The Influence of National Religious Consciousness on Entrepreneurial Behavior

Steven A. Williamson  
Coggin College of Business, University of North Florida  
4567 St. Johns Bluff Rd. S., Jacksonville, FL 32224

Carolyn B. Mueller*  
School of Business Administration, Stetson University  
421 N. Woodland Blvd., DeLand, FL 32723

Cheryl A. Van Deusen  
Coggin College of Business, University of North Florida  
4567 St. Johns Bluff Rd. S., Jacksonville, FL 32224

Alexa A. Perryman  
College of Business Administration, Florida State University  
Palmetto Way, Tallahassee, FL 32306

Entrepreneurial behavior historically has been associated with economic development and the growth of national economies. Similar to other complex behaviors, entrepreneurship is thought to be influenced by an individual’s goals, attitudes, and societal norms. While culture, particularly Hofstede’s dimensions, and gender are common variables included in investigations of this topic, few studies have isolated the variable of religion, and its corresponding influence, into the analysis of entrepreneurial behavior. To explore the influence that a national religious consciousness (NRC) has on entrepreneurial behavior, this paper views the concept of NRC as both an antecedent and a component of the global variable of culture. It is proposed that NRC has a central role in shaping and defining entrepreneurial behavior, as well as influencing national culture and gender roles. A conceptual framework and deductive propositions are proposed to highlight the asymmetric roles between NRC, national culture, gender roles, and entrepreneurial behavior.

* Telephone: (386) 822-7408  
Email: cmueller@stetson.edu
INTRODUCTION

This paper asserts that national culture is a complex, global, construct comprised of many different component variables including religious influence. Culture is the language by which past, present, and future events are translated, understood, and put into perspective (Lavoie, 1991). National culture is a composite of the dominant mental programs shared by the majority of a society’s middle classes and includes attitudes towards authority, food preferences, gender roles, and religious beliefs among its many attributes (Hofstede, 1980, 1998), and Kelly and Dirk De Graaf posit that religion, “…remains a central element in modern life…” (1997: 639). From early research to present, numerous findings exist in support of religion’s influence on culture and culture’s affect on individuals.

While academic works on religion are ubiquitous, recent studies analyzing its effect on business practices, specifically entrepreneurial behavior, are few. This appears to be a serious oversight as many concur that “…entrepreneurship…spurs the expansion of business, creates new employment potential and fuels economic growth” in nations (Thomas and Mueller, 2000: 287). It also seems likely that a better understanding of how culture and religious influences encourage (or discourage) entrepreneurial activity of men versus women is also an important issue. Studies of entrepreneurial start-ups by both genders are becoming more common; however, the majority have been single-country studies incorporating a rather limited number of constructs and little consistency across those studies. Therefore, identifying similarities and differences to better understand the process of new venture creation in various countries is difficult if not impossible.

In this paper, religious influence is defined as the national religious consciousness (NRC) that molds the national ethos. The NRC as proposed here is characteristically similar to Maclear’s description of a “modern civil religion [that] has assumed the shape of shared presuppositions and common national values without taking the form of a statutory church” (1992: 41) and to Guth, Green, Kellstedt and Smidt’s (1995) characterization of religious tradition, in this case a summary tradition or, as Kelly and Dirk De Graaf phrased it, “the religious context of the nation as whole” (1997: 640). As a component of and an influence on national culture, religious influence or NRC has a strong effect on entrepreneurial behavior. Moreover, the culturally dominate religion, that is the NRC, to a large extent determines gender roles and the cultural support and consequences for enactment.

Entrepreneurial behavior is defined here as accepting the financial risk and consequences for a business activity that one is actively operating and managing. Entrepreneurial activity varies in scope from the self-employed handy-man to the billionaire industrialist operating a multi-national company. Entrepreneurial behavior is encouraged and respected in some cultures, while others have tended to discourage the behavior or limit it to certain socioeconomic classes.

Based on extant literature related to participation in self-employment, the attractiveness of entrepreneurship varies from country to country and from culture to
culture. However, unlike the United States and other fully developed nations, developing nations do not have governmental informational systems in place like the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes, known as the Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes prior to 1987, unemployment compensation data, and other sources that allow for tracking entrepreneurial activities (Giamartino, 1991).

In fully developed economies such as the United States, individuals who are strongly motivated to participate in entrepreneurial behavior self-select themselves for these activities. However, this desire is also affected by culture in terms of uncertainty avoidance. For example, many entrepreneurs will not leave secure jobs, yet when downsizing occurs, they take this as an opportunity to pursue their own business.

Moreover, it would seem that with the birth of the information age that entrepreneurship has been rediscovered. In recent years, US corporations have sought to encourage the spirit of entrepreneurship in their management teams with the belief that this spirit drives creativity and growth. To this end, firms have implemented many types of stock ownership and bonus plans in an effort to “make managers into owners” (Stewart, 1991: 223). Additionally, this rediscovery has found its way into the hallowed halls of academe. Many university business schools have developed an interest in teaching entrepreneurship, and have created both majors and minors in their curriculum for students interested in going their own way instead of the corporate way. Many additional schools, not to be left behind, are demonstrating their own capitalist nature in their current eagerness to design and implement new entrepreneurial programs to cash-in on the opportunity to woo new students.

Comparatively, in countries with developing or transitional economies the choice to participate in entrepreneurship, to a degree, may be predetermined or socially discouraged as with India’s caste system. Elsewhere, entrepreneurial activity may be the only course of action available for personal or family survival (Cornwall, 1998).

The emergence of entrepreneurial research coincides neatly with Capitalism’s explosive growth occurring during the beginning of the 20th century, as entrepreneurship is Capitalism in its most simplistic form. Weber (1920, 1958) initially tied the modern development of Capitalism as an economic system to the birth of Protestantism and in particular, Calvinism. Thus, Weber’s rationale of the movement’s genesis, although not universally accepted, provided the linkage between cultural drivers such as religion and economic behavior.

