Religion and Helping: Impact of Target Thinking Styles and Just-World Beliefs

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Summary

Previous research on religion and helping has left some questions unanswered. In the present study, participants expressed willingness to help groups of people in need (homeless people and illegal immigrants), and this after having been religiously versus non-religiously stimulated. The activation of religious context increased the willingness to help, but only the homeless. Orthodox religious people tended to consider the targets responsible for their problem, an association partially mediated by the belief in a just world for other. Symbolic thinking was associated with willingness for helping, an association partially mediated by the belief in ultimate justice. Results suggest a limited (target) and conditional (thinking style, just world beliefs) prosociality as a consequence of religion.

Keywords

helping, prosocial behavior, symbolic thinking, orthodoxy, just world beliefs, religious priming

The role of religion in promoting prosocial behavior has been a constant assumption across most psychological theories of religion (see Saroglou, Pichon, Trompette, Verschueren, & Dernelle, 2005, for a review). Many previous studies have investigated the role of religion on helping, an important aspect of prosocial behavior. Overall, these studies suggest a general pattern of a weak but constantly positive association between religiousness and helping people in need (Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 2003). However, previous studies have also pointed out some limitations of the above pattern. For

instance, the religion-helping association seems clearer (if not only present) in non-spontaneous helping behavior rather than in spontaneous one (Hansen, Vandenberg, & Patterson, 1995). Moreover, serious doubt exists on whether religious people's motivation for helping is really concern for others' needs or rather self-concern (Batson, Schoenrade, & Ventis, 1993). Finally, intrinsic religious people show willingness to help only people who share their values and unwillingness to help people who threaten their values (Batson, Floyd, Meyer, & Winner, 1999). Religious fundamentalists go even further: not only are they clearly unwilling to help people who threaten their values—in fact they consider them rather responsible for their difficult socio-economic situation—but they do not seem neither to be particularly helpful of people in need non-threatening their values (Jackson & Esses, 1997).

Other questions and issues remain unanswered in this previous research on religion and helping. The present study aims to investigate three such issues, mainly (a) the causal role of religion on helping in general and helping proximal versus distant targets in particular (religion was introduced as an independent variable and not only as personal disposition of participants); (b) the specific role of different personal religious attitudes, i.e. open- vs. closed-mindedness of religious or non-religious people, on different if not opposite helping attitudes (considering for instance people in need as responsible of their situation or not); and (c) the possible mediating role of the just world beliefs on the religion-helping association.

Helping as an Effect of Religion

Previous empirical evidence regarding the role religion plays on helping and prosocial behavior in general is exclusively based on correlational information. Whenever the design of the study is simply correlational or social-experimental (for the latter, see Batson et al., 1993, 1999; Batson, Eidelman, Higley, & Russell, 2001; Jackson & Esses, 1997), religiousness and religious attitudes are measured in terms of individual self-reported differences. Correlations, possibly different across conditions varying as a function of the target's status, are computed between the religious measures and helping or other prosociality-related measures. Religion is not introduced as an independent variable in those experiments thus making any assumption on the possible causal role of religion on helping only speculative. The present study aims to test such a causal role. We hypothesized that the activation of a religious context will increase willingness to help.

Although theoretically justified on the basis of most psychological theories of religion, such a hypothesis is not obvious. Other causal directions might concur. For instance, it has been suggested that people who are—partially because of genetic influences—agreeable, in terms of basic personality traits, may both turn to religion (or remain close to it if religiously educated) and act in a prosocial way (Saroglou, 2009).

