appear in our study to be closely associated with stress. In this way, our findings are inconsistent with others, who have reported a relationship between quest and trauma (Krauss and Flaherty 2001). It is possible that quest is triggered by or triggers more intense stress than measured in the current study (i.e., trauma rather than mere stress) or, alternatively, that other factors may be more important than stress.

Quest appears to be more closely associated with identity exploration (not identity confusion) (Watson et al. 1998) than with stress. Several observations support our conclusion. When quest co-occurred with intrinsic religiosity, as in our intrinsic questers, it was associated with greater ego identity exploration and less commitment than when intrinsic religiosity occurred without quest. Even though the intrinsic questers reported more openness to change in their ego identities than the pure intrinsics, they did not show weaker orthodoxy, lower religious identity, poorer religious coping, or compromised well-being. Thus, quest in association with intrinsic religiosity appears not to be an indicator of lower religiosity so much as a marker of openness in ego identity development and in one's religious beliefs. Religious development may result from a dynamic interrelationship between quest (or seeking) and intrinsic religiosity (or internalized knowing), which over time resolves itself by commitment to a religious identity in a way that is similar to the progression in ego identity development. If this is the case, quest may indeed have "an adaptive, purposeful side" (Puffer et al. 2008:281). One's openness to questing may nurture religious and existential growth, providing a pathway to religious maturity that parallels ego identity achievement. These observations suggest we need a better understanding of the "dialectic between making and abandoning commitments" (Graham, McDonald, and Klaassen 2008:146), in religious maturity as well as ego identity development. This dialectic may be of particular importance during emerging adulthood when the ability to make commitments (e.g., in love and work) while in the process of exploration may predict more positive developmental outcomes than the failure to do so (Luyckx et al. 2006). Longitudinal and cross-religious-subculture research will have to clarify whether this parallel between religious and ego identity development captures the dynamic of religious growth and maturity for Christian emerging adults, emerging adults with other religious affiliations, and religious individuals at other developmental ages.

A Model of Quest

Although the Quest Scale may have been developed to measure personality characteristics (Batson 1976) and appears to be most closely associated with the personality variable of openness (Burris 1994; Sandage and Williamson 2010; Simpson, Newman, and Fuqua 2010), we argue that it also measures characteristics of the person's life situation, i.e., of their ideological surround, such as what assumptions shape the context, how much change the person is experiencing, whether the person has options for religious expression, and whether the person experiences support during change. An appropriate model of quest must thus take into account a range of factors, including personality and contextual factors. This model should also be bidirectional. Intrinsic questers, for example, may score higher on quest because they are reacting to life experiences as much as shaping them by their personality and choices. In other words, an appropriate model should take into account the associations among quest, trauma, and development (Krauss and Flaherty 2001), as well as the ideological surround in which quest takes place (Watson 1993; Watson, Morris, and Hood 1992; Watson et al. 1998). By our sample, we feel particularly able to explore quest within an ideological surround. We have studied a group of individuals who share a common ideology

(as measured by our religiosity measures), and we encourage others to explore quest within its ideological surround as defined by Watson and colleagues.

A caveat is that these groups were created using midpoint scores. Although treating variables categorically rather than continuously brings loss of statistical power and more limited measurement information (Burris 1994; Cohen 1983; MacCallum et al. 2002), we nevertheless defend our use of categories and argue, consistent with recommendations (Donahue 1985; MacCallum et al. 2002), that statistical analysis and functional meaning support their use. Whether one is high or low in intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity and quest has everyday implications for these individuals, each of whom had previously participated in a Christian college context.