From early research to present, numerous findings support culture’s effect on “stimulating economic activity” (Begley and Tan, 2001: 537). On the other hand, Salk and Brannen (2000) suggest the globalization of business, increased ease of transportation, and modern communication services, along with increased service access, have and continue to reduce the effects of local and national cultures. It appears, then, that in some regards the world’s population is becoming increasingly homogeneous, particularly in the context of business. However, this homogeneity has yet to negate the ingrained effects of national cultural ties on a variety of business processes. Moreover, as national culture has also been shown to affect its members
differently in regards to gender (Hofstede, 1998), the propensity to engage in entrepreneurial behaviors is likely to vary between men and women. The linkages between the factors of entrepreneurial activity, national culture, NRC, and gender roles are represented in the following model.

THE MODEL

Figure 1 illustrates the complexity of the relationships among the variables of interest. The darker arrows represent the primary directional influence while lighter ones represent a weaker reciprocal effect. The propositional framework represents the multi-component global variable of national culture dominated by asymmetrical relationships that are affected by varying degrees of reciprocity between each of the identified component variables. NRC has been extracted from the global variable of national culture in order to discuss it as a discrete influencer and is portrayed in this paper as an independent variable. Here, the primary relationship between NRC (i.e., religious influence) and entrepreneurial behavior is viewed as one between a property (i.e., a long-lasting characteristic, non-dependent on circumstance for establishment and resistant to influence, which is non-synonymous to a disposition), and an act (i.e., a mutable characteristic dependent on circumstances), respectively. Thus, it is argued that NRC will affect entrepreneurial activity in a direct relationship as it is typified in perspectives such as the Protestant work ethic (Weber, 1920, 1958).

Gender in itself is certainly a property; however, gender roles describe the expected and enacted behaviors (i.e., the disposition or act) assigned to the gender. Therefore, even though gender is a property and, thus, is not influenced by religion, gender roles are shaped by its influence. Additionally, most of the known, major religions of both the past and present have been based on patriarchal control. Thus, the cultural roles of
women have historically been subservient in the majority of cultures. The strength of religion’s influence on gender roles is reinforced by the acceptance and enactment of these roles. With each acceptance of the religiously inspired roles prescribed for each gender, the legitimacy of the influence becomes stronger and the roles are reinforced to the point that reciprocal relationships develop among the component variables.

Another culturally-based issue relevant to this discussion is the way that people tend to deal with or view their environment. For example, individuals with fervent religiosity who are close adherents to their chosen religion’s traditional doctrine are viewed as having more external than internal loci of control, as they are most likely to attribute events in and around their lives to external, in this case spiritual, causes. Comparatively, religious adherents who attribute the events in and around their lives to their own choices and not to a deity’s guiding hand or spiritual cause are viewed as having more of an internal loci of control. Moreover, this locus of control, as an aspect of personality, influences an individual’s occupational choice. Thus, an individual with a more internal locus of control is arguably more likely than one with an external persuasion to select self-employment via entrepreneurship.

Some of Hofstede’s (1980) cultural factors, specifically the power distance index, collectivism versus individualism, and uncertainty avoidance, are related to the concept of locus of control and transform the individual concept to one of cultural acceptance. The society that has incorporated a spirit of upward mobility, individualism, and self-reliance into its cultural persona is more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activity than one which embraces status quo, collectivism, and uncertainty avoidance. Quite similarly, when discussing how individuals deal with their environments, Trompenaars (1998), in his work with Hampden-Turner, also identifies the importance of locus of control as outer- or inner-directed. Outer-directed individuals feel that they have little control over life’s outcomes while inner-directed individuals believe they are in control of their respective destinies and are more likely to pursue their own personal goals.

Furthermore, religion, as a discrete influencer, is considered to be a primary contributor to the shaping of societal norms. Reliance upon religious beliefs is not declining. Sherkat and Ellison assert that in the US, “religious beliefs are remarkably salient” (1999: 365), while Iannaccone (1998) presents anecdotal evidence of the resurgence of religious beliefs throughout the world with the majority of growth originating from the more fundamentalist sects of the various religions. In a lesson taken from Iannaccone (1998), this examination does not address the validity of religious theology. Instead it seeks to assess the effects of religious influence on national culture, enacted gender roles and the resultant cultural norms which, in turn, will influence entrepreneurial activity.

**ISOLATING AND DEFINING RELIGIOUS INFLUENCE**

The term NRC, as used, has been defined as the religious influence of any given country’s populace. Simplistically defined, the concept of religion is a system, typically institutionalized, that addresses the communal beliefs and guides an individual’s
behavior and state of commitment to a deity or supernatural power. However, with regard to religion, nothing is truly simple.

Difficulty exists in how to adequately define the concept of religion. Research has erred in terms of both narrowness, in terms of a particular cultural group, and vagueness, where almost all forms of the non-secular can be fit into the parameters. In his 1973 book, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Clifford Geertz anthropologically defined religion as:

>a system of symbols which act to (2) establish powerful pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivators in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (Asad, 1983: 239).

Thus, religious beliefs have the capability to motivate other aspects of human behavior beyond the realm of sacred. This can be evidenced in the fact that all major world religions have adapted to the political and social realities far from their initial core intentions. Overall, all religions throughout history have attempted to represent and order beliefs, feelings, and actions which are a response to what is viewed as Divine, thus eliminating uncertainty and explaining the unexplainable.

Friedland (2001) argues that religion has permeated contemporary nationalism and, thus, called into question the theoretical duality of the social and the cultural. While secularism is the breakdown of religious dominance, most notably over the state, religious nationalism or NRC is a form of collective representation. This type of nationalism greatly dilutes the presumptions of geopolitics. Moreover, religion’s influence on culture and, in turn, its influence on the entrepreneurial process has been well documented. As Weber (1920, 1958) noted, entrepreneurship, and thus capitalism, can only flourish as a system when religion has loosened its hold on culture. As a result, the development to a capitalistic economy based on entrepreneurship may be viewed as the evolutionary progression of religious beliefs.

