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The Restored Gospel in Psychology

Ann Clawson

ABSTRACT *Theism is largely absent from contemporary psychology (Slife & Whoolery, 2006). The root assumptions of control, predictability, biological determinism, and moral relativism inherent in many dominant psychological theories (Slife & Williams, 1995) exclude and contradict knowledge provided by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is impossible to fully incorporate Gospel doctrines into psychology while operating under these assumptions. Such truths cannot be added onto methods and theories that inherently oppose them. Thus, to be a theist in contemporary psychology, changes must be made at the very basic conceptions of human nature and behavior (Slife & Whoolery, 2006). Prerequisite to any psychological research, theories, or therapy should be the foundational knowledge of the relationship between the body and spirit, the importance of agency, and the Atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Building psychology upon these doctrines more accurately captures the unique divine nature of each person, illuminates the significance of individual context, and provides a foundation of hope that can lead to truly transformative change.*

Although the modern conception of psychology as a natural science is relatively new, past philosophies demonstrate that the human mind has long been a focus of scholarly interest. However, contemporary psychology, driven by a desire for empirical evidence and technological results, has neglected the importance of theism to the study of the mind, deeming it irrelevant, unpredictable, and outside scientific control (Slife & Fischer, 2000). Psychologists cannot blend theism and secular science because many assumptions inherent in contemporary psychology are incompatible with principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To be wholly theistic requires foundational changes. In order to best characterize human nature, theism should be rudimentary, not an extension of secular science (Slife & Whoolery, 2006). Specifically, research methods, modes of explanation and therapeutic practices should evolve from assumptions founded in Latter-day Saint (LDS) doctrines of the divine role of the body, the gift of agency, and the Atonement of Jesus Christ.

Nature of the Body

Revealed knowledge of the role of the body and spirit contradicts many psychological explanations and must be a basic assumption when characterizing behavior. Current deterministic and reductionistic psychological assumptions regard the body as a sufficient explanation of behavior but fail to incorporate the equally necessary component of spirit (Slife & Hopkins, 2005). Rather, as evidenced in the scriptures, because the combination of the spirit and body is an essential characteristic of every human being, both elements are requisite to an adequate conception of human nature. In the Council in Heaven we agreed to follow God's plan, which required coming to earth where our spirit and body became our soul (D&C 88:15). Created in the image of God (Ether 3:15), our bodies are temples that enable us to achieve exaltation. This combination of the spirit and body maximizes our divine potential by allowing us to develop moral character and receive a fullness of joy (D&C 93:34; Packer, 2000). Thus, the body and spirit shape human behavior and individual personality, acting as spiritual and physical reminders of the divine nature of each human being.

Minimizing the relationship between physical and spiritual aspects diminishes understanding of the divine origin of the body and ignores many of the unique capabilities of each person. For example, many psychologists question the origin and presence of "innate" qualities. The scriptures clearly outline some of these "innate qualities" as divinely inherited spiritual gifts (D&C 46:11-26). These spiritual gifts contribute to each person's unique divine nature and are key components of motivation and behavior. Accordingly, to understand human nature and behavior in a more comprehensive way, theistic psychology should equally consider the spiritual and physical.

Human Agency

Crucial assumptions of pragmatism and the belief that **human behavior** can be controlled and predicted underpin **both biological determinism** and most conceptions of the **scientific method**, and exclude agency (Slife & Williams, 1995). According to the assumption of biological **determinism**, genetically structured brain mechanisms and chemical states regulate and dictate behavior, which is **reduced** to a matter of stimulus-response conditioning induced by the environment (Malott, 2007). Determinists believe that “what we do is caused both by our nature (our biology) and our nurture (our behavioral/learning history)” and that any other view is “out of date and meaningless” (Mallott, 2007, p. 158). Humans have little control over their choices or real power to change because their circumstances and responses are dictated by their biology. Further, central to this conception of the scientific method is the assumption that human behavior is predictable and controllable because it is governed by universal natural laws. The unique context or personality of each person falls secondary to scientifically invoked principles of behavior. Under these premises, the only limitation to fully understanding human nature is to discover these universal laws (Slife & Williams, 1995). Such views seek to replace the ability to choose, eliminating the fundamental principles of agency and spirituality. Because the non-existence of agency is a basic assumption, agency cannot be appended to research or therapy based on these ideas.

