Spirituality and Reasoned Action as Predictors of Participating in Service Projects
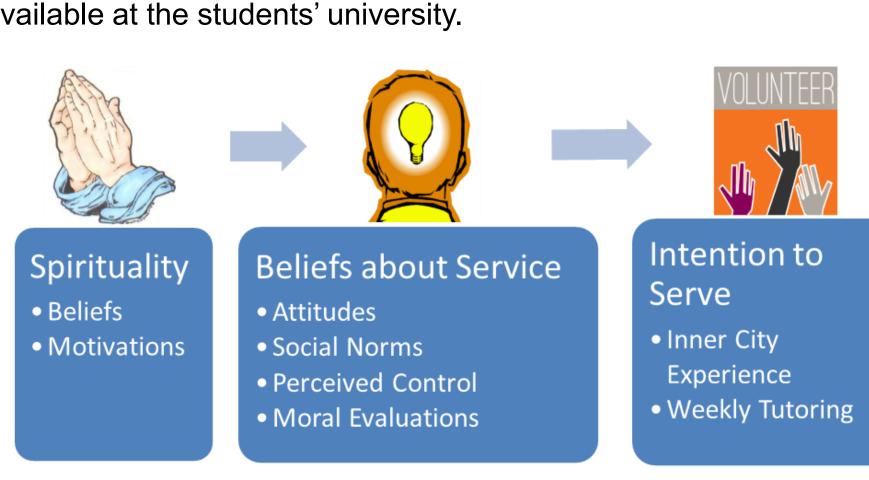
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Abstract

The reasoned action approach (RAA) predicts that behavior is predicted by attitudes, social norms, and perceived behavioral control in a relationship mediated by the intention to engage in the behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2009). RAA has been shown to be highly predictive of a wide variety of behaviors. Spirituality is one possible source of influence on the variables that the RAA predicts will underlie behavior, particularly behaviors with a strong ethical or moral component. In this study, several dimensions of spirituality were measured, including God Concept, Religious Motivation, and several single item spirituality measures. The RAA was utilized to understand intention to volunteer for two community service projects, which could count towards the students required service for graduation. Data were collected from 143 undergraduate students from a Christian evangelical university in Southern California. The associations between RAA variables and intention to engage in two community service projects were calculated, along with associations between spirituality variables and RAA variables. RAA variables strongly predicted intention to volunteer, although influence varied according to the service project. Spirituality was significantly associated with attitudes and moral evaluations of the inner city experience project.

Background

- University-based service learning has the capacity to achieve multiple aims of higher education (Bringle & Hatcher, 2000)
- Service learning has been identified as a possible pathway for the formation of a responsible civic identity among students. (Jones & Abes, 2004; Mitchell, 2015)
- Students who participate in service learning projects have better GPA's, as well as better writing, critical thinking, and leadership skills, than those who do not participate in them. (Astin et. al, 2000).
- The reasoned action approach can be used to understand factors influencing the intention to volunteer for service projects (Hellman, Hoppes, & Ellison, 2006).
- Spirituality is a broad construct that may inform the attitudes, norms, and moral evaluation of service projects (Hardy & Carlo, 2005)
- The goal of the present study was to investigate how multiple dimensions of spirituality related to the intention to volunteer for service projects available at the students' university.

Spirituality	Beliefs about Service	Intention to Serve
• Beliefs • Motivations	• Attitudes • Social Norms • Perceived Control • Moral Evaluations	• Inner City Experience • Weekly Tutoring

Method

Participants:

143 undergraduate students at a faith-based university in Southern California

- Age: Mean = 19.13, SD = 1.79
- Sex: Female (79.0%), Male (21.0%)
- Ethnicity: Caucasian (53.1%), Asian American (16.1%), Latino/a (18.2%), African American (3.5%), Multiple Ethnicity/Other (9.1%).
- Class: Freshman (70.6%), Sophomore (14%), Junior (11.2%), Senior (4.2%)
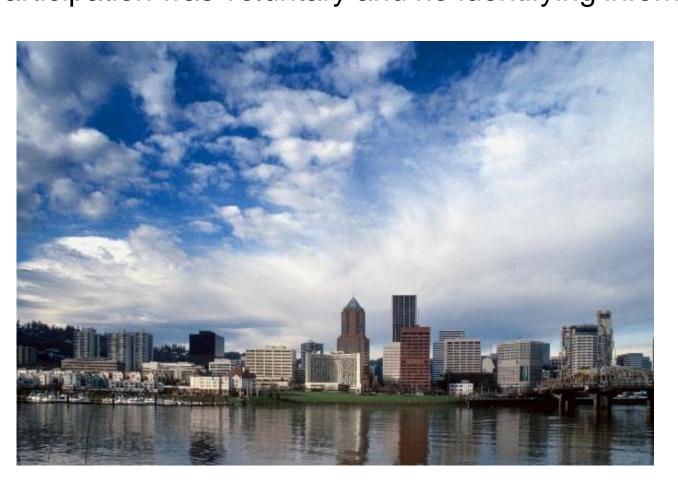- Living Situation: On-Campus (88.1%), Off-Campus (11.9%)

Measures:

1. God Concept scale (Spilka, Armatas, & Nussbaum, 1964; Wong-McDonald & Gorsuch, 2004) – adapted by Lehmann (2009)
2. Age-Universal I/E Religiousness Scale (Gorsuch & Venable, 1983)
3. Single-Item Measures of Spirituality: How important is spirituality to you? How certain is your belief in God? Do you believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? How close do you feel to God?
4. Intention to Volunteer: a single item measuring intention to volunteer for each service project, with specific times and dates provided (e.g. I will volunteer with LA 101 this semester, on either March 19–22 (Saturday to Tuesday) or April 9–12 (Saturday to Tuesday).
5. Attitudes: two semantic differential items for each behavior (i.e. Volunteering would be [*Boring/Fun*]; [*Unsatisfying/Satisfying*])
6. Social Norms – two items measuring perceived norms and motivation to comply (e.g. Most people close to me would think I [*should/should not*] volunteer)
7. Perceived Behavioral Control – two items measuring perceived ability to volunteer (e.g. I think that I would have [*no time/ plenty of time*] to volunteer)
8. Moral Evaluations: two items measuring moral evaluation of volunteering for the service project (i.e. *What ALL Good Youth Should Do/What NO Good Youth Should Do; Immoral/Moral*)

Procedures:

- Institutional IRB Approval was received prior to initiation of participant data collection.
- Participants were recruited from the Psychology Department Research Participation System, which grants students credit for participation as part of lower class Psychology classes. Students who participated received 0.5 hours of credit.
- Participants were linked to an online survey where they were provided an opportunity for informed consent.
- Questionnaire took approximately 15 minutes to complete
- Participation was voluntary and no identifying information was collected.

Results

Table 1. *Means and SD of Service Project Variables*

Variable	M	SD
Inner City		
Intentions	3.17[a]	1.57
Attitudes	5.28[a]	1.24
Moral Evaluations	5.78[a]	0.91
Social Norms	5.35[a]	1.26
Perceived Behavioral Control	4.01	1.26
Homework Tutor		
Intentions	3.84	1.67
Attitudes	5.70[b]	1.23
Moral Evaluations	6.19[b]	0.77
Social Norms	5.85[b]	1.23
Perceived Behavioral Control	4.33	1.20

Table 2. *Means and SD of Spirituality Variables*

Variable	M	SD
God Concept		
Christian God Concept	6.62[c]	0.55
Wrathful God Concept	3.72	1.52
Religious Motivation		
Intrinsic	5.29	0.97
Extrinsic Personal	4.74	1.37
Extrinsic Social	3.05	1.10
Single-Item Spirituality Measures		
Spiritual Importance	5.27[b]	1.48
Certainty of Belief in God	6.05[c]	1.38
Belief in Jesus Christ	6.65[c]	0.91
Closeness to God	5.20[b]	1.30

Table 3. Correlations of Reasoned Action Variables with Intention to Volunteer

Predictors	Inner City Experience r / R	Inner City Experience b	Homework Tutor r / R	Homework Tutor b
Reasoned Action Set (R)	.66***	-	.68***	-
Attitudes	.61***	0.58***	.38***	0.10
Social Norms	.44***	0.04	.36***	0.12
Perceived Beh. Control	.44***	0.30***	.67***	0.86***
Moral Evaluations	.42***	0.17	.15	-0.14

Results, cont'd

Table 4: *Correlations of Spirituality Variables with Reasoned Action Variables for Moral and Immoral Behaviors*

Predictor	Attitudes Inner City	Attitudes Tutoring	Moral Evaluation Inner City	Moral Evaluation Tutoring
Christian God Concept	.154*	.143	.127	.029
Wrathful God Concept	.114	.117	.084	.143
Total God Concept (R)	.214*	.207*	.169	.155
Intrinsic	.242**	.221(**)	.196*	.016
Extrinsic Personal	.161	.071	.222**	.157
Extrinsic Social	-.107	.015	-.101	-.090
Total Relig. Motivation (R)	.296**	.231	.301**	.181
Spiritual Importance	.146	.143	.155	-.022
Certainty of God Belief	.096	.046	.071	-.082
Belief in Jesus Christ	.091	.085	.103	.033
Closeness to God	.122	.098	.080	-.066
Total Single-Item (R)	.156	.175	.170	.174
Total Spirituality (R)	.355*	.310	.346*	.318

Discussion

- Among students at a faith based university, intention to volunteer for a service project can be strongly predicted by the Reasoned Action model.
  - For the Inner City Experience project, attitudes and perceived behavioral control each contributed unique variance towards intention to volunteer.
  - For the Homework Tutor project, perceived behavioral control was the only significant unique predictor of intention to volunteer in the Reasoned Action model.
- The intention to volunteer for either project was not significantly predicted by the set of spirituality variables.
  - This preliminary analysis may have lacked power to detect findings that were theoretically expected to be small, based on the compatibility principle.
  - Restriction of range may have also attenuated results.
  - As the Homework Tutor project was determined solely by perceived control beliefs (i.e. whether the participant viewed their ability to volunteer for the project as within their control), it is unsurprising that spirituality was not associated with intent to volunteer as this variable was not expected to be associated with spirituality.
- Nevertheless, spirituality was related to the attitudes and moral evaluations of the Inner City Experience project.
  - These results suggest that spirituality may not only affect the moral evaluation of service projects but also may impact the beliefs about the anticipated affective experience of that behavior (i.e. attitude).
  - Social norms may also be related to spirituality but measures utilized in this study may not have been sensitive to these effects.
- Protected post-hoc findings suggested religious motivation and God concept were factors related to attitudes and moral evaluations towards volunteering.
- Future research should utilize measures of spirituality that are not constrained by ceiling effects and are conceptually related to RAA predictors, such as religious support, to investigate the role of spirituality and religiousness on service project engagement.