How is religious belief, and particularly one’s internal representation of God affected by exposure to unfairness in the world?

Previous Literature

Cognitive measures of Christian’s representations of God suggest that positive traits and theological traits are more easily accessed than are negative traits when included in the representation (Gibson, 2005; Bailey, unpublished data).

People who view God as punishing and less loving, for example, are less likely to cheat when given the chance (Shariff & Norenzayan, 2011). However, these effects have also been found in response to primes that focus subjects’ attention on a lawful society (Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007).

Thus, it is not clear if the relationship between perception of God and behavior is specific to representations of God or is more generally do to the perception of being monitored by powerful others.

The current study uses a reaction time measure (Gibson, 2005) to examine how exposure to stories of people who have experience trauma through no fault of their own affects Christians’ representations of God.

Methods

Participants

Subjects will be recruited from the Behavioral Sciences Department Research Participant Pool. All subjects will be eighteen years of age or older.

Design

Materials & Instructions

Divide the subjects into three groups: Control, God, Society

Story Clip on Tragic Story

Writing Prompt: “Where was God in all of this?” or “Where was society in all of this?”

Reaction Task

Religious Behavior Questionnaire

Discussion/Results

There is no significant difference between the reactions of the groups when presented with the stimuli however there is some correlation within the variance.

References