The unique LDS perspective on the premortal existence and purpose of life provides an essential understanding of the role of agency from which any study of human behavior must originate. Joseph Smith taught that agency is a gift from God that facilitates independent thought and action (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 2007), fostering the development of personality. Modern revelation teaches that agency is an inherent quality of eternal intelligences and is central to God’s plan (Kendrick, 1996). This teaching clarifies that humans have the power to act for themselves and for the future to achieve eternal exaltation (D&C 58:26-28, 101:78), meaning action is not solely determined by past stimuli and conditioning history. Rather, opposition provided by Satan enables the use of agency and facilitates feelings of joy and sorrow necessary for progression (2 Nephi 2:11). Without agency man “would be no better

than a mechanical contrivance...could not have acted for himself, but in all things would have been acted upon” (Smith, 1954, p. 49). The ability to act allows man to gain knowledge, experience joy or sorrow, and work to achieve eternal life (D&C 42:61). Because the ability to act is central to earthly existence and eternal happiness, it must also be central to any psychology sensitive to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Gospel teachings also elucidate the nature of limitations to agency. Based on assumptions of control and predictability, psychologists often reduce events that appear outside of human control to biological or environmental processes. From this perspective, spirituality and moral agency are not thought to account for psychological disorders in which environmental or electrophysiological processes limit behaviors. Attributing susceptibilities or tendencies to genetics or biological causes and eliminating the power of choice “runs counter to the most fundamental premises of the gospel of Jesus Christ” (Oaks, 1987, p. 94). Granted, the Gospel does not offer a ready explanation for every consequence or disorder. However, it teaches that individuals can have some control or participation in their own life events (Kendrick, 1996).

To apply psychology and conduct therapy or research productively it is essential to view agency as an unqualified divine gift restricted by freedom based on an individual’s context (Oaks, 1987). Freedom can be qualified in this life but restriction of freedom does not eliminate agency (Oaks, 1987). For example, if a child is mentally handicapped due to its mother’s decisions during pregnancy, the child’s freedom is limited mentally due to the actions of another. Fortunately, from a Gospel based perspective, the child can still live a happy life and make choices in the context of their disorder. Thus, through agency life has meaning because each person, based on their unique circumstances, has the ability to make choices and then face the consequences.

Any psychological framework excluding human agency opposes these fundamental doctrines. Without agency, there is no place for the existence of happiness or the potential for meaningful and self-motivated change. Therapy then becomes a setting where therapists manage their client’s biology or reinforcement history rather than a process that allows clients to recognize and utilize their agency. Because agency is essential for eternal salvation any study, explanation of behavior or therapeutic

approach must include agency at its most basic levels.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ

The contemporary psychological perspective necessitates an amoral existence without need for an atonement, ultimately eliminating hope and the potential for genuine change. Whether an action is correct or incorrect, it is determined outside of personal control. Consequently, morality is irrelevant and change is limited (Judd, 2005; Williams, 2005). Without distinct moral choices or the hope that comes through repentance, accountability is unnecessary. Instead, knowledge is obtained passively, meaning progression towards eternal exaltation is contingent upon chance alone. Under these conditions, an atonement is neither pertinent, effective, nor meaningful.

Alternatively, belief in the atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ are fundamental because they include morality and provide hope and an eternal perspective necessary for agentic change (Mormon 9:13; 2 Nephi 2:26-27). The gift of agency is central to God's plan because it is contingent upon moral responsibility. The ability to choose between moral opposites is meaningful because it necessitates accountability, making each person responsible for their own actions (Articles of Faith 2; 2 Corinthians 5:10). The Atonement is, therefore, vital because it provides redemption from sin through the ability to repent. It is powerful in psychology because it is effective in any context and accounts for limited freedom, providing hope that anyone can change or overcome challenges through Christ. This hope is a powerful motivator that can provide a unique eternal perspective to enhance therapy. The repentance process also expands agency, facilitates personal growth, and increases knowledge because it is sustained by individual effort. Any characterization of humans or attempt to improve life that is not centered on the Atonement is limited in its ability to heal (Gantt, 2003).

The doctrine of the resurrection is also fundamental to an adequate psychology because it provides the potential for physical and spiritual perfection. Christ's resurrection shows that the infirmities of the flesh, such as mental and biological disorders, can and will be overcome. Joseph E. Smith (1954) explained that all the temptations and infirmities of the flesh increase our appreciation of the Atonement and prepare us to become perfect like

God. He explained the consequence of materialistic philosophies prevalent in contemporary psychology, stating that "it has become quite popular...for men of wisdom to deny the literal resurrection of the body. [This] doctrine... is fundamental... it cannot be spiritualized or dissolved" (Smith, 1954, p. 265). Every being achieves physical perfection through the resurrection, eliminating determinism. It is also significant that the resurrection "cannot be spiritualized" (Smith, 1954, p. 265), meaning it is a real and physical process that cannot be reduced to a subjective theoretical experience. Minimizing the power of individual change through Christ eliminates the cornerstone of the LDS religion (Ephesians 2:20) and limits the effectiveness of psychology.