The degree to which individuals attribute their lives, world, and future to their chosen deity varies even more than the religious sects they form. The variety of religions and religious sects that claim the same deity and foundations for their beliefs but practice their faiths in radically different ways are too numerous to mention. Moreover, a fundamental problem that continues to plague American religious historiography is the prevailing tendency to define it in mutually exclusive terms (Schmidt, Moore, Hughes, and Valeri, 2003). However, religion is not viewed synonymously by all cultures. One example of this lack of homogeneity in the western world is the difference between how religion is viewed by Native and non-Native Americans. Traditionally, Native Americans took a holistic approach, viewing religion and religious pursuits as being totally interwoven with political, economic, and otherwise material matters, whereas non-Native Americans have traditionally viewed religion and religious pursuits as being independent (Arnold, 2002).
Investigations into religion’s effects on business and commercial practices are not as numerous as one might first suspect. The extant literature includes research that is limited in terms of both narrowness, isolating on a particular cultural group, and vagueness, where almost all forms of the non-secular can be fitted into the parameters. Moreover, although religion’s significance can be traced throughout the world’s history, the linkages of religious perspectives, gender roles, and entrepreneurship are thus far primarily anecdotal. Such evidence ranges from the Egyptian’s devotion to Isis which helped to fuel the construction of the pyramids, and thus the Egyptian economy, to the Roman Catholic Papacy which, during its inception, replaced Rome itself as the principal unifier of the western world. Similarly, the current era does not lack for support in this regard. Today’s scope is markedly similar as the religious right in the US has given muscle to the Republican Party, and in so doing has asserted its own moral and ethical values agenda onto science and industry, to radical factions of Islamic fundamentalists who have sought to eliminate western culture and in doing so have influenced the world’s economy and culture.

A possible explanation for this lack of investigation may simply stem from the basic tenant that the US was founded upon - religious freedom and the separation of Church and State. This separation and the concept of religious freedom are imbedded within the US business and commercial culture and its accompanying legal environment. However, there is a logical certainty that the collective religiosity or NRC of a country’s citizens influences its culture and that, in turn, this religiously infused culture exerts its control on all of its structures and institutions, including gender role assignments. From a review of Beyer’s 1994 work, Sherkat and Ellison assert “that the functional differentiation of religious institutions does not prevent religious influences on politics, the economy, culture and other aspects of social life” (1999: 365).

Indeed, in their more recent study analyzing the influences of religiosity and economic growth in 59 countries, Barro and McCleary (2003) acknowledge that religious beliefs, participation in formal religious practices, and governmental influence (or not) on formal religions within a country’s borders are strongly related to economic growth. Substantial literature focused on the sociality of religion poses the secularization hypothesis where individuals become less religious as their respective regions experience economic development. However, despite increased economic development, national cultures and ethos tend to change rather slowly. Religion’s influence on societal and political events (and the reverse) is likely to have a long-term, continuing influence on the level of entrepreneurial activity within countries, as well as a significant influence on how societies view entrepreneurial ventures by men versus women.

Today, India is the world’s largest democracy and has one of the fastest developing economies, yet the complexity of the Indian culture continues to shroud the sub-continent with a mystique that is indecipherable by most westerners. India’s dominant religion is Hinduism, a henotheistic religion that includes the beliefs of both reincarnation and a predetermined caste system. Historically, the cultural acceptance of these precepts have influenced and even predisposed some members of the population to be engaged in entrepreneurial activity while strictly prohibiting others from engagement. The democratic government of present day India officially prohibits caste
limitations and has implemented targeted assistance programs, similar to US affirmative action programs, to assist those of the lower castes and the untouchables. Although this government sponsored initiative has begun to improve the educational and economic plight of those born into a lesser social status, especially in the cities, the influence of the caste system is resilient and cultural change is unlikely in the short-term. Further, the blending of Hinduism with other less practiced religions has influenced the Indian culture in ways that have likely affected both the practice of entrepreneurial activities and gender roles.

Japan provides still another example of the influence of religion on national culture, the practice of entrepreneurial activities, and gender roles. Japan is a country whose culture is reflective of an isolationist past, a rapid modernization, and a devastating world war. Despite these events, its culture reflects the constancy of its Shinto and Buddhist religious foundations which, although different, are complementary and relate in a seemingly symbiotic fashion. Japan’s NRC is polytheistic with 84 percent of its population acknowledging both Shintoism and Buddhism. Shinto, itself, is pantheistic in its acceptance of natural forces, life forces, and physical objects as Kami or deities, as well as the deities of other religions. Additionally, unlike most other religions, “Shinto has no real founder, no written scriptures, no body of religious law, and only a very loosely organized priesthood” (Robinson, 1995). Shinto has been strongly influenced by Neo-Confucianism (Caldararo, 2003) and draws its morality from Confucianism (Tomoeda, 1930). Shinto, like Buddhism, conveys an optimistic view of mankind and, like most eastern religions, it tends to focus on the present and living with honor while maintaining a connection to the past through ancestor worship.

It is from these foundations, Shinto, Buddhism, and Neo-Confucianism, that the practice of Bushidō or the Samurai Code developed (Clark, 1996; Nitobe, 1905). Bushidō is an ethical code that embraces loyalty and honor above all else. Although it provided the religious foundation for the dreaded kamikaze attacks of World War II and the practice of Seppuku, ritual suicide, it brought this same dedication and commitment to business when it was extrapolated to the world of commerce. Bushidō has been credited with providing the foundation for both the reemergence of Japan as an industrial power and the concept of lifetime employment by Japanese firms, although this has been eroded during the last decade.

