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The Role of Religious Orientation and Religious Emphasis

On God Attributions

By

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ABSTRACT

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Religion exists as one of the greatest driving forces for a person's political beliefs and overall outlook on life. In an attempt to understand such a complex phenomenon, researchers have examined factors that influence a person's likelihood of acquiring religious beliefs. Past research has suggested a relation to religious emphasis in the home and future religious tendencies. This present study examined the role of acquisition of religious beliefs (via religious emphasis in one's childhood home) and religious orientation on a person's likelihood of making god attributions. It was hypothesized that religious emphasis and intrinsic religiosity would increase a person's likelihood of making god attributions, but that event type would serve as a moderator for these attributions.

Specifically, it was predicted that uncontrollable events would elicit more god attributions than controllable events and that the highest number of god attributions would be made in the uncontrollable/positive event condition. The data supported the hypothesis that both emphasis on religion in childhood homes and intrinsic religiosity would predict greater numbers of god attributions. However, extrinsically religious persons were only slightly less likely to make god attributions. Additionally, uncontrollable events were found to be positively

correlated with god attributions, but uncontrollable and negative events were found

to elicit the greatest number of god attributions of all the conditions.

The Effects of Religious Orientation and Religious Emphasis

On God Attributions

Religion has been found to exist in some form among all human cultures in the world (Sasaki & Kim, 2010). Although there has been a decline in organized religion in many Western nations, religion has remained a pervasive part of most societies and is deeply embedded in a society's history (Silberman, 2005). Countries like the United States still exhibit signs of religion both through currency and in the classroom; dollar bills still contain the statement " In God we trust" and the pledge of allegiance, which many children say on a daily basis in the classroom, contains the phrase " One nation under God" (Silberman, 2005, p. 642). Additionally, religious beliefs drive the controversy of many social debates in the United States such as issues involving death, abortions and capital punishment (Silberman, 2005). Therefore, religion is not only a predictor of individual beliefs and behavior, but also a major motivational force for larger social issues; " every human action, ranging from benevolence to inhumane violence has been justified in the name of religion, which has been a pervasive feature of human life throughout history" (Silberman, 2005, p. 641).

The reason behind this phenomenon of religion piques researchers' interests to delve into the motivations behind it. They investigate the appeal of God, and the reason why people around the globe have all adapted some sort of worldly concept. However, researchers are unable to come up with one single underlying factor that leads a person to acquire religion. Instead, researchers have identified multiple factors that have been found to influence religious behavior. Such factors include a combination of:

environmental influences (parents, peers, youth groups), as well as a possible biological

basis for religion (Gorsuch, 1997; Spilka 2003; Beck, 2004; Pargament & Park, 1995).

Despite its pervasive role in human life throughout history, religion has received

relatively small amounts of attention from psychologists (Pargament et al., 1995;

Silberman, 2005). Many psychological researchers in the past have viewed religion with

" a raised eyebrow," arguing that religion is merely a form of "avoidance, escapism and

denial" (Pargament et al., 1995, p. 14). More recently studies have examined religion as

an important mechanism for coping with a wide range of negative life situations; it has

been found to provide a sense of stability in times of uncertainty (Ross, Handal, Clark &

Vander Wal, 2009; Schroeder & Frana, 2009). For example, religious beliefs can predict

one's attitude towards death. Studies have shown that religious people are more likely to

show an acceptance towards death, since many religions emphasize a concept of the

afterlife (Dezutter, Soenens, Luyckx, Bruyneel, Vantsteenkiste, Duriez & Hustebaut,

2009). However, people who take a literal approach towards their religion are more likely

to show death anxiety, as they may feel defenseless against death (Dezutter et al., 2009).

Studies have also examined how religion affects people who are ill as well as

people who are dying. One study found that patients with HIV/Aids used their religion to

cope with their illness (Cotton, Puchalski, Sherman, Mrus, Peterman, Feinberg,

Pargament, Justice, Leonard & Tsevat, 2006). Religion has also been identified as a

mechanism for alleviating anger and anxiety as well as providing a motivation for

behavioral change in newly released convicts (Schroender et al., 2009). In addition,

studies that have examined religious coping in people who have recently experienced a

loss found that religion provides a way for the bereaved to achieve greater acceptance as

well as a sense of meaning from their loss (Park, 2005; Stein, Abraham, Bonar,

McAuliffe, Fogo, Faigin, Raiya & Potokar, 2009). However, to say that religion is merely

a defense mechanism and coping technique would be a detrimental simplification of such

a complex topic (Pargament et al., 2005). Many other factors contribute to religious

behavior, beliefs and motivation, factors that are deeply embedded in human nature.

Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger & Gorsuch (2003) describe these factors "under a more

general perspective" (p. 15). Specifically, they argue that we can understand religion as a

search for meaning; that the search for meaning in one's life is intrinsic to human nature

(Spilka et al., 2003; Beck, 2004; Kirkpatrick, 2005; Silberman, 2005).

   Many researchers have described religion as a way of satisfying one's needs; that

religion provides solutions as well as explanations for problems that other forms of

knowledge may not solve; " religion is one of the few meaning systems that can offer

meaning to history from the moment of creation until the end of time, as well as to every

aspect of human life from birth to death and beyond" (Silberman, 2005, p. 647). Thus,

religion satisfies people's intrinsic need to make sense out of the world they live in, by

providing a lens through which believers can interpret reality and make sense out of life-

changing events (Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger & Gorsuch2003; Silberman, 2005). This

quest for meaning is described by the social psychological construct of attribution theory

(Spilka et. al , 2003). Spilka et. al (2003) describes attribution theory as a framework

through which we can study religion. He says, " Attribution theory is concerned with

explanations- primarily causal explanations about people, things and events. These are

expressed in statements and ideas that assign certain roles and influences to various

situations and dispositional factors " (Spilka, 2003, p. 16).

One can attribute the causes of events to many different factors, including oneself, others, chance, and God (Spilka et. al, 2003). Indeed, one scholar suggests the causal explanations can be divided into two main categories: "naturalistic" and "religious" (Spilka et al., 2003, p. 40). Naturalistic explanations occur when people attribute the cause of the event to natural causes (Spilka et al., 2003). When people are attributing the cause of an event to God or another religious figure, this explanation is called a religious attribution (Spilka et al., 2003). The type of referent that a person uses to identify the cause of an event can have important psychological implications. Past research has suggested that through religion people can successfully cope with their losses (Baumeister, 1991). Specifically, religion allows people to view their loss in context, to make it meaningful and then find a way to deal with the loss (Spilka et al., 2003). However, one study found that when people viewed their loss as " a punishment from God," this type of attribution was associated with reports of both increased depressed mood and interpersonal loneliness (Stein, Abraham, Bonar, McAuliffe, Fogo, Faigin, Raiya, & Potokar, 2009). Additionally, findings suggest that, " the use of benevolent religious reappraisals had positive implications for persons coping with serious mental illness, while greater reliance on punishing God reappraisals or reappraisals of God's power had more negative metal health implications" (Phillips & Stein, 2007, p. 536).

Given the effect that these attributions have on coping and mental health, it is important to identify the conditions under which people are likely to make certain types of attributions. Studies suggest that the most common referent falls in the naturalistic category (Spilka, 2003; Lupfer, Tolliver & Jackson, 1996). Therefore, people are more likely to attribute the cause of an event to the following: people, natural events, accidents

and chance (Lupfer, Brock & DePaola, 1992 as cited in Spilka, 2003). However, certain factors have been identified which increase the likelihood of a person making a religious attribution. These factors occur when naturalistic attributions, " do not satisfactorily meet the needs for meaning, control and esteem" (Hewstone, 1983; Spilka, Shaver & Kirkpatrick, 1985 as cited in Spilka, 2003, p. 40).

Various studies on attribution theory and religion have identified certain situational factors that help to predict when people are likely to make "god attributions" (Spilka et al., 2003). Spilka et al., (2003) identified two different types of factors which influence religious attributions: contextual factors and event character factors. Contextual factors are factors that influence the attribution because of the location in which it is being made (Spilka et al., 2003). For example, a religious attribution is more likely to be made if the attributer is in a religious setting (e.g. a church or in the presence of others who are religious) at the time of attribution (Fiske & Taylor, 1991 as cited in Spilka et al., 2003). Event character factors are factors that are influenced by, " the nature or character of the event being explained" (Spilka et al., 2003, p. 42). Spilka et al., (2003) identifies four event character factors: 1) the importance of the event; 2) whether the event is positive or negative; 3) the domain of the event; and 4) whether the event occurs to the attributing person or to someone else.

People will often make god attributions when an event is significant (Spilka, 2003; Lupfer, Tolliver & Jackson, 1991). Specifically, past research has suggested that positive and life-altering events as well as events with extreme outcomes elicited more god attributions than events that were negative and non-life altering or mild (Lupfer, Tolliver & Jackson, 1991; Gorsuch & Smith, 1983). God attributions were also found to

be more commonly used when an event was seen favorably, or when participants

approved of the event; if participants disapproved of the event, Satan was blamed

(Lupfer, De Paola, Brock & Clement, 2001). In addition, severe, uncontrollable and

positive events have also been found to increase the likelihood of god attributions (Miner

& McKnight, 1999).

