

P3 – Gratitude and Religiosity as Predictors of Relationship Commitment

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- Research Purpose:** This project examines gratitude, religiosity, and relationship commitment in a sample of people who are currently involved in a romantic relationship.
- Research Description: Overall series of projects:** Although Emmons, McCullough, and Tsang (2003, p. 327) argued that gratitude “enhances one’s personal and relational well-being”, most of the research linking gratitude to interpersonal relationships has focused on prosocial behaviour rather than ongoing personal relationships. Indeed, Algoe, Haidt, and Gable (2008) claimed that their recent study was the first to examine gratitude as a factor in the promotion of relationships. This project is one of a series of three studies that will explore the association between gratitude and relationship outcomes in ongoing romantic relationships. The students involved in the three projects will collect data together, but will focus on separate aspects of the overall study for their individual theses.
- Project 3:** The third project will examine the extent to which gratitude and religiosity predict relationship commitment. Researchers have made a distinction between intrinsic religiosity, in which religion is a central motive in one’s life; and extrinsic religiosity, in which religion is seen as a means to a goal (e.g., social status or social support). Intrinsic religiosity has been linked with various measures of well-being. Although religiosity has been studied in the context of the marital relationship (e.g., Brimhall & Butler, 2007), no study has explored the associations between gratitude, religiosity, and commitment in romantic relationships.
- Participants:** The overall study will include approximately 150-200 adult participants who have been in a relationship for at least six months (i.e., married, de facto, or dating). These participants will be recruited via the first-year psychology student experimental pool, community groups and organisations, and networks available to the three Honours students involved in the overall study. The supervisor will arrange for permission letters from any groups or organisations prior to data collection. Each student will be responsible for recruiting approximately 50-70 participants for the study.
- Methodology:** The following questionnaires will be used:
- (a) The Gratitude, Resentment, and Appreciation Test (GRAT; Watkins, Woodward, Stone, & Kolts, 2003). This is a 44-item dispositional measure of gratitude that breaks down into three subscores: resentment, simple appreciation for common pleasures, and social appreciation for others.
 - (b) The Religious Orientation Scale-Revised (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989), which measures intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity.
 - (c) The commitment subscale from the Investment Model Scale (Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998).

Data Analysis: Pearson product-moment correlations and regression analyses will be the main analyses used. The three students involved in the overall study may choose to do the data screening either individually or together. However, each student will be responsible for individually analysing the data relevant to his/her specific project.

Student friendliness: This project is suitable for local or distance students. Weekly contact will be required in the early stages of the project, but can be more flexible throughout the year to reflect the different needs of the students. If two or more local students are involved in the project, I would prefer as many joint supervision sessions as possible. Contact with distance students will mainly be via email or phone. It may also be beneficial for distance students to allow a little extra time at the workshops (e.g., a day at the beginning or end) to provide more time for face-to-face supervision, though this can be negotiated. While the student will be able to find plenty of articles on gratitude, religiosity, and relationship commitment, no studies have linked these three variables together. Therefore, the student will need to use critical thinking in order to integrate different bodies of research. If you are interested in this project, please send me an email and include two or three sentences indicating why you are interested in the project.

Expected research outcomes: It is hoped that the results of the overall study will be published in a journal article and/or presented at a psychology conference. The supervisor and the three students will all be co-authors on these papers.

Further reading:

Algoe, S. B., Haidt, J., & Gable, S. L. (2008). Beyond reciprocity: Gratitude and relationships in everyday life. *Emotion, 8* (3), 425-429.

Brimhall, A. S., & Butler, M. H. (2007). Intrinsic vs. extrinsic religious motivation and the marital relationship. *The American journal of Family Therapy, 35*, 235-249.

Gorsuch, R. L., & McPherson, S. E. (1989). Intrinsic/extrinsic measurement: I/E-revised and single-item scales. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 28* (3), 348-354.

Rusbult, C. E., Martz, J. M., & Agnew, C. R. (1998). The Investment Model Scale: Measuring commitment level, satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, and investment size. *Personal Relationships, 5*, 357-391.

Watkins, P. C., Woodward, K., Stone, T., & Kolts, R. L. (2003). Gratitude and happiness: Development of a measure of gratitude, and relationships with subjective well-being. *Social Behavior and Personality, 31* (5), 431-452.

Ethics:

Ethical approval will be sought by supervisor; or
 Ethics approved – number _____

Resources:

Project able to be funded within \$150 departmental limit
 Project not able to be funded within \$150 departmental limit – additional funds will come from: _____

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