

09-Jun-2023

Religion as a Social Force in Health: Complexities and Contradictions
BMJ-2022-074052.R1

Dear Dr. Idler,

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to consider this paper, which we discussed at a recent Analysis Committee Meeting.

We really enjoyed reading this revision. The committee agreed you had done a really great job in responding to the reviewer comments and had put a lot of work into building up the examples throughout. We also appreciate you have attempted to put forward more of a stance. We are pleased to make a provisional offer of publication if you are able to address the following points in a revised text and in the document attached:

1. While all the conceptual elements are there, the committee felt the current structure detracted from the readability of the paper. While most of it is laid out in a linear fashion, according to lessons and examples across the ecological framework, there are several parts where linkages or 'threads' between subsections get lost as does your main argument that "engagement is imperative because the health effects are real, contradictory, and complex." As such we have made some suggested changes to the organization for readability and to help build a more persuasive style as per the format of an Analysis paper. We very much appreciate it can be difficult to work within the constraints of these article types but bringing out the argument was a driving reason for our proposed changes in the attached. It may look like a lot of track changes, but the suggestions mainly relate to the reorganization of existing text and clarification of points.

2. The committee also had some concerns with the precisions of terms and would like to see a little more depth of analysis. The committee felt the paper would benefit from more evidence of the complexity and nuance so BMJ readers who are new to this topic can really come away from the piece having learnt more about the relationship between religion and health. For example, its fine to say religion has been viewed as having this type of impact on health, but we suggest the examples are used to reflect what you mean e.g. is it religion as an institution, religion as expressed through ones own faith etc? We felt that the paper sometimes used terms such as public health and religion in a blanket way e.g. public does x, religion does x, and for a scholarly piece we would expect more analysis and nuance to be brought to that - what exactly is meant when the term public health is used? Is it public health agencies or practitioners for example? Similarly, it wasn't clear what engagement with religion means (e.g. Line 73) vis engagement with religious institutions e.g. Line 108. We feel the suggested reorganization will help the piece be more persuasive and also address areas where more nuance and depth is needed.

We very much appreciate this is your paper and that you will have to make editorial/author decisions as part of your revisions. However, the proposed restructure was made at this stage of the process to give you an idea of the type and flow of narrative we would be looking for and which our readers would find compelling. In doing so we apologize should we have inadvertently changed the meaning of any point.

We ask that you please revise your paper and send it back to us within one month.

When you resubmit, please also provide:

- (a) A cover letter outlining how you have responded, or not responded and why, the editors' comments.
- (b) A word count (excluding the references and words in boxes and tables). You should aim to keep this count below or very close to 2000 words.
- (c) Please check that all the information required in the manuscript (see note below) is included in the revised manuscript.

All accepted Analysis articles are published on bmj.com, the canonical version of the journal. Some accepted Analysis articles will also be published in print. The BMJ might choose to shorten content or replace or re-size images for the print issue.

Please click this link to start the resubmission process: *** PLEASE NOTE: This is a two-step process. After clicking on the link, you will be directed to a webpage to confirm. ***

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I hope you will find the comments useful and thank you for your continued time and effort on this paper. Please don't hesitate to get in touch should you have any questions.

Best wishes,
Rachael

Rachael Hinton, PhD
Associate Editor, The BMJ

BMJ, BMA House
Tavistock Square
London, WC1H 9JR

INFORMATION TO INCLUDE IN REVISION

Please would you also check that you have provided the following information:

- Competing interest statement (in the style explained at <http://www.bmj.com/about-bmj/resources-authors/forms-policies-and-checklists/declaration-competing-interests>; click on "Research" and please see "Examples competing interest statements")
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- Signed patient consent form(s), if the article gives enough personal information about any patient(s) (http://resources.bmj.com/bmj/authors/editorial-policies/copy_of_patient-confidentiality)