Such instances of god attributions during a significant event are conveyed in

commonly used phrases such as, " act of God," " God's will," "hand of God," " God

works in mysterious ways" (Spilka, , 2003, p. 43; Dalal & Pande, 1988). Medical events

lead to more religious attributions than social or economic events (Spilka & Schmidt,

1983). Additionally, when the medical events are seen to be significant and have a

positive result they are more likely to be attributed to God (Spilka & Schmidt, 1983).

One study found that permanently disabled individuals were more likely to attribute the

cause of the accident to external factors such as Chance and God, than were the

temporarily disabled (Dalal et al., 1988). Another study that asked paraplegics to explain

the cause of their accidents found that people were likely to see a "benevolent divine

purpose in what happened to them" (Bulman & Wortman, 1977 as cited in Spilka, pp.43,

2003). These findings support past research which suggests that, "attributions to god are

overwhelmingly positive" (Bulman & Wortman,1977; Johnson & Spilka, 1991; Lupfer

et al., 1992 as cited in Spilka et al., 2003).

Other factors that relate to the attributor, called dispositional factors, also have

been found to influence the type of attribution made, including: a person's background,

cognitive/linguistic capabilities, and personality (Spilka et al., 2003). Thus, certain

personal factors can predict the likelihood of a person making god attributions. For

example, studies have shown that exposure to religion in childhood is a good indicator of

religious behavior later in life (Spilka et al., 2003). Indeed, one study found parental

influence to be the best predictor of religious belief for Australian adults; a person who

has had much exposure to religion is more likely to make religious attributions later in

life (Hayes & Pittelkow, 1993; Spilka, 2003; Lupfer et al., 1996). Therefore, parental

religion as well as a child's relation to his or her parents may influence one's future

religiousness and likelihood of making religious attributions.

Beginning with child rearing, parents play a major role in their child's acquisition

of religion (Luft & Sorrell, 1987 as cited in Spilka et al., 2003). Studies have suggested

that religious behavior may result from parenting styles (Spilka et al., 2003). Baumrind

(1967, 1991) as discussed in Spilka et al.'s (2003) book *The Psychology of Religion: An*

Empirical Approach, has described parenting styles in terms of three categories:

authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and rejecting/neglecting. Authoritarian parenting

styles have been linked to religiousness (Spilka et al., 2003). For example, conservative

Protestants have been found likely to use an authoritarian style of parenting which places

emphasis on a child's obedience (Ellison & Sherkat, 1993 as cited in Spilka et al., 2003).

Other parenting techniques have been found to influence their child's god image. One

study found that parents who are "ineffective" and "powerless" might be likely to form a

"coalition with God" (Nunn, 1964 as cited in Spilka et al., 2003, p. 102). This "coalition"

is used to evoke punishing God images in which children are told "God will punish you if

you misbehave" (Nunn, 1964 as cited in Spilka et al., 2003, p. 102). Children whose

parents used this type of parenting technique were found to be more likely to attribute

problems to themselves and feel a need to be more obedient (Nunn, 1964 as cited in

Spilka et al., 2003). These children were also more likely to have a negative god-image

(Nunn, 1964 as cited in Spilka et al., 2003).

Since parents are usually considered to be the most critical relationship formed in

childhood, they also serve as the most influential agent of socialization for children

(Spilka et al., 2003). Socialization is defined as " the process by which a culture (usually

through its primary agents, such as parents) encourages individuals to accept beliefs and

behaviors that are normative and expected within that culture" (Spilka et al., 2003, p.

107). Bandura's Social learning theory (1977) states that one's attitudes and beliefs are

affected by both modeling and reinforcement. This theory has been applied to religion in

that, through modeling and reinforcement, parents will often teach their children about

the religion which they themselves believe in (Spilka et al., 2003). Because children are

often not aware of other religious options, they may begin to exhibit similar religious

tendencies as their parents (Spilka et al., 2003). One study found that " greater emphasis

on religion in one's childhood home was liked with acceptance of religious teachings

during the university years" (Hunsberger, 1976 as cited in Spilka et al., 2003, p. 109).

Also, in religious families much time may be spent at religious functions such as

attending church. Since many children may not have yet developed firm religious beliefs,

religious behaviors (i.e. attending a house of worship, praying) may reinforce one's

beliefs, as one study found that behaviors might precede attitudes (Spilka et al., 2003;

Siev, 2009). Eventually these external influences become internalized. (Ryan, Rigby &

King, 1993 as cited in Spilka et al., 2003). Therefore, religious beliefs can come from

external influences, which can be transferred into internal beliefs.