Conclusion

Including theism, particularly as articulated in the LDS understanding of the restored Gospel, can improve the success and development of psychology only if it is foundational in our theories, research, and both methodological and therapeutic practices. The Gospel perspective enhances the ability of psychologists to help others through the Atonement. Moral agency replaces determinism, illuminating the importance of context and individual worth. The LDS viewpoint also reveals the importance of the combination of the body and the spirit in understanding divine nature and behavior. To live the Gospel fully, the spiritual and secular cannot be compartmentalized. Although theism does not provide every answer, it provides fundamental truths upon which psychology can and must be redefined. Although it may be unpopular and involves significant changes, truly being a theist in psychology requires a serious re-evaluation of and critical reflection on the contemporary psychological perspective. Conforming to current assumptions and fully maintaining Gospel truths is impossible; such knowledge cannot be ignored or added to faulty assumptions. Doing so diminishes the effectiveness of psychology and perpetuates a discipline based on limited assumptions.

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Flirting with Psychology: A Measure of Flirtation

Peter Clayson and McKenna Dutcher

ABSTRACT *Flirtation is an indicator of romantic interest that is frequently researched; however, there is no current psychometrically-validated self-report measure of flirtation. To meet this need, the I'm Too Flirtatious Scale (I2FS), a 10-item measure of flirtatious non-verbal behaviors, was developed using a 4-point Likert scale and administered to a convenience sample of 150 students at Brigham Young University. The I2FS had high internal consistency ($\alpha = .82$), but a relatively low content validity ratio (all items $\geq .20$). Principle component analysis revealed one primary factor corresponding with flirtatious nonverbal behaviors. Taken together, the I2FS provides a relatively homogeneous and psychometrically-valid measure of flirtation.*

Flirtation expresses sexual interest and often represents the beginning of a sexual pursuit (O'Farrell, Rosenthal, & O'Neal, 2003). Both men and women perceive these types of social interactions differently; what may be a casual interaction to one may be perceived as flirtation or sexual harassment to another (Henningesen, Henningesen, & Valde, 2006). The beginnings of these interactions seem to stem more from nonverbal communication than from direct verbal cues; as a result, this study will focus on nonverbal communication to probe flirtatious interactions (Grammer, Kruck, Juette, & Fink, 2000). It is important to know not only what people perceive as flirtation, but also to understand how people flirt, in order to appreciate avenues of communication within courtship.

Research consistently describes flirtation as the degree to which one utilizes suggestive haptic (i.e., tactile) interaction or other nonverbal messages to communicate a desire for increased relational intimacy (Abrahams, 1994). Suggestive haptic interaction is defined as touching an individual to convey a sexually provocative message of interest and attraction. Suggestive nonverbal communication is defined as messages intentionally sent through appearance, mood setting, and body language,

with the intention to communicate a desire for increased personal intimacy.

Many scholars assert that there is no nonverbal communication more powerful than touch and that touch is the predominate language of flirtation (Thayer, 1986; Lee & Guerrero, 2001; Quiles, 2003; Renninger, Wade, & Grammer, 2004; Ryan & Mohr, 2004; Henningsen et al., 2006). Burgoon, Walther, and Baesler (1992) noted that not only is touch highly arousing, but also that it is "one of the most provocative yet least understood" nonverbal behaviors (p. 237). Both sexes perceive suggestive physical contact, even forms of physical aggression or force, such as playful shoving, punching, throwing, slapping, and inflicting pain, to be a method of flirtation (Ryan & Mohr, 2005). Because touch conveys messages of affection, love, and flirtation, it is used to foster positive relationships (Lee & Guerrero, 2001).