However, in his 1995 review, Axel proposed that the Japanese business culture is a descendent of the traditional Japanese family culture, especially the mother–son dyad that “serves as a model on which to pattern fictive parent–child relationships between” [non-related adults] (1995: 61). Further, Axel identified the participants in the fictive mother–son dyad as the Oyabun, the fictive parent, and the Kobun, the fictive child, with the resulting relationship being one that exhibits the amaeru–amayakasu characteristics of affection that create a special dependency and an emotionally binding bond (1995: 62). Axel’s description of the Oyabun–Kobun relationship resembles the mentor–protégé relationships, including the protective behaviors and emotional attachments, found in western cultures. Axel’s arguments for the traditional family culture being the model for the Japanese business culture are nearly void of reference to religious beliefs yet religion has historically influenced the Japanese family. Family
shrines within the home, ancestor worship and, until 1945, the recognition of the Emperor as a living god, all pay homage to the centrality of religion to the Japanese family and overall culture.

Japan was defeated in World War II and, as a result, was occupied by US troops. With its industrial base destroyed, the new US-authored constitution imposed change on Japan’s religious and civil ethos via relegation of the Emperor to ceremonial status and by implementing universal suffrage for all Japanese adults. Japanese culture however, remained Japanese. Caldararo states that “Nihonjinron,” the concept of Japaneseness, almost reached the status of a civil religion; “the tradition is Shinto and the entire framework of personal relations are guided and given meaning by it, but modified by Neo-Confucianism” (2003: 472).

Finally, Japan’s NRC has profoundly and directly affected the gender roles of its citizens as well as influenced Hofstede’s cultural dimension of masculinity. It was only after the obligatory US-authored constitution went into effect in 1946 that Japanese women received the right to vote. In actuality, Japanese women received this same right only 26 years after the women in the US. Japan’s NRC, driven by influence from Bushidō, created a male-dominated society with strict gender roles for the women of the warrior class. The women of the Samurai – the daughters, wives, and mothers – were as concerned with honor and loyalty as the Samurai themselves. Women were expected to fulfill their domestic duties and militarily defend the home as required, while always maintaining their home-centered role (Nitobe, 1905). Like women from many other cultures, Japanese women were the faithful curators of the culture (Axel, 1995) that sustained their roles. Although the Samurai class was never much larger than ten percent of the population, the warrior code of Bushidō was respected and then accepted by the Japanese masses. Further, Bushidō permeated the culture and established the Japanese identity. As the cowboy and frontiersman were heroes for Americans and medieval knights were heroes for Europeans, so the Samurai were heroes for the Japanese (Nitobe, 1905).

Little has been written regarding the NRC and to date nothing usable has been found in the way of a comparative tool that will allow the NRC of one country to be compared to the NRC of another. We note, however, that a related and interesting approach by economists Barro and McCleary (2003) deserves further investigation to this end. Their study expanded the more usual, narrow measures of economic variables by focusing on a component of national culture, religiosity, to better understand how religion affects national economic growth in general.

However, there is little if any information on the NRC’s effect on entrepreneurship in particular. The strength of the NRC influence and the effect of that influence on culture, gender roles, and entrepreneurial behavior are dependent upon both the characteristics and theologies of the included religions and the dedication and belief adherence of the religions’ practitioners. From a review of the world’s dominant religions, basic components and common characteristics are identified in Table 1 to allow for comparisons.
The X axis of Table 1 is composed of ten factors believed to be key influencers embedded in religion and each factor was rated on a scale of 10 – very strong to 1 – very weak for the World’s major religions which make up the Y axis. Entrepreneurship as affected by cultural religiosity is believed to be positively influenced by a weaker effect. However, all effects are relative and are only of comparative value. Thus, Protestantism has less of a negative effect on entrepreneurship than Catholicism, and would thus support Weber’s evaluation. Those cultures that are historically influenced by one national religious consciousness are more likely to either embrace or reject entrepreneurship. The values in Table 1 are only representative of overall beliefs and practices and were derived through interviews and the literature. The concept is presented for challenge.

CULTURE AND CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

Culture is the totality of shared behaviors, attitudes, traits, customs, religious beliefs, artifacts, and the like that characterize a particular population and are transmitted from generation to generation. As such, national culture must be recognized as a complex or global variable that encompasses many component variables. National culture can be inherited, learned through the socialization process, or a combination thereof. Although numerous studies have examined both the similarities and the differences in the attitudes associated with business practices in a wide variety of cultural backgrounds, generalization of study findings are not possible due to the equally innumerable study approaches. However, evidence exists that attitudes associated with business practices do cluster according to definable cultural groupings and national cultural patterns (Haire, Ghiselli and Porter, 1966; Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Trompenaars, 1994; Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1998).

Carland, Carland and Busbin’s (1997) statement that the US has perfected the art of entrepreneurship may not be completely correct as formal studies of the relationship between national culture and entrepreneurial efforts have not fully established a causal relationship. However, inference can be made from culture’s influence in shaping ethical values and attitudes toward entrepreneurship. Similarities in perspectives of business ethics, specifically views of corporate responsibility, unethical industry practices, and current versus past ethical standards, were found between Japanese and American managers (Nakano, 1997). However, Japanese ethical orientations tended to be more situational than those of American managers, with the most influential factor being company policy (Nakano, 1997). This ethical orientation is likely the result of the permeation of Bushidō into Corporate Japan. These differences between US managers and Japanese managers can be related to the very different NRC ethics influencing the two national cultures. In the US, the NRC reflects the Protestant ethic which embraces individualism and self-reliance and drives managerial behavior, while in Japan, Bushidō promotes honor, loyalty and dedication to authority.