Despite the important role that child rearing and parental influence may have on a person developing religious beliefs and predicting future god attributions, some studies have found that even religious people rarely make god attributions (Lupfer et al., 1996). Therefore, different types of religious orientation might mediate the effects between religiosity and god attributions (Mallery et al., 2000). Religious persons have been classified along two different dimensions: extrinsic and intrinsic. An extrinsic religious orientation is characterized by a person's wish to participate in their religion to benefit themselves or as "a means to other, sometimes more selfish ends" (Flere, Edwards & Klanjsek, 2008, p. 2). For example, those who are extrinsically religious will often participate in religious activities for social reasons such as to meet people within their religious institution. Intrinsic religious orientation is more autonomous; it is characterized by a true belief of religious tenets and enjoyment of religious worship (Gorsuch, Mylvaganam, Gorsuch & Johnson, 1997). The difference between the two was explained as " The extrinsically motivated individual uses his religion, whereas the intrinsically motivated lives his" (Allport & Ross, 1967, p. 434). Past research has analyzed the differences between these two dimensions. People who are intrinsically religious have been found to make different attributions than people who are extrinsically religious (Watson, Morris & Hood, 1990; Mallery, Mallery & Gorsuch, 2000). In one study, participants with high intrinsic religious orientation, when given a religious prime, were more likely to self report actions and behaviors that were consistent to their religious tenets, such as behaving in accordance to their religion's "moral standards" (Carpenter & Marshall, 2009). Another study found that, "intrinsicness was directly related to understandings of God as an important causal agent" (Watson et. al, 1990, p. 116).

Many factors contribute to a person's acquisition of religious beliefs. These factors include parental influences as well as varying motivational influences, which we can analyze through one's attribution style. However, types of religious attributions also vary based upon the type of event in question and the degree of religiosity in the participant, which is often related to parental influence (Miner & McKnight, 1999). Extensive research on this topic has suggested that naturalistic attributions are made much more often than religious attributions (Lupfer et al., 1992; Weeks & Lupfer, 2000). However, under certain specific conditions, an event may be more likely attributed to God. These findings suggest that God is a more likely referent in "severe, uncontrollable and pleasant events" (Miner et al., 1999, p. 284).

This study will examine the interaction between parental emphasis of religion in childhood and religious motivation style on God attributions. Specifically, I predict that participants whose childhood household placed a strong emphasis on religion will be more likely to make god attributions. In addition, I predict that since intrinsically religious people are more likely to self-report beliefs that are consistent with their religious tenets, participants who are intrinsically religious will be more likely to make god attributions than people who are extrinsically religious (Carpenter & Marshall, 2009). Since past studies have found the type of event described to influence the type of attribution made, I predict that both uncontrollable and positive events will elicit more god attributions than controllable and negative. However, I predict that controllability will serve as a moderator for god attributions; when the event is seen to be uncontrollable all participants will be more likely to make god attributions. Thus, I expect positive uncontrollable events to elicit more god attributions than any of the other conditions.

Methods

Participants

Eighty participants from Union College signed up on the psychology department's Freud website to participate in exchange for either four dollars or course credit.

Design

This study used a 2x2 between-subjects factorial design. The two independent variables were controllability (whether the event was seen as controllable or uncontrollable) and valence (whether the event was a positive or negative one) and the dependent variable in the study was type of attribution (i.e. God, fate, chance, or the person involved) made to the event given.

Procedure

Prior to filling out the study, informed consent was obtained from each of the participants; participants were given a brief explanation about the study and were told that they could leave the study at any time. To ensure the validity of the participants' answers, some deception was involved. Participants were told that I was interested in studying attribution styles, while I was really interested in studying god attributions and how they are related to emphasis of religion in childhood and religious motivation styles. After obtaining informed consent, each participant was randomly assigned to one of four conditions. First, participants were given one of four events to read (see appendix a). The events varied based upon controllability and positivity, but did not otherwise differ. For example, the uncontrollable events were the same, they only differed based upon if they had a positive or negative outcome. The same was true for the controllable events.

Thus, the four events, or conditions, were classified as the following: controllable/negative, controllable/positive, uncontrollable/negative, uncontrollable/positive. Participants were asked to imagine the event as though it was happening to themselves.

After reading and imagining the event given, participants were asked to attribute a cause to the event. Specifically, participants were asked to rate on a 0-5 scale , with 0= no role/ no control and 5= big role/complete control, the degree to which they found the following attributes to have played a role in the event: god, the person involved (the participant), chance and fate. In order to make sure that the manipulation worked, participants rated the degree to which the event was either controllable, with 1 being completely uncontrollable and 5 being completely controllable, or positive, with 1 being very negative and 5 being very positive. The Salience in Religious Commitment Scale (see appendix b) was used to measure " the importance an individual attaches to being religious" (Roof & Perkins, 1975). This scale only consisted of three questions, which determined how each individual viewed their religiosity. However, this scale was not used in data analysis because subjects responded inconsistently. Next, participants completed the Religious Emphasis Scale (see appendix c), which was used to assess the extent to which each participant's families emphasized religion while they were growing up (Altemeyer, 1988). Participants were asked to rate on a 0-5 scale, with 0= no emphasis, 1= a mild emphasis placed on the behavior, 2= a moderate emphasis placed on the behavior 4= a strong emphasis placed on the behavior and 5= a very strong emphasis placed on the behavior, the extent to which each behavior was emphasized in their childhood home. Lastly, participants completed a questionnaire to assess their religious

motivation (as seen in appendix d). We used the questionnaire published in Allport & Ross's (1967) study, *Personal religious orientation and prejudice*.

