Religion, Death, and Prosocial Behavior

Previous research has indicated positive relationships between subconscious priming of religious concepts and helping behavior (Pichon et al., 2007) and mortality salience and helping behavior (Jonas et al., 2002). Our research aims to build upon these findings to gain a clearer understanding of the relationship between religion and prosocial behavior by contrasting the effects of priming mortality with priming religious beliefs concerning death. We hypothesize that priming religious beliefs concerning death would lead to greater rates of prosocial behavior than priming mortality, and that this effect would be modulated by participants’ level of religiosity. The current study is a 3 (religious v. mortality v. neutral primes) X 2 continuous (religiosity) between-subjects mixed design. Participants are primed, given a distracter task, and presented an opportunity to behave prosocially by volunteering for pilot studies. Preliminary results indicate a main effect of religiosity on helping behavior (p=.05).