China’s NRC has many commonalities with that of Japan in terms of shared components and the practice of melded beliefs; however, Bushidō is not an institutionalized practice in China. Thus, China’s religious base is both similar and
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Catholicism including Orthodox Sects</th>
<th>Protestantism including Baptist Other Christian Sects</th>
<th>Judaism including Orthodox</th>
<th>Islamic including various Sects</th>
<th>Hinduism including Sikhism and other Sects</th>
<th>Buddhism</th>
<th>Taoism</th>
<th>Confucianism</th>
<th>Shintoism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exactness of theology</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative/pessimistic Positive/optimistic - perspective of human nature</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reward/Punishment for earthly behavior in afterlife</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal behavior code, i.e., diet, birth control, prayer</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theism exclusivity</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affluency of Organized Religion</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formalization of structure</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutionalized Proselytization</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggressive – Peaceful</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender role embeddedness</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>85</strong></td>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
<td><strong>66</strong></td>
<td><strong>80</strong></td>
<td><strong>40</strong></td>
<td><strong>31</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
divergent from Japan’s religious base. The primary religious philosophies of China are Taoism (Daoism), Buddhism, ancestor worship, Confucianism, and shamanism. Arguments could be made that Taoism embodies the spirit of capitalism with its “live well and prosper” philosophy. The Chinese acceptance of multiple spiritual foundations allows religious practices to serve as ethical cornerstones for business practices without inhibiting the entrepreneurial spirit. For example, in China, differences in scenario-based ethical decision-making exercises between local and US managers were found in the rationales behind a decision rather than in the decision itself (Whitcomb, Erdener and Li, 1998). In a similar vein, McDonald and Kan’s (1997) study of ethical perceptions between expatriate and local managers in Hong Kong found no statistically significant differences in the ethicality or religiosity of men versus women. From studies that specifically examine entrepreneurship and support the need to understand cultural differences and managerial motivational needs (Baum et al., 1993; Wildeman et al., 1999), it can be inferred that entrepreneurial attitudes are culturally sensitive.

Several methods to examine differences in national culture and the various impacts of culture on business within countries have been proposed. Widely recognized as some of the most significant are works by Hofstede (1980), and Trompenaars (1994) and Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998). Geert Hofstede initially identified four cultural dimensions and later with Michael Bond added long-term orientation as a fifth dimension. These dimensions, based on culturally-driven dispositions and behaviors, have often been used to compare the similarities and differences between nations. Utilizing these dimensions requires the degree of cultural influence stimulating the dimensional behaviors to be inferred, primarily from observing and/or self-report of the behaviors (e.g., through use of a questionnaire or interview.) Noting that the precision of data derived from both observation and self-report depend upon the acuity of the participants’ perceptive abilities, the underlying assumption of these dimensions is that the frequency, pervasiveness, and intensity of the enacted behaviors reflect the potency of the cultural norms that foster such behaviors. Each dimension is a response to the global variable of culture, but develops into an influence on culture itself as the behavior patterns are recognized and normalized. Again, in this paper the concept of NRC has been segregated from the global variable of culture to separate NRC’s influence on the elements identified in Figure 1.

Hofstede’s dimensions appear to be undergoing a reorientation in terms of presentation. For example, the dimension of Individualism versus Collectivism would now be referred to as an Index of Individuality (ITIM, 2003). This reorientation has the effect of moving the dimensions from a continuum presentation to more of a two-factor presentation, similar to Herzberg’s two-factor theory of motivation. If this trend becomes accepted it may assist in eliminating some of the confusion regarding the dimensions. Following is a discussion that focuses primarily on Hofstede’s dimensions, but incorporates related concepts proposed by Trompenaars where appropriate.

**Individualism versus Collectivism**

This dimension pertains to the cultural norms that motivate individuals to work alone or in groups, thus distinguishing between “I” or “we” as the primary unit of
cultural identity. In highly individualistic or “I” cultures, an individual’s primary focus is on personal and immediate family maintenance and continuation. Thus, in the “I” culture strong work ethics, greater individual initiative, a preference for increased autonomy, and achievement-based promotion are encouraged. Comparatively, low individualistic or “we” cultures are characterized by encouragement and support of group membership marked by inter-group loyalty. In this setting, the work ethic, individual initiative, and need for autonomy are distinctly lessened and promotions are typically based on seniority. Identifying a national culture as either “I” or “we” oriented does not signify that all, or even a majority, of the identified populous will individually enact the prescribed behaviors, but rather that the culture is such that it promotes the prescribed behaviors. From their work with senior executives, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1998) also support this dimension of culture.

The most commonly cited example for individualism in terms of countries is the US, which also is the country influenced most by the Protestant work ethic. The fundamental beliefs of the Abrahamic religions, in particular Christianity and most importantly Protestantism, had a dramatic impact on the development of the NRC that underpins the accepted ethical codes as they are enacted in the commercial environment. Protestantism also espoused the virtues of self-reliance, personal accountability, and advancement based on merit. On an individual level, this influences the personality trait of locus of control, previously introduced, and leads to an “I” culture when embraced at the national level.

Hundley and Kim’s (1997) study of pay equity issues between South Korean and US employees found that judgments of fair pay in South Korea, a collectivist country (i.e., low on the individualism index), were affected more by differences in seniority, education, and family size, while those in the US were more sensitive to variations in individual job performance and work effort. Korea is a country that has experienced strong US military, economic, and cultural involvement for more than fifty years, yet its religious consciousness has remained distinctly Eastern in character and shares much with both Japan and China. Thus, it would seem that even with Korea’s close involvement for more than fifty years with the US, the icon of the “I” culture, that the shared Eastern religious consciousness is a pervasive influence.

To continue, it appears that highly individualistic countries would tend to have greater levels of entrepreneurial activity than would countries with greater levels of collectivity. That over 80 percent of all US firms started by females (approximately 31 percent of all US firms) have no paid employees (Tobias, 2001) indicates that women in the highly individualistic culture of the US are willing to work alone to start new business ventures.

**Proposition 1.** Individuals from countries high in individualism will be more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities than those from countries low in individualism.
Power Distance

This dimension may be defined as the degree to which the culture does or does not promote upward mobility among its populous. India is a country which provides an example of an exceedingly high score, or a lack of equality, on the power distance index. This score reflects a religious consciousness firmly rooted in Hinduism and the caste system, which has prohibited upward mobility and continues to hinder it despite government sanctions.

Trompenaars (1994) describes this dimension as to how status is accorded in a society. Achieved status is possible through accomplishments while ascribed status is granted through one’s birth right or based on factors such as age, class, gender, etc. In ascriptive cultures, pay for performance and bonuses to high performers are upsetting as these systems are by definition achievement-based. There is a defined conception of what different people are entitled to, thus this dimension is similar to Hofstede’s power distance.