<div align="center">Results</div>

Manipulation Check

A manipulation check was used to ensure the validity of the manipulations. First, an independent samples t-test was performed to analyze participants' ratings on how controllable they found the given event. This helped us to determine if the participants' ratings of controllability matched ours. A second independent samples t-test was used to determine how positive or negative participants found the given event to be. The data revealed that the manipulations were successful for the controllable/uncontrollable events such that, t(78)= 14.59, p<.01 (M=4.35 in controllable condition, M= 1.81 in uncontrollable condition). Results also indicated that the manipulations for the positive/negative events were successful such that, t (78)= 6.10, p<.01, (M= 3.38 for positive condition, M= 1.74 for negative condition).

Condition 1: Controllable and Positive

Scores on the Intrinsic Religious motivations scale were correlated with participants' responses regarding the likelihood that they would attribute causality to each of the 4 factors (god, self, fate, chance). Results indicated that degree of intrinsic religiosity was not significantly correlated with likelihood of making god attributions, r(18) =.21, p=.38. Degree of intrinsic religiosity was also not correlated with making chance attributions, r(18) =.37, p=.11 or fate attributions, r(18)=-.24, p=.32. However, it was negatively correlated with self attributions, r(18)= -.53, p=.02. Similarly, scores on the Religious Emphasis scale were correlated to each of the 4 factors. Degree of religious

emphasis was not significantly correlated with likelihood of making god attributions, $r(18)=.06$, $p=.80$; self attributions, $r(18)=-.17$, $p=.49$, chance attributions, $r(18)=.09$, $p=.70$ or fate attributions, $r(18)=.03$, $p=.91$. Lastly, scores on the Extrinsic Religious motivations scale were correlated with each of the 4 factors. Results for this condition revealed that, degree of extrinsic religiosity was not correlated with god attributions, $r(18)=-.10$, $p=.68$, self-attributions, $r(18)=-.24$, $p=.32$; chance attributions, $r(18)=.37$, $p=.11$ or fate attributions, $r(18)=-.42$, $p=.07$.

Condition 2: Uncontrollable and Negative

Scores on the Intrinsic Religious motivation scale were correlated with each of the 4 factors (god, self, chance, fate). Results revealed that degree of intrinsic religiosity was correlated with both god attributions, $r(19)=.85$, $p=.00$; and fate attributions, $r(19)=.46$, $p=.04$; but was not correlated with self attributions, $r(19)=.07$, $p=.75$ or chance attributions, $r(19)= -.38$, $p=.09$. Next, scores on the Religious Emphasis scale were correlated with each of the four factors. Degree of religious emphasis was correlated with god attributions, $r(19)=.70$, $p=.00$ and fate attributions, $r(19)=.68$, $p=.00$; but was not correlated with self attributions, $r(19)= -.01$, $p=.99$; or chance attributions, $r(19)=-.22$, $p=.35$. Lastly, scores on the Extrinsic Religious motivation scale were correlated with each of the four factors. Degree of extrinsic religiosity was correlated with god attributions, $r(19)=.68$, $p=.00$; but was not correlated with self-attributions, $r(19)=-.02$, $p=.94$; chance attributions, $r(19)=-.20$, $p=.39$ or fate attributions, $r(19)=.39$, $p=.08$.

Condition 3: Controllable Negative events

Scores on the Intrinsic Religious motivation scale were correlated with each of the 4 factors (god, self, chance, fate) . Degree of intrinsic religiosity was not correlated with god attributions, r(14)=.07, p=.80; fate attributions, r(14)=.31,p=.24; chance attributions, r(14)=-.07, p=.78; or with self attributions, r(14)=.23, p=.40. Next, scores on the Religious Emphasis scale were correlated with each of the 4 factors. For this condition, degree of religious emphasis was negatively correlated with god attributions, r(15)=-.53, p=.03. Degree of religious emphasis was not correlated with self-attributions, r(15)=.14, p=.60, chance attributions, r(15)=.20, p=.44 or fate attributions, r(15)=-.22, p=.40. Lastly, scores on the Extrinsic Religious motivation scale were correlated with each of the 4 factors. Degree of extrinsic religiosity was not correlated with god attributions, r(14)=.05, p=.86; self attributions, r(14)=.31, r=.25; chance attributions, r(14)=.13, r(14)=.64 or fate attributions, r(14)=.37, p=.16.