Although touch is the most powerful form of nonverbal communication, individuals use other nonverbal cues when flirting, such as eye contact, facial expressions and nodding. For example, Renninger et al. (2004) found that males were less likely to approach the other sex to make sexual advances without first being cued by facial expressions. Similarly, Moore (1985) observed that initial courtship was cued by behaviors such as glancing, primping, smiling, nodding, and leaning forward. Indeed, one study found nonverbal communication to be the key in maintaining the attention and interest of the other sex during courtship (Grammer et al., 2000; Renninger et al., 2004). Female nonverbal behavior directs courtship settings and male responses, while male nonverbal behavior is used to display aspects of himself, such as his status, health, strength, and intelligence (Grammer et al., 2000; Renninger et al., 2004).

There is no consensus in the research literature as to how flirtation should be measured, and to date, no research has constructed and psychometrically-validated a self-report measure of flirtation. For example, Downey

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and Vitulli (1987) investigated the likelihood of male and female college students to reciprocate and pursue flirtatious cues by using a self-report questionnaire involving hypothetical situations. Expounding upon this research, O'Farrell et al. (2003) examined the correlation between relationship satisfaction and responsiveness to a non-mate's flirtation using videotaped self-introductions. In 1994, Abrahams examined the perceptual dimensions with which men and women judge flirtation episodes involving both nonverbal and verbal cues using a self-report questionnaire involving hypothetical situations. As can be seen from these studies, flirting can be measured through vignettes, coded videotapes, and assessments of personal interactions; however, no research has constructed a reliable self-report measure of flirtation. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to create a measure of flirtation and test its factor structure, internal consistency, and validity to determine its utility for use in future studies quantifying flirtatious behaviors.

Method

Participants

Participants consisted of a convenience sample of 150 single Brigham Young University (BYU) students. The sample included 64 males between the ages of 18 and 26 years ($M = 21$, $SD = 2.16$) and 86 females between the ages of 18 and 54 years ($M = 19$, $SD = 3.94$). Both sexes were equally represented, $\chi^2(1, N = 150) = 3.23$, $p = .07$. The questionnaire was administered via an online third-party website called Qualtrics (www.qualtrics.com) to participants from a BYU Psychology 111 course or from a networking website: Facebook (www.facebook.com).

Item Construction

The I'm Too Flirtatious Scale was created from an item pool of 30 questions. Ten items were selected from the 30-item pool based on the content validity ratio (CVR), calculated with the relevancy ratings of 21 panelists in an undergraduate psychological testing course (see Appendix A for the final questionnaire). Items with a CVR $> .20$ were included (see Table 1). Items were rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). Five items were negatively worded and reverse scored to control for agreement bias. Item presentation

Table 1
Content Validity Ratio

Item	CVR
Touch arm during conversation	0.70
Dress to impress	0.30
"Footsies"	0.20
Romantic Atmosphere	0.40
Body language as sexually attractive	0.70
Cuddling	0.30
Arm around the shoulder	0.20
Touch the lower back	0.20
Stand closer	0.90
Body language to get attention	0.70

was also randomized to control for order effects.

Statistical Analysis

Cronbach's alpha was used to ascertain the internal consistency of the questionnaire (Cronbach, 1951). The factor structure of the I2FS was examined using principle components analysis. We selected factors based on inspection of the eigenvalues, examination of the scree plot deflection, and interpretability. Pearson bivariate correlations were used to identify relationships among questions to clarify the factors of the factor analysis. All data were analyzed using SPSS 16.

Table 2
Component Matrix

Item	Component	Component	Component
	1	2	3
Touch arm during conversation	0.67	0.10	0.18
Dress to impress	0.65	-.31	-.29
"Footsies"	0.43	0.09	0.71
Romantic Atmosphere	0.77	0.19	-.02
Body language as sexually attractive	0.61	-.50	-.03
Cuddling	0.38	0.62	-.29
Arm around the shoulder	0.51	-.01	0.47
Touch the lower back	0.67	-.40	-.17
Stand closer	0.73	0.03	-.16
Body language to get attention	0.67	0.39	-.16

Results

Factor Structure

Principle components analysis revealed three factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 (eigenvalues = 3.87, 1.11, and 1.01) that accounted for 59.84% of the variance (see Tables 2-3). This three-factor solution

was inconsistent with the deflection in the scree plot that indicated only one primary factor (see Figure 1). Given that two of the factors had eigenvalues just over one, that the deflection in the scree plot indicated one primary factor, and that all of the items had primary loadings on the first factor except the cuddling item (see Table B2), we interpreted these results to indicate there is only one primary factor that accounted for 38.72 % of the variance in the I2FS and appeared to correspond with overall nonverbal flirtatious behaviors.