Although separate from the individualism dimension in Hofstede’s (1980) work, the greater that power distance is embedded, the less individualistic the society, as power distance has been found to be highly negatively correlated with individualism (Cho, Kwon and Gentry, 1999). Indian culture also provides an example of the acceptance of low individualism (collectivist) concepts. This linkage can be viewed as stemming from the priority given in collectivist cultures to group decisions and respect for seniority and, as is the case in India, may include family structure and practices including arranged marriages and strict obedience to parental wishes despite adult status. Comparatively, the US culture is viewed as a primary example of low power distance. Here again, the culture is influenced by NRC. However, in this instance, individualism and entrepreneurial behavior and venturing are encouraged.

Proposition 2. Individuals from low power distance countries will be more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities than those from high power distance countries.

Masculinity versus Femininity

This dimension relates to the national culture’s reinforcement of traditional gender roles. Traditional male gender roles identify men as the primary providers and protectors of family and family rituals, while traditional female gender roles encourage women to engage in care-giving, nurturing, and supporting behaviors. These stereotypical behaviors are also used to describe societies rather than individuals. For example, societies with a masculine culture embrace a competitive or performance-based orientation versus a feminine, cooperative or collaborative-based orientation. In highly masculine cultures, the dominant societal values are success, its associated material possessions, and recognition, as well as the importance of decision-making, advancement, and challenge. Comparatively, feminine societies, or those with low masculinity indexes, embrace the traditionally feminine values of caring for others and the overall dominant quality of life to help encourage a friendly, secure, cooperative atmosphere and group decision-making. Thus, a low masculinity (or highly feminine) culture exerts less cultural pressure to conform to traditionally defined gender roles.
Regardless of the anthropological arguments regarding the primacy of religion’s patriarchal nature, the history of religion throughout the world has typically been dominated by the male figure. Where female deities or goddesses are worshiped, typically in polytheistic or henotheistic cultures, they have primarily been cared for and spoken for by male priests and rulers. In addition, the female role is commonly attributed to the realm of home, family, fertility, and sexuality in the form of reproduction. The female goddesses of ancient religions and current day Hinduism, which is henotheistical rather than polytheistical, have roles of great importance yet the roles remain subservient to those of their male counterparts.

Moreover, the Abrahamic religions, based on the premise that God made man in his own image, thus defined God as male, who then created woman, as an afterthought, as man’s companion. The sanctioned roles for women believers within the various, modern patriarchal religions vary depending on the specific religion, but with few current exceptions, these roles are minimized and limited to those of more traditional support. Thus, is it viewed that Hofstede’s masculinity dimension conceptualizes the influence of gender role enactment, which is further influenced by religion. On the other hand, the overall societal norms from a highly masculine society may encourage achievement-level qualities in all individuals regardless of gender.

Arguably, today’s business leaders need to be capable of utilizing both masculine and feminine qualities. Traditionally, the necessary skills for leadership include the masculine qualities of assertiveness, decisiveness, self-confidence, risk-taking, and boldness. More recently, feminine skills such as sensitivity, humor, and attention to detail are also considered valuable. It is not enough for managers to understand their own cultural imperatives, they must also comprehend the expectations of their followers and then demonstrate a proficiency in those expected skills. Put into the vernacular, managers must enact the adage of “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” Furthermore, del Rosario (2002) argues that upcoming leaders need to be androgynous, displaying adaptability to crossover between both masculine and feminine qualities. However, national differences have been shown to influence the desirability of traits, evidenced by the differences found in the levels of assertiveness among Japanese, Malaysian, Filipino, and US white-collar workers (Niikura, 1999). Thus, it is likely that these national differences will carry over into the willingness of individuals to start new businesses.

As an influence, however, it would seem that cultures with a strong masculine dimension would be less supportive of female entrepreneurs. The above literatures leads us to the following propositions:

**Proposition 3.** Individuals from countries with a high masculinity index will be more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities than will individuals from less masculine countries.

**Proposition 4.** Males from highly masculine countries will be more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities than will females from countries with a high masculinity index.
Uncertainty Avoidance

This dimension is defined as the extent to which a culture imparts the need and desire for structure onto its populace, a structure that is operationalized through a system of rules and laws that may govern all varieties of interactions and, thus, reduce ambiguity and uncertainty. Moreover, it is the component of the national psyche that promotes the acceptance of risk or, conversely, uncertainty avoidance. To promote acceptance of risk is to promote competitive behavior, since inherent to the concept of competition is the opportunity of winning and the risk of losing. At the individual level, this dimension is known as risk propensity. Individuals with a high risk propensity are competitive by nature and engage in activities that are surrounded by ambiguity and uncertainty. Individuals with low propensities for risk are more likely to engage in activities where less uncertainty is involved. Individuals of this nature find situations with high levels of uncertainty to be overwhelming, while high risk propensity types find low risk engagements to be less than challenging.

David McClelland’s (1987) acquired needs theory postulates that everyone is motivated to some extent by three needs: achievement, power, and affiliation. Each of these needs drives behaviors and, at any particular time, one of the needs will dominate the other two with the tendency for one need to be represented more often than the others. Thus, an individual who exhibits achievement-related behavior more than behaviors typical of power or affiliation is identified as having an achievement orientation. Such an individual is motivated to compete and to accept levels of risk that affiliation-oriented individuals would find disconcerting. Additionally, these needs are learned during the maturation process through responses to given circumstances and experiences from the first moment of awareness. A primary source of these acquired needs is the perceived cultural expectations and, in particular, expectations defined by Hofstede’s dimension of uncertainty avoidance. Similarly, high-achieving societies tend to have moderate to high levels of masculinity where acquiring money and other physical assets are highly desirable.

Cultures with high uncertainty avoidance are typified by groups who follow established routines that minimize the occurrence of unexpected events and circumstances. Low uncertainty avoidance is expressed in cultures where individuals are encouraged to bear more risk, have a greater tolerance for ambiguity in structures and procedures, and tend to be task oriented. From this, it is inferred that individuals from high uncertainty avoidance countries would be less likely to pursue entrepreneurial activities due to the inherent ambiguity associated with the success of new business ventures. However, this tendency may be moderated by the survival need in developing countries where small entrepreneurial food or handicraft stands are the only means of income for much of the populace.