Condition 4: Uncontrollable Positive Events

Scores on the Intrinsic Religious motivation scale were correlated with each of the 4 factors. When the event was seen to be uncontrollable and positive, degree of intrinsic religiosity was correlated with god attributions, r(19)=.70, p=.00; but was not correlated with self attributions, r(19)=-.28, p=.22; fate attributions, r(19)=.35, p=.12; or chance attributions, r(19)=-.30, p=.18. Next, scores on the Religious Emphasis scale were correlated with each of the 4 factors. For this condition, degree of religious emphasis was correlated with god attributions, r(20)=.58, p=.01. Degree of religious emphasis was not correlated with self-attributions, r(20)=-.01, p=.97; chance attributions, r(20)=-.14, p=.53; or fate attributions, r(20)=.111, p=.62. Lastly, scores on the Extrinsic Religious

motivation scale were correlated with each of the four factors. Results revealed that

extrinsic religiosity was correlated with god attributions, r(19)=.71, p=.00; but not

correlated with self-attributions, r(19)=-,01, p=.98; chance attributions, r(19)=-.20, p=.38

or fate attributions, r(19)=.40, p=.07.

Across Conditions

Before analyzing intrinsic religiosity within the 4 different conditions, scores on

the Intrinsic Religiosity Scale, across all 4 conditions, were correlated with each of the 4

factors. The results supported the hypothesis that overall, intrinsic religiosity was

correlated with god attributions, r(76) = .56, p=.00. Intrinsic religiosity was not correlated

with self-attributions, r(76)=-.15, p=.20; or chance attributions, r(76)=-.090, p=.43.

However, intrinsic religiosity was correlated with fate attributions, r(76)=.30, p=.01.

Scores on the Religious Emphasis Scale, across all conditions, were also correlated with

each of the 4 factors. The results revealed religious emphasis to be correlated with god

attributions, r(78)=.29, p=.01; but not with self-attributions, r(78)=-.04, p-.74; chance

attributions, r(78)=-.01, p=.93; or fate attributions, r(78)=.14, p=.23. Lastly, scores on the

Extrinsic Religiosity Scale, across all conditions, were correlated with each of the 4

factors. Extrinsic religiosity was correlated with god attributions, r(76)= .49, p=.00; and

fate attributions, r(76)=.30, p=.01; but was not correlated with self attributions, r(76)= -

.07, p=.56; or chance attributions, r(76)=-.03, p=.80.

Discussion

Overall, the results for this thesis supported the hypotheses.

Intrinsic Religiosity

This present study predicted that intrinsic religiosity would be correlated with god attributions; that people with high scores on the Intrinsic Religiosity Scale would be likely to make god attributions. The results supported the hypothesis. Overall, intrinsic religiosity was correlated with god attributions. However, the type of event served as a mediator for god attributions. Correlations of intrinsic religiosity with god attributions differed based upon the event given. For example, when the event was seen to be uncontrollable and negative, intrinsic religiosity was highly correlated with god attributions. However, when the events were seen to be controllable and positive and controllable and negative, the correlation results between intrinsic religiosity and god attributions were nonsignificant. Thus suggesting that controllability has a greater effect on god attributions than does positivity.

Religious Emphasis

It was also predicted that religious emphasis in the childhood home would be correlated with god attributions. This hypothesis was supported by the results. The general findings for religious emphasis suggest that greater religious emphasis in the childhood home predicts greater god attributions in the future. Like intrinsic religiosity, type of event also served as a moderator between religious emphasis and god attributions. Thus, the correlation between religious emphasis and god attributions varied based upon type of event. For example, like the findings for intrinsic religiosity, the highest correlation between religious emphasis and god attributions occurred when the event was seen to be uncontrollable and negative followed by uncontrollable and positive. When the event was seen to be controllable and positive, the findings were nonsignificant. However, when the event was seen to be controllable and negative, there was a negative

correlation between god attributions and religious emphasis. Therefore, these results also suggest the strong influence of controllability on a person's likelihood of making god attributions.

Extrinsic Religiosity

This present study predicted that extrinsic religious persons would be less likely to make god attributions than intrinsic religious persons. While the overall correlation between intrinsic religiosity and god attributions was higher than the overall correlation between extrinsic religiosity and god attributions, findings from this present study suggest that like intrinsic religiosity, extrinsic religiosity is also correlated with god attributions. Like the two previous variables, the correlation between extrinsic religiosity and god attributions was also mediated by type of event. However, unlike the two previous variables, the highest correlation between extrinsic religiosity and god attributions occurred when the event was uncontrollable and positive followed by uncontrollable and negative. For both the controllable/positive event and the controllable/negative event, the findings were nonsignificant.