Helping proximal versus distant targets. It is not to be excluded that in every-day life religion has not a universal, extended, or unconditional impact on prosocial behavior, helping, and altruism but just a limited, minimal, and conditional one (Saroglou et al., 2005; Saroglou, 2006). For instance, although religious people from a variety of countries and religious traditions tend systematically to attribute high importance to Benevolence (preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent contact), they do not necessarily endorse the value of Universalism (preservation of the welfare of *all* people and of nature), and in several cases—for instance, in mono-religious Mediterranean countries—they tend to attribute low importance to this later value (Saroglou, Delpierre, & Dernelle, 2004). It has also been hypothesized that religion may have an impact on prosocial behavior towards close targets with whom people are in frequent contact and engaged in long-term relationships implying reciprocity but may be unrelated to prosocial behavior towards unknown targets; and an initial study provided correlational evidence in favor of this assumption (Saroglou et al., 2005, Study 2). Similarly, considerable research on religion and prejudice has demonstrated an in- vs. out-group distinction: religious people, certainly religious fundamentalists but sometimes also "simply" intrinsically religious people show negative attitudes, stereotype, and discriminate different kinds of outgroups and people appearing as threatening their values such as people from other religions, homosexuals, women, foreign people, illegal immigrants, and non-religious people (for reviews, see Batson, Anderson, & Collins, 2005; Bréchon, 2003; Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005).

Thus we investigated whether the impact of religious activation on helping would be different when the targets in need can be considered as proximal (homeless) or distant (illegal immigrants). If the activation of the religious context increases willingness to help in both cases, we expected the effect to be greater in the case of homeless compared to illegal immigrants. Alternatively, it could be that the effect would be present only in the case of the homeless.

Variety of Helping Types and Variety of Religious Attitudes

We also expected religiousness, as an individual differences construct, to be positively associated with willingness to help. This would be in line with important previous evidence documenting a weak but rather systematic tendency of religious people to report high prosociality through a variety of ways: agreeable personality (Saroglou, 2002), importance of Benevolence as a value (Schwartz & Huismans, 1995; Saroglou et al., 2004), helping and volunteering (Donahue & Nielsen, 2005). However, more nuanced questions can be asked if we focus not on religiousness or on willingness to help as global constructs, but when distinguishing specific helping attitudes and specific, i.e. open- vs. closed-minded, ways of being religious.

Variety of Helping Types

Recent studies (Jackson & Esses, 1997, 2000), inspired by the framework proposed by Brickman, Rabinowitz, Karma, Coatis, Con, and Kidder (1982), distinguished on the basis of factor analytical procedures three different attitudes relative to helping of people in need (i.e., unemployed, immigrants), also called three types of helping: *direct assistance*, *empowerment*, and *group change*. *Direct assistance* involves solving groups' problems directly. People in need are not held responsible for their problems and are not seen as responsible to find a solution themselves. Creation of jobs, social welfare, and subsidization of housing are some examples of direct assistance. *Empowerment* is a second helping type that aims to remove barriers to the success of the marginalized group and involves helping members of a group to help themselves. People in need are not seen as responsible for their problems, but it is society and its structures that are responsible. They are, however, partially responsible for a solution to their problem if helped—empowered—by others or the society. Political and social action against discrimination in the workplace and creation of incentive programs for starting small businesses may be examples of empowerment with regard to immigrants and the unemployed respectively. Finally, some people may consider targets in need as responsible for having caused their problem and consequently they adopt a non-helping attitude. For these people, it is then also the responsibility of the targets in need to change if they wish to solve their problem. This is what Jackson and Esses (1997, 2000) called *group change* attitude. It implies reprimanding problematic group members to change themselves and to try harder to find solutions to their problem.

Two previous studies investigated how religious fundamentalists endorse these three attitudes relative to helping unemployed people that are either threatening (homosexuals and single mothers) or non-threatening (respectively, native Canadians and Canadian students) their values (Jackson & Esses, 1997). Religious fundamentalism predicted group change, i.e. a non-helping, attitude towards unemployed homosexuals and unemployed single mothers, whereas it was unrelated to any helping-related attitude towards unemployed native adults and students.

Variety of Religious Attitudes

If religiousness is taken as a global construct, one can expect, in line with the basic assumptions of the present study, religiousness to be positively associated with direct assistance and empowerment of people in need. On the basis however of the two previous studies by Jackson and Esses (1997) we hypothesized that closed-minded religiosity such as fundamentalism or orthodoxy (these two constructs are usually highly intercorrelated; e.g., Hunsberger, Alisat, Parker, & Pratt, 1996) should be unrelated to direct assistance and empowerment and even be positively associated with group change, that is indeed, as described above, a non-helping attitude implying assumption of responsibility of people for being in an unfortunate situation. However, Jackson and Esses (1997) did not investigate how non-fundamentalist religion and even open-minded religion predispose people to react through the one or the other helping attitude when facing targets in need. We hypothesized that this kind of religious attitude is associated with willingness to help targets in need through either direct assistance or empowerment.