Proposition 5. Individuals from low uncertainty avoidance countries will be more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities than will those from countries high in uncertainty avoidance.
Religion’s influence is suggested to be a core influence on Hofstede’s uncertainty avoidance dimension. Religion and divine or celestial powers have allowed mankind to answer questions related to the many uncertainties and mysteries of life for which science lacked an answer. And, of all the uncertainties and mysteries that have plagued mankind from the time ancient man began using abstract thought, nothing has provided more questions and fewer answers than the concept of death and an afterlife. Religion and the belief in an afterlife have altered the lives of many believers. From the construction of great tombs and pyramids in ancient Egypt to the current day practice of modern religions, believers have been and continue to be motivated in this world by their individual beliefs of an afterlife and its requirements for entry. Belief in an afterlife or even a next life, whether it is Christianity’s heaven or Hinduism’s reincarnation, is the ultimate reducer of uncertainty. Therefore, the stronger the individual belief system, the more uncertainty is avoided.

Additionally, highly structured and popularly adhered to religious doctrine may suggest a society less in need of a comprehensive secular system. However, it is proposed that a strong belief system will encourage the overall adherence to the practiced religious code. Moreover, where entrepreneurial behavior has been embraced, the religious code will be positively related and where entrepreneurial behavior has been negatively portrayed, the religious code will be negatively related to entrepreneurial activities.

Proposition 6. The strength of a country’s religious influence is directly related to the dimension of uncertainty avoidance.

Time Orientation

This dimension refers to the cultural implications of time. As the last cultural dimension postulated by Hofstede and Bond, dual aspects of time have been captured and included in the concept thus increasing its complexity. The complexity dissipates to some degree when the first aspect of this dimension, long-term (duration), is considered as an antecedent variable to a point in time focus, the second aspect. This facet of the dimension addresses the cultural significance of reverence for the past, including ancestors, traditions, and societal artifacts. A society that venerates its past is identified as having a high long-term orientation. Thus, the culture that has a limited past or fails to emphasize the importance of its past, or even seeks to remove its past from its cultural memory, is said to have a either a low long-term orientation or, more simplistically, a short-term orientation. Traditionally, East Asian countries have been found to have long-term orientations displayed in such facets as respect for elders and traditional ways. Comparatively, Western cultures, such as the US and Northern Europe, score lower on the long-term orientation scale. Additionally, this dimension has been used to describe a culture’s orientation to the past or future, that is, a point in time focus based upon Trompenaar’s (1994) work. The difference is in an emphasis on the past and traditions (past point in time focus) versus one on modernization and the future (future point in time focus). Here, East Asian countries display a distinctly future point in time focus based on industrial and economic progression and modernization. Likewise, many Western countries seem industrially and economically limited due to a
commitment to a past point in time focus. Given this dimension, it is inferred that having a future time orientation is influential in the engagement in entrepreneurial processes.

Proposition 7. The strength of a country’s religious influence is directly related to the dimension of time distance.

Proposition 8. The relationship between religious influence and time distance will be stronger among countries with a long-term orientation than those with a short-term orientation.

Proposition 9. Individuals from countries with a present or future orientation will be more likely to engage in entrepreneurial activities than will those from countries with an orientation on the past.

GENDER ROLES: SOCIETALLY AND RELIGIOUSLY SHAPED

Academic research has produced conflicting results on the significance of gender, and the associated differences between the sexes, on seemingly every topic in question, with studies’ findings ranging from no significant evidence to strong support. In regard to female entrepreneurship, the amount of solely female-owned businesses in the US is growing. The US Census Bureau’s 1997 Survey of Women-Owned Business Enterprises calculated that female-owned firms comprised slightly over 4 percent of the $18.6 trillion in receipts for all businesses in 1997. Furthermore, approximately 31 percent of all firms across the nation are owned by females, with one-third of all such firms residing in the four most populous states: California, Florida, New York, and Texas (Tobias, 2001). One rationale for female entrepreneurship is founded in the fact that few multinational and/or expansive organizations have female CEOs (del Rosario, 2002). However, without regard for females as CEOs, many females seem to engage in entrepreneurial processes for the freedom to schedule their own activities and the flexibility to fulfill the multiplicity of culturally-based gender roles. Supporting the flexibility motive, Tobias (2001) reported that over 80 percent of all US firms started by females have no paid employees. It is likely that many of these female entrepreneurs without employees are engaged in part-time and supplementary income production activities.

Despite its prevalence in the US, the relatively high percentage of female involvement in entrepreneurial activities varies globally. For example, in Scandinavian countries, only 20 percent of current new firm formations are by women (Ljunggren and Kolvereid, 1996). Statistics show that women tend to have business starts-ups in the service industries while men focus more on high-technology or manufacturing industries (Krueguer, Reilly and Carsrud, 2000). However, the levels of revenues from entrepreneurial ventures across countries is similar. Moreover, Verheul and Thurik (2001) found that female entrepreneurs had lower levels of start-up capital than did their male counterparts, although the type of capital did not vary by gender. Analyzing gender differences in Dutch real estate brokers, Verheul, Risseeuw and Bartelse (2002)
found that female entrepreneurs were more likely to start new business ventures while male brokers were more likely to take over existing businesses.

As argued earlier, both societally-defined gender roles and biologically-driven ones have been shaped by religion’s influence. As previously suggested, the history of religion is patriarchal and the female role is primarily defined in terms of support to males in both content and context. Thus, the transmutation of the religiously inspired gender roles into the culturally sanctioned roles is suggested. A bewildering paradox exists with regard to religiously inspired gender roles observed in multiple cultures based on consistent findings that report women to be the more devout followers of their respective religions (Peek, Lowe and Williams, 1991). This paradox emanates from the fact that despite women in general appearing to be the victims of religiously inspired, patriarchal, “misogynist gender role prescriptions and proscriptions” (Sherkat and Ellison, 1999: 367), they tend to be more rigidly fundamental than men in their beliefs and the curators of the religious traditions that bind them to a subservience model.

