The Relationship Between Religiosity and Happiness Among Conservative Christian Students

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ABSTRACT
Religiosity has generally been studied by measuring beliefs. However, recent studies have branched out to include the measure of religious practices. This study seeks to explore the relationship between religiosity, measured both by attitudes and behaviors, and happiness among conservative Christian students.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH
RELIGIOSITY AND HAPPINESS
In early studies religiosity was often measured by attendance (Tittle & Welch, 1986). Since then the study has moved towards a measure of beliefs. In general, religious people report higher life satisfaction (Myers & Diener, 1995). Religiosity and happiness have been studied in numerous undergraduate samples (Francis et al, 2004, French & Joseph, 1999). While most studies have supported the positive link between the two variables, some have found no relationship (Lewis, Maltby & Burkinshaw, 2000).

RELIGIOUS BEHAVIORS
Higher religious belief results in high religious behavior (Cohen, Shariff & Hill, 2008). Religious behaviors were found to fall two categories, high and low cost (Habenicht, Bailey & Bailey, 2009). High cost behaviors include tithing, offering and fasting while low cost behaviors include prayer and worship. In general religiosity has not been defined as religious behavior as often as religious orientation.

METHODOLOGY
DATA COLLECTION
The Subjective Happiness Scale (Lyubomirsky & Lepper, 1999) was used to measure happiness, the Religious Life Inventory (Batson, 1976) for intrinsic, extrinsic and quest religiosity and the Habenicht Religious Practices Scale for religious behaviors. Data was collected from two general education psychology classrooms.

POPULATION
Andrews University is a uniquely conservative Christian university. It is 94% Seventh-day Adventist, a relatively conservative group. A convenient sample was used with a final N of 110.

RESULTS

VARIABLE DISTRIBUTIONS

IMPLICATIONS
Using a stepwise multiple linear regression, we found that high cost behavior accounted for 25% of the variance with low cost adding another 5%. Happiness was found to have the highest correlations with high cost behaviors (.500), intrinsic religiosity (.304), and extrinsic religiosity (.248). No relationship was found between low cost behaviors (-.078) or quest religiosity (-.160). This suggests that people get the most happiness from doing things rather than just believing something. It should be noted that high cost and low cost are not two different groups. Most of the subjects engaged in low cost behaviors with only a few going further to high cost behaviors. This supports the general consensus in the literature that increased volunteerism yields greater happiness (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001).

LIMITATIONS
• An extremely religious sample.
• Reliability of a self-report
• Convenient sample