Because there was only one indiscriminately pro-religious individual in the sample, we were not able to explore earlier claims of a lack of difference between the indiscriminately pro-religious and intrinsic (Donahue 1985). Differences between indiscriminately pro-religious questers and intrinsic questers were, however, found. Indiscriminately pro-religious questers—those high on intrinsic and extrinsic orientations and questing—seemed more “muddle-headed” (Allport and Ross 1967:6) or disengaged than to have positive well-being in comparison to their counterparts who were similarly high in intrinsic and quest but lower in extrinsic religiosity. Thus, although their exploration scores were comparable, the indiscriminately pro-religious questers had made fewer commitments than the intrinsic questers, and their coping scores indicated that they were not able to “use their religion well” (Pargament 1997). The indiscriminately pro-religious questers were not simply nondiscriminative in their motivations for religion but were also more weakly connected to religion, receiving neither its benefits for identity or for coping. These findings suggest that the indiscriminately pro-religious individuals might also show lower religiosity and well-being, despite Donahue’s (1985) suggestion, but our data do not allow exploring this hypothesis. In support of Donahue’s prediction, it has been suggested that indiscriminately pro-religious individuals might be the most religiously mature because they possess the orthodoxy of intrinsic religiosity and the pragmatic appreciation and use for community that characterizes extrinsic religiosity. Our findings, however, challenge this hypothesis. At least for indiscriminately pro-religious questers in comparison to intrinsic questers, the benefits of religiosity were not observed. Quest’s flexible openness to alternative views, when transpiring within a well-grounded faith, is adaptive within religious communities. In contrast, the valuing of community over religious beliefs, as implied within the pragmatic perspective of extrinsic religiosity, appears less adaptive.

Pure questers, even in comparison to the indiscriminately pro-religious, were the least well-adapted of our orientation groups. This subgroup appears most similar to the group that is generally studied in other quest research (Genia 1996; Watson, Morris, and Hood 1989). Members of this group showed lower religiosity, fewer commitments, poorer coping scores, and lower faith life satisfaction. We suggest that openness to alternative perspectives and awareness of life’s existential ambiguities and confusions are detrimental to development without a set of beliefs and assumptions about the world that place one within it. In the current study, we believe that this orienting perspective is measured by intrinsic religiosity.

While considering the implications for our findings, it is important to note that our study sampled individuals who had graduated from American Christian colleges. Our sample, although it may seem unusual, represents the one-quarter of the late adolescent American population that is evangelical Christian (Smith et al. 2003) and thus illuminates new insights about this substantial cohort. The religious sample permitted exploration of the co-occurrence of substantial levels of intrinsic religiosity and quest and other religiosity constructs. Further, our participants have lived in a Christian-college context with distinctive beliefs and experiences (Freitas 2008). This research supports earlier observations that quest is influenced by the context in which its participants engage, including their “ideological surround” (Watson et al. 1998), and reflects the cognitive complexity that individuals bring to their faith (Cottone, Drucker, and Javier 2007). As a result of our findings, we suggest that quest is not simply a personality variable but its

expression is also influenced by the person's context. More research is recommended on such contexts (Freitas 2008; Watson et al. 1998) and on additional measures of religious orientation (Pargament 1997). The rich qualities of the sample also posed some problems. For example, the highly religious sample had a somewhat limited range in religiosity scores, and the participants were primarily white American students from a Christian college subculture, so future research on different populations and religions will have to determine the generalizability of our results. For example, the combination we found of intrinsic religiosity with quest may be more likely in our type of sample than a secular one, and future work will determine if such patterns emerge in Jewish or Muslim samples. In addition, more data on Christian evangelicals' quest may reveal that questioning beliefs and being open to change is central to their identity and faith to a relatively high degree, contrary to notions of such youth as having particularly rigid beliefs.

In America, emerging adulthood is a stage that has been transformed by contemporary post-modern values of questioning, critical analysis, and a personal search for meaning (Williamson and Sandage 2009), with contemporary young adults delaying commitments to love and work and favoring an individualized faith (Smith 2005). Seeking, for some, can become "an end itself" (Klaassen and McDonald 2002:190), without the mature progression that Batson (1976) envisioned. Alternatively, questions about faith can lead to faith formation in a way that parallels identity exploration (Puffer et al. 2008), and the lower well-being of questers (though not intrinsic questers) may be a function of the growth pangs of emerging adults. The strong association between quest and exploration, rather than quest and identity achievement, suggests closer attention to the exploration/commitment dynamic within both faith and identity development. For intrinsics, quest may engender a distinctive developmental trajectory, a path of existential searching by which emerging adults successfully manage the demands of contemporary culture while developing a more mature faith.

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