Podium Presentation

Title of Project: When God's on Your Side: Thwarting the Negative Effects of Rejection

Denis Chapan

Faculty Mentor: Kristine Kelly
Psychology

Everyone has an inherent need to belong such that lack of fulfilling interpersonal relationships results in many problems (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The belonging regulation system involves “social shielding,” which protects people from threats to their belongingness by inventing fantasy relationships with celebrities, fictional characters, or even cartoon characters (Giles, 2002). These imaginary relationships are known as parasocial relationships. God may serve as a parasocial attachment which ameliorates threats to an individual's need to belong. I hypothesize that participants who are reminded of God will be buffered from the negative effects of social rejection than those who do not reminisce about God.

Participants were undergraduate Christian students. They first wrote about a time when they felt rejected (Blackhart et al., 2009). Next, they were randomly assigned to (1) pray to God, (2) think about a friend, or (3) meditate by focusing on one’s own breath. Finally, they completed the Needs-Threat Scale (Jamieson, Harkins, & Williams, 2010), which measures threat to an individual's belonging need.

Data will be analyzed by conducting a one-way analysis of variance with prayer/friendship/meditation as the independent variable and threatened belonging needs as the dependent variable. Results are expected to show that participants who pray to God will report less belonging threat than those who meditate but will not differ from those who think about a friend. These results will demonstrate that God may serve as a parasocial relationship which buffers individuals from the negative effects of rejection as much as real friendships do.