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha indicated the test's internal consistency was highly reliable ($\alpha = .82$; see Table 4). A Pearson bivariate analysis revealed 37 of 45 correlations were significant, indicating a strong linear relationship between the majority of test items ($p < .05$; see Table B5).

Validity

One item had very high content validity ($\geq .90$) as measured by the CVR, three items had adequate content validity ($.70 \geq .79$), and six items had low content validity ($\leq .59$; see Table 1). Forty-nine percent of participants correctly identified the construct being measured (i.e., flirtation), indicating that the test had low face validity.

Discussion

Due to the absence of a psychometrically-validated measure of flirtation, we created the I2FS and examined its psychometric properties and factor structure. The I2FS had high internal consistency and reliability. Principle component analysis and examination of the scree plot deflection revealed that the I2FS consisted of one primary factor. This factor (nonverbal communication) had a high correlation between the items. This suggested that the majority of the variance between test items captured the broad domain of nonverbal communication well. However, test items did not discriminate between the domains of haptic interaction and nonverbal cues. Although haptic interaction is inherently a part of nonverbal communication, more pellucid items could result in greater discriminability between these two hypothesized factors.

A potential variable that may have influenced ratings on the I2FS is attraction. Individuals may be more likely to flirt with those to whom they are attracted. As a result, the relationship status of participants may also be

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Table 3
Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigen values			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% Variance	Cumulative %
Touch arm during conversation	3.87	38.72	38.72	3.87	38.72	38.72
Dress to impress	1.11	11.10	49.78	1.11	11.10	49.78
"Footsies"	1.01	10.07	59.84	1.01	10.07	59.84
Romantic Atmosphere	0.84	8.43	68.27			
Body language as sexually attractive	0.77	7.73	76.00			
Cuddling	0.63	6.26	82.26			
Arm around the shoulder	0.51	5.06	87.32			
Touch the lower back	0.48	4.76	92.08			
Stand closer	0.43	4.33	96.41			
Body language to get attention	0.36	3.59	100.00			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis

% = Percentage

a limitation, because individuals in relationships may be less likely to flirt due to relationship commitment. We did not include a measurement of how attraction can influence nonverbal behaviors and the level of participant involvement in current relationships, which may have resulted in inaccuracies in the findings.

Another source of error may have been the non-expert panelists for the CVR. Panelists consisted of students from an undergraduate psychological testing course who, while

probably periodically engaging in flirtatious activities, are not experts in the field. These student panelists rated few items as essential, which may be largely attributed to the conservative nature of not only the religious university but also the panelists previous exposure to the construct. In addition, the sexually themed items possibly led some panelists to feel uncomfortable, which also may have biased responses.

Despite these sources of error, the I2FS represents the

Table 4
Cronbach's Alpha

Cronbach's alpha	Cronbach's alpha standardized	N
0.82	0.82	10

First empirically supported measure of flirtation; therefore, it is worthwhile to improve this measure. This scale only sampled Brigham Young University students; further studies must be conducted to improve external validity. After further developing the I2FS, it may be used in studies of sexual harassment. Instigators of sexual harassment may not recognize their actions as sexual advances, but rather as flirtatious. However, increasing the number of questions and editing of the established questions would further discriminate between the two domains of haptic interaction and nonverbal communication. It may also be requisite to add more questions to assess further domains incorporated by flirtation, such as verbal communication.

The aim of the I2FS was to measure flirtation accurately and reliably. The I2FS proved to be highly reliable. Further research is necessary not only to validate this measure, but also to incorporate more domains into the hypothetical construct of flirting, such as attraction and relationship status, giving a broader analysis of flirtation.

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Appendix A

I'm Too Flirtatious Scale

Demographics

What is your sex? Male Female
 What is your age?
 What year are you at Brigham Young University?
 What is your major?

Questions

In my interaction with a person of interest, I often touch his or her arm during conversation.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

When I dress in the morning, I do NOT use my clothing to impress a person of interest.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

When under a table, I playfully rub the leg of a person of interest with my foot ("Footsies").
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

I do NOT create a romantic atmosphere when with a person of interest.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

I use body language to project myself as being sexually attractive.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

I do NOT enjoy cuddling with a person of interest.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

I intentionally place my arm around the shoulder of a person of interest to communicate my interest in him or her.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

I do NOT touch the lower back of a person of interest to convey messages of attraction.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

I stand closer to those to whom I am more attracted.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

I do NOT use body language to get attention from a person of interest.
 Strongly Agree
 Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

What do you think this questionnaire is trying to measure?

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