Iannaccone (1998: 1466) identified few overall changes in the belief system of the US with the same basic number of clergy employed, both now and 150 years ago, as a fraction of population, that is, 1.2 per 1000. In addition, Iannaccone indicates religious growth world-wide is fundamentalist in nature. From this perspective, religion is proposed to have a significant influence as an antecedent on the relationship between gender roles and entrepreneurial behavior. Furthermore, it is suspected that the cultural influences, specifically Hofstede’s dimensions of masculinity, individualism and uncertainty avoidance, and Trompenaars’ concepts of individualism and achievement, may act as suppressor variables on the gender role to entrepreneurial behavior relationship. The above logic leads to the final set of propositions:

Proposition 10. The strength of a country’s gender roles and the strength of its religious influence are directly related.

Proposition 11. The more defined a country’s gender roles are, the less likely females will engage in entrepreneurial processes.

Proposition 12. Countries low in individualism will be more likely to have more defined gender roles than those high in individualism.

Proposition 13. Countries high in masculinity will be more likely to have more defined gender roles than those low in masculinity.

Proposition 14. Countries high in power distance will be more likely to have more defined gender roles than those low in power distance.

Proposition 15. Countries high in uncertainty avoidance will be more likely to have more defined gender roles than those low in uncertainty avoidance.

Proposition 16a. Countries with a long-term orientation will be more likely to have more defined gender roles than those with a short-term time orientation.
Proposition 16b. Countries with a past orientation will be more likely to have more defined gender roles than those with an orientation to the present or to the future.

DISCUSSION OF IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

In this paper it is suggested that a country’s NRC (i.e., its religious influence) affects its populace’s propensity to engage in entrepreneurial activities both directly and indirectly. Specifically, the framework put forth postulates that religion (religious influence), through asymmetrical relationships, influences national culture, gender roles, and the likelihood that individuals will engage in entrepreneurial activities. This paper seeks to contribute to the understanding of the depth and value of religious influence as a variable when separated from the global variable of culture, particularly in relation to a country’s propensity to engage in entrepreneurial behavior.

By separating religion from the global variable of culture, the strength of the variable’s influence can be assessed. Religion, and thus religious influence, on human behavior predates written record. Religion has continually been used to explain the unexplainable, to reduce ambiguity, and to provide a basis for societal interaction. Its influence has provided the basis for the concepts of right and wrong and, in turn, helped to shape a system of laws and ethical norms that govern human interactions. Religion is most often thought of on the micro level as an individual belief system practiced by and primarily affecting the individual. However, the macro conception of a specific religious consciousness or religious influence is a primary component and determinate of national culture and, thus, has an enduring effect on the population under examination regardless of individual beliefs.

Several variables have been introduced which are believed to mold the character of a country’s religious consciousness, namely the doctrine of the dominant religion, the religious homogeneity, and the conviction of the populous to these beliefs. In an era of a global economy, understanding the role that national culture plays on entrepreneurial behavior and economic development is essential. Thus, understanding a country’s NRC should aid in understanding its motivations, behaviors, and actions, with particular regard to entrepreneurial activities. To this end, further research on religious consciousness is needed, including the development of a religiosity scale or index that may include religious doctrine, homogeneity, and conviction.

Among the many limitations of research in this area is the fact that there is a knowledge bias toward Christianity. Much effort has been made to present the central concepts of the world’s most influential religions, with influence based on both the numbers of practitioners and the economic importance of the countries in which the religion forms the foundation for the NRC. Another limitation may well be that culture does change, albeit slowly and for a variety of reasons, several of which have been discussed throughout this paper. As understanding of business practices and training
programs develop for differing locales, it is likely that individuals exposed to professional training will relate less to the national norms. For example, a number of years ago McClelland (1965) conducted an achievement motivation training program focused on developing high-achieving managers and entrepreneurs in India. The results were impressive; within a year, two-thirds of the trainees had started new businesses or expanded their present companies at a rate double than expected for the cultural norm.

REFERENCES


Entrepreneurial behavior historically has been associated with economic development and the growth of national economies. Similar to other complex behaviors, entrepreneurship is thought to be influenced by an individual’s goals, attitudes, and societal norms. While culture, particularly Hofstede’s dimensions, and gender are common variables included in investigations of this topic, few studies have isolated the variable of religion, and its corresponding influence, into the analysis of entrepreneurial behavior. WILLIAMSON, Steven A. et al. The Influence of National Religious Consciousness on Entrepreneurial Behavior. International Business: Research, Teaching, and Practice, [S.I.], v. 1, n. 1, p. 53-75, nov. Exploring Buddhist influence on the entrepreneurial decision. International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior and Research, 14(3): 172-191. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/13552550810874682. Van Stel A, Carree M, and Thurik R (2005). The effect of entrepreneurial activity on national economic growth. Small Business Economics, 24(3): 311-321. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11187-005-1996-6. Vargas-Hernández JG, Noruzi MR, and Sariolghalam N (2010). Williamson SA, Deusen CA Van and Perryman AA (2007). The Influence of National Religious Consciousness on Entrepreneurial Behavior. International Business Research Teaching and Practices, 1(1): 53-75. Religion can also be conceptualized as religiousness, as an individual phenomenon, characterized by the adherence of an individual to specific beliefs and practices (Miller & Thorensen, 2003). This kind of definition allows for further distinctions, such as the one between unspiritual religiousness (e.g., observing some practices for the social benefits), or unreligious spirituality (e.g., mystical experiences of individuals without a religious context). Moreover, four interpretations of how spirituality/religion influence health have been proposed. The first of these, the “any pathway” interpretation, considers that spirituality/religion can influence health through any of the four pathways noted above (health behaviors, social support, psychological states and psi influences).