General Implications

A number of factors influence a person's likelihood of acquiring religious beliefs. These factors include both environmental influences (parents, peers, youth groups) and a possible biological basis for religion (Gorsuch, 1997; Spilka et al., 2003; Beck, 2004; Pargament & Park, 2005). Since parents are the primary mechanism of socialization for young children, they provide the first introduction between their child and religion (Spilka et al., 2003). Past research has argued that internalization occurs in which children will often adopt their parent's religious beliefs (Spilka et al., 2003). Thus, this

present study analyzed the role of religious emphasis on god attributions. Overall, religious emphasis was correlated with god attributions. These findings support past research, which found parental influence to be the best predictor of religious belief for Australian adults (Hayes & Pittelkow, 1993). The type of event moderated these findings in each of the conditions. For example, when the event was seen to be uncontrollable and positive and uncontrollable and negative, religious emphasis was correlated with god attributions. However, when the event was seen to be controllable and negative religious emphasis was negatively correlated with god attributions and when the event was seen to be controllable and positive the findings were nonsignificant.

While parental religiosity may predict future god attributions, some studies have found god attributions to still be unlikely even among religious people (Lupfer et al., 1996). Therefore, different types of religious orientation might mediate the effects between religiosity and god attributions (Mallery et al., 2000). Theorists have identified two different religious orientations: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic religiosity is characterized as a true belief of religious tenants, in which the religious person truly enjoys and believes in religious worship (Gorsuch, Mylvaganam, Gorsuch & Johnson, 1997). While extrinsically religious persons might partake in similar religious behaviors, they are more focused on what their religion can do for them and they participate in their religion as " a means to other, sometimes more selfish ends" (Fiere, Edwards & Klanjsek, p.2, 2008). In relation to god attributions, intrinsically religious persons have been found to be more likely to self-report actions and behaviors that were consistent to their religious tenets such as accordance to their religion's moral code (Carpenter & Marshall, 2009). Thus, this study predicted that intrinsic religiosity would be correlated with god

attributions across all four conditions. This hypothesis was also supported by the data. The data showed that intrinsically religious persons, across all conditions, were likely to make god attributions. Similarly, findings from this present study suggest that extrinsically religiosity is also correlated with god attributions across all conditions.

It was also predicted that the type of event given would moderate all participants' likelihood of making a god attribution. I predicted that the highest number of god attributions would occur when the event was both uncontrollable and positive, but that controllability would be the greatest determinant of a person's likelihood of making a god attribution. The study revealed that controllability was the greatest influential factor on god attributions. Specifically, all three variables showed high correlations when the event was seen to be uncontrollable. In opposition to the present study's hypothesis, both intrinsic religiosity and religious emphasis had the highest correlations with god attributions when the event was seen to be uncontrollable and negative. However, extrinsic religiosity showed the greatest correlation with god attributions when the event was seen to be uncontrollable and positive.

These findings are in disagreement with past research which suggests the greater likelihood of attributing positive events to God, rather than negative events (Bulman & Wortman,1977; Johnson & Spilka, 1991; Lupfer et al., 1992 as cited in Spilka et al., 2003) One possible explanation for this result is a difference in god images; the way a person views god can determine the types of god attributions made (Spilka et al., 2003). For example, if a person has a punishing god-image, he or she might predict that god plays a greater role in negative events than positive (Nunn, 1964 as cited in Spilka et al., 2003). While a person who believes in God's constant benevolence, might make more

god attributions for positive events than for negative events. Thus, one limitation of our study was that we did not account for the effect of god-image on god attributions. Future studies might examine the effects of god image and how differing god images might influence one's attribution style. Additionally, past research has suggested a relation between robust beliefs about Satan and God experiences (Beck & Taylor, 2008). Specifically beliefs about Satan were related to more positive experiences with god as well as a decreased likelihood of placing blame upon God for negative events in the world (Beck & Taylor, 2008). Future research might also examine how Satan influences the types of events that a person attributes to god.

Another potential limitation that might have influenced our data was sample size. Since there were four conditions, a larger sample size would have increased our study's validity. In addition our results might have been influenced by the all-college student sample. One longitudinal study, which analyzed changes in religiosity among college students, found that religious behaviors decreased with each semester (Stoppa & Lefkowitz, 2010). Therefore, college students who may have partaken in religious activities at home may not show the same religious tendencies as in the past. This may be because it is more difficult to find a religious organization while at school or because a student might be busy with schoolwork. Thus, our findings may have been influenced by our use of only college students who may not be representative of the larger population.