Previous research using the Post-Critical Belief (PCB) theoretical model and corresponding scale (Hutsebaut, 1996; see also Fontaine, Duriez, Luyten, & Hutsebaut, 2003) seems to be in favor of the above assumptions. In that theoretical framework, a distinction is made between two dimensions, i.e. inclusion versus exclusion of Transcendence (in more simple terms, being believer or not) and a literal versus symbolic approach toward religious ideas, beliefs, doctrines, and texts (in other terms, being closed- versus open-minded with regard to religion when believing or not). Four religious attitudes emerge from crossing these two orthogonal dimensions: *orthodoxy* (literally believing), *external critique* (literal reject of religion), *second naiveté* (being symbolic as religious), and *relativism* (being symbolic in approaching religion although not believing). Several studies within this framework and using the PCB scale converge in that rather than including or excluding Transcendence, it is the

symbolic versus literal dimension that predicts respectively high versus low empathy and low versus high discrimination and racism (Duriez & Hutsebaut, in press, for review).

Predictions

In line with this theoretical and empirical evidence, we expected thus both orthodoxy and external critique to correspond to a group change (non-helping) attitude and both second naiveté and relativism to correspond to willingness for direct and/or indirect (empowerment) helping.

Just World Beliefs as Mediating the Link Between Religious Attitudes and Helping Types

In the above mentioned two studies by Jackson and Esses (1997), the authors have successfully investigated the tendency of religious fundamentalists to discriminate against some groups (unemployed homosexuals and single mothers) by attributing to them high levels of responsibility for their problem. High scores on group change was due to the fact that these groups were perceived by religious fundamentalists as threatening their values. In the present study we introduced a somewhat different, although not incompatible, approach. We hypothesized that if different religious attitudes, i.e. closed- vs. open-minded ones, may predict different helping types, i.e. respectively group change vs. direct or indirect helping, this may be due to different kinds of beliefs in a just world. (Note that in the introduction to their paper, Jackson and Esses made a brief mention of just world beliefs without however testing their assumption afterwards).

One classic among the many consequences of the complex psychological reality called "belief in a just world" (BJW) is the blame and derogation of the victim, including the innocent (Lerner, 1980). People with high scores on BJW scales tend to perceive targets that are in an unfortunate situation as responsible for their situation: they got what they deserved. An impressive series of studies have been accumulated in favor of this reality applying to a variety of victims such as poor people, people with disabilities, people with AIDS, rape victims, unemployed people, and immigrants (see Furnham, 2003, for a review). However, in recent theoretical and psychometric work, a distinction is made between *belief in a just world for self* (BJW-S: I deserve what I get and I get what I deserve) and *belief in a just world for other* (BJW-O: people in general deserve what they get and get what they deserve) (Furnham & Proctor, 1989; Lipkus, Dalbert, & Siegler, 1996). Recent studies demonstrate different

predictiveness of each of the two constructs: BJW-S is rather associated with positive outcomes relative to personal psychological adjustment and life satisfaction, whereas BJW-O is rather associated with negative social outcomes such as discrimination and stigmatization of marginalized people, aggression, revenge, and high penal punitivity, outcomes that are in line with the previous literature on the victim's blame and derogation among high BJW scorers (Bègue & Bastounis, 2003; Dalbert, 1999; Dzuka & Dalbert, 2002; Kaiser, Vick, & Major, 2004; Sutton & Douglas, 2005). Since religion is also often related to the belief in a just world (see studies from nine countries cited in Saroglou, 2003), we made a mediatonal hypothesis: literal, closed-minded attitudes relative to religion may imply a strong belief in a clear correspondence between what people get and what they deserve, a belief that in turn should lead to a group change attitude when confronting people in need (illegal immigrants or homeless). In other words, BJW-O (but not BJW-S) should, at least partially, mediate the link between orthodoxy (and external critique) and group change attitude (of non-helping).

A different mediational pathway was hypothesized for the link between open-minded religious attitudes and willingness to help. Indeed, reviews of the BJW literature (Furnham, 2003; Hafer & Bègue, 2005; Maes, 1998) point out that BJW can lead either to victim blame and derogation (unfortunate people are responsible for their problem) or to prosocial tendencies such as positive evaluations of victims and helping them. Recent conceptualization and corresponding psychometric work made a progress with regard to these a priori divergent empirical lines of research based on the use of global BJW self-report scales. Maes (1998) distinguished between (a) an *immanent* justice in the events that have occurred (it is now that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get) and (b) an *ultimate* justice (injustice is reconciled in the long run by future justice). Interestingly, prosocial tendencies as implied by a need for justice (mildness, equality, existential guilt about the underprivileged, solidarity) seem to correspond to high scores on ultimate justice whereas negative social tendencies (rivalry, competition, severe judgments) seem to translate the need for a just world among people with high scores on immanent justice (Maes & Kals, 2002; Maes & Schmitt, 1999). As these authors observed in line with Lerner (1980; see also Hafer & Bègue, 2005), the expectation that justice will be restored in the long run seems to increase the willingness to contribute to a compensation of injustice by undertaking prosocial actions in favor of innocent, "non responsible for their problem", victims. Thus we hypothesized that open-minded with regard to religion people (second naiveté and relativism in terms of the PCB model) may value

ultimate justice, an intrinsically religious mature ideal (Maes, 1998; see also Bègue, 2002), which in turn may imply direct assistance and/or indirect helping (empowerment) of people in need (immigrants and homeless) who are not considered—in the rationale of these two helping types—as responsible for their problem. In other words, we hypothesized that ultimate justice (but not immanent justice) at least partially mediates the link between symbolic religious thinking and direct or indirect helping.

Summary

To summarise, the present study had three main objectives and corresponding expectations. First, we expected that the activation of a religious context would increase willingness to help people in need. Proximal targets (homeless) should benefit more from this effect than distant targets (illegal immigrants). Second, personal religious attitudes should also be related to helping but in a more complex way: closed-minded religiosity (orthodoxy) or anti-religiosity (external critique) should be positively related to the group change attitude: within this attitude, people in need are seen as responsible for their problem, so it is down to them to help themselves. By contrast, open-minded attitudes relative to religion (second naiveté and relativism) should be positively related to helping attitudes, i.e. empowerment and/or direct assistance. Third, these two patterns of hypothesized links should be—at least partially—mediated by just world beliefs: closed-minded with regard to religion people may adopt a group change attitude because they presumably tend to endorse belief in a just world for others whereas people with open-minded attitudes relative to religion may be willing to help targets in need because they presumably believe in an ultimate justice.

Method

Participants

One hundred and eighty one people took part in this study. They were approached by two researchers (both females) in the streets of three different towns in Belgium (Brussels, Louvain-la-Neuve, and Namur). All of them were French-speaking. Men represented 52 % of the total sample and women represented the remaining 48%. Minimum, maximum and mean age was 16, 79, and 29.92 (*SD* = 15.23).

Procedure

The study was announced as a survey of perceptions and opinions relative to marginalised people. All participants filled in the questionnaires outdoors, seated on public benches or steps. They were first presented for about three minutes with a picture that depicted a person who is in a difficult socio-economic situation. People were randomly assigned in four (2 × 2) conditions. In each of the four conditions a different picture was presented. The first manipulated variable was the *status of the target*, i.e. *illegal immigrants* versus *homeless*: the person in need depicted in the picture was either a foreign (black woman) depicted in a way that a reference was made to illegal immigrants or a homeless person (covered by a blanket). The second manipulated variable was the *context*, i.e. *religious* versus *secular*: these two targets (the immigrant and the homeless person) were depicted in front of (or inside) either a church or a gymnasium. The *n* of participants by condition was as following: 48 for the illegal immigrant in the religious context, 46 for the illegal immigrant in the secular context, 36 for the homeless in the religious context, and 51 for the homeless in the secular context. The successful identification of the two types of target and the two types of context was pretested in 40 (4 conditions × 10) participants who answered to the following two questions: "Where is this person in the picture?" and "What is this person doing?"

Afterