God loves me, God loves me not: Can individuals' Trust and Mistrust in God predict depression?

Chayim Newman[1], David H. Rosmarin[2] & Vance Zemon[1]

[1]Yeshiva University: Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology, Bronx, NY.
[2]McLean Hospital/Harvard Medical School, Belmont, MA.

Background

Previous research indicates that religion serves as a buffer against depressive symptoms (Smith, McCullough, & Poll, 2003). The overall relationship between religious variables and depression, however, is relatively weak. Core religious beliefs relating to God or a Higher Power may be a fruitful area of study to further investigate how and why religion impacts upon symptoms of depression. In the current study, we re-analyzed the psychometric properties of a recently-developed, 24-item self-report instrument assessing trust and mistrust in God or a Higher Power and its power as a predictor of depression.

Methods

A community-based sample of 354 participants (n = 234 Jews, n = 120 Christians) was recruited via snowball sampling beginning with email invitations sent to lists from community organizations and advertisements placed on community websites. Participants then completed an online questionnaire which included demographic measures, measures of religious and spiritual beliefs and practices, and psychological measures including measures of anxiety and depression. The age range for participants was 18-79 years. Clinical levels of depression were detected in 26.3% (*n* = 76) of the sample.

Measures

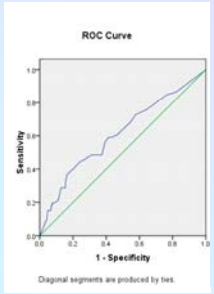
Trust and Mistrust in God was measured using a novel instrument developed by Rosmarin et al. (2009) based on a theoretical model described by traditional Jewish texts. The instrument consists of 24-items (18 positively-phrased and 6 negatively-phrased), each measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale. Principal component analyses suggested an underlying structure of four factors, consistent with the underlying theoretical model: one factor relating to trust in God and three factors relating to mistrust in God's omniscience, omnipotence and omnibenevolence. Negatively-phrased items were reverse-scored so that higher scores indicated greater trust in God and less mistrust in God.

Depression was measured using the Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977), a 20-item self-report questionnaire developed to measure symptoms of depression in a community population. The measure has shown high internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha around 0.85 in community samples) and high split-half reliability (ranging from 0.77 to 0.92). A clinical cut-off score of 16 and above on the CES-D was used to determine depressed vs. non-depressed participants (Nezu, Ronan, Meadows & McClure, 2000).

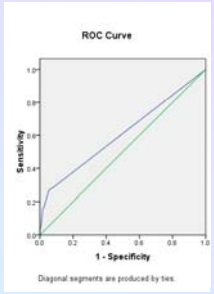
Logistic Regression Predicting Depression From Trust and Mistrust in God

Predictor	B	Wald X^2	p	Odds Ratio
Mistrust in God's Benevolence (God hates me)	-.358	8.977	.003	.699
Mistrust in God's Omniscience (God doesn't care about me)	-.001	.000	.990	.999
Mistrust in God's Omnipotence (God has no control)	.048	1.295	.255	1.050
Trust in God (God loves me)	-.046	9.234	.002	.955

ROC Curve Analysis - Predictive Power of Subscale Scores



ROC curve for Trust in God subscale scores.
Area under the curve = .612



ROC curve for Mistrust in God's Benevolence subscale scores.
Area under the curve = .607

Results

To determine the relationship between trust and mistrust in God and participants' levels of depression, analysis was conducted using logistic regression. Results indicated that levels of trust and mistrust in God were significantly correlated with higher levels of depression *(chi square = 26.149, p < .000, df = 5)*. For every one point decrease in score on the Mistrust in God's Benevolence subscale, the odds of being depressed increased by 30%, while for every one point decrease in score on the Trust in God subscale, such odds increased by a factor of 5%. To further examine the predictive power of these factors, a receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve analysis was performed. Area under the ROC curve was used to estimate classification accuracy. A criterion score of 30 points and above on the Trust in God subscale was found to have 85% specificity for 30% sensitivity in predicting depression (61% of the area under the curve). A criterion score of 15 points and above on the Mistrust in God's Benevolence subscale was found to have 90.5% specificity for 30% sensitivity in predicting depression (60% of the area under the curve).

Conclusions

- Participants' core beliefs related to overall trust in God or a Higher Power and Mistrust in God's benevolence were indeed predictive of their levels of depression.
- Supportive of our hypothesis, overall trust and mistrust in God was a better predictor of participants' levels of depression than demographic variables alone.
- Implications of the study include the consideration of religious core beliefs in evaluation and empirically-supported treatment of depression, especially in faith-based communities.

References

Rosmarin, D. H., Krumrei, E. J. & Andersson, G. (2009) Religion as a Predictor of Psychological Distress in Two Religious Communities. *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy*, 38:1, 54–64.

Correspondence concerning this poster may be addressed to:
Chayim Newman
Yeshiva University: Ferkauf Graduate School of Psychology. 1165 Morris Park Ave., Bronx, NY 10461.
e-mail: cnewman@yu.edu

Slide 1

DHR1 I would delete "Anxiety" b/c we don't mention it elsewhere in the poster.
David H. Rosmarin, 4/25/2010

DHR2 Add gender distribution.
David H. Rosmarin, 4/25/2010

DHR3 See pg. 64 of that paper (note: this is the one you cite here in the reference section): We describe 11 TIG and 13 MIG items. We had 18 TIG and 6 MIG in the Mental Health Religion & Culture paper which was a different sample (N > 500 and all Jews).
David H. Rosmarin, 4/25/2010

DHR4 Not sure about this. If we're creating new subscales, all of them should be scored such that higher scores on each subscale correspond to higher levels of each variable under study. So higher scores on MIG #3 mean that people have more belief that God is NOT in control.
David H. Rosmarin, 4/25/2010

DHR5 This table is great, but I'd put TIG first and then the 3 MIG's underneath to be consisten with the title of the poster and the setup of the study in the Background and Methods.
David H. Rosmarin, 4/25/2010

DHR6 I'm new to odds ratios so I'd check with Vance about this, but as far as I know "correlated" is a word which we use when describing relationships b/w continuous