Future research should also account for gender differences. Extensive research on the subject of god attributions has suggested that people who are more religious are more likely to make god attributions (Lupfer et al., 1996). Previous studies have suggested that women are more religious than men and also more likely to be extrinsically religious than

men (Collett & Lizardo, 2009; Pierce, Cohen, Chambers & Meade, 2007). Since we did

not include gender differences in our questionnaires, it is possible that we had a higher

number of men or women and this may have skewed the results. While there were

limitations to the validity of our data, the overall implications of this study suggest the

importance of both religious orientation and emphasis of religion in childhood in

predicting a person's interpretation of important life events.

Appendix A:

Event Type 1) Negative/ Uncontrollable:

You have contracted a strange illness that there is not yet a cure for. You are told that there is nothing you could have done to prevent the onset of this disease. The doctor says that it does not look promising.

Event Type 2) Positive/ Uncontrollable:

You were diagnosed a year ago with a strange illness that there was not a cure for. The doctor told you that there was nothing you could have done to prevent the onset of this disease. Yesterday when you went in for a checkup you found out that the disease was gone.

Event Type 3) Positive/Controllable:

You are driving in your car and you quickly glance down at your phone. When you look up you are three feet away from the truck, you swerve out of the way and are able to just miss hitting the truck. You are safe and your car was undamaged.

Event Type 4) Negative/Controllable:

You are driving in your car and you quickly glance down at your phone. Since you have done this many times without anything happened you figured it would be like any other day. However, today you glance back up and smash directly into a telephone poll.

Appendix B:

Salience in Religious commitment scale

Strongly disagree (1) disagree (2) agree (3) strongly agree (4)

1) My religious faith is:

_____ Important for my life, but no more important than certain other aspects of my life

_____ Only of minor importance in my life, compared to certain other aspects of my life

_____ Of central importance of my life, and would, if necessary come before all other aspects of my life

2) Everyone must make many important life decisions, such as which occupation to pursue, which goals to strive for, whom to vote for, what to teach one's children, etc. When you have made, or do make decisions such as these, to what extent do you make the decisions on the basis of your religious faith?

_____ I seldom if ever base such decisions on my religious faith

_____ I sometimes base such decisions on my religious faith but definitely not most of the time

_____ I feel that most of my important decisions are based on my religious faith, but usually in a general unconscious way

_____ I feel that most of my important decisions are based on my religious faith, and I usually consciously attempt to make them so

_____ Without my religious faith, the rest of my life would not have much meaning to it

Appendix C:

On a 0-5 basis, please indicate how much your parents emphasized these activities while you were growing up

0= no emphasis

1= a slight emphasis was placed on the behavior

2= a mind emphasis was placed on the behavior

3= a moderate emphasis was placed on the behavior

4= a strong emphasis was placed on the behavior

5= a very strong emphasis was placed on the behavior

1) Attending religious services

2) Getting systematic religious instruction regularly

3) Reviewing the teachings of religion at home

4) Praying before meals

5) Reading scripture or other religious material

6) Praying before bedtime

7) Discussing moral "do's" and "don'ts" in religious terms

8) Observing religious holidays; celebrating events in a religious way

9) Being a good representative of the faith; acting the way a devout member of your religion would be expected to act

10) Taking part in religious youth groups

Appendix D:

Please rate how true each of the following statements are to your life with 0 being very false and 5 being very true.

1) I try hard to carry my religion over into all my other dealings in life

    _____

2) My religious beliefs are really what lie behind my whole approach to life

    _____

3) It is important for me to spend periods of time in private religious thought and meditation

    _____

4) If not prevented by unavoidable circumstances, I attend my house of worship

    _____

5) The prayers I say when I am alone carry as much meaning and personal emotion as those said by me during services

    _____

6) Quite often I have been keenly aware of the presence of god or the divine being

    _____

7) I often read literature about my faith

    _____

8) If I were to join a worship group I would prefer to join a religious scripture study group rather than a social fellowship

    _____

9) Religion is especially important because it answers many questions about the meaning of life.

    _____

10) One reason for my being a member of my house of worship is that such membership helps to establish a person in the community

_____

11) A primary reason for my interest in religion is that my house of worship is a congenial social activity

_____

12) Houses of worship are important as a place to formulate good social relationships

_____

13) The primary purpose of prayer is to gain relief and protection

_____

14) What religion offers me most is comfort when sorrows and misfortune strike

_____

15) The purpose of prayer is to secure a happy and peaceful life.

_____

16) Although I believe in my religion, I feel that there are many more important things in my life.

_____

17) It does not matter so much what I believe so long as I lead a moral life

_____

18) Although I am a religious person I refuse to let religious considerations influence my everyday affairs

_____

19) I pray chiefly because I have been taught to pray

_____

20) Occasionally I find it necessary to compromise my religious beliefs in order to protect my social and economic well-being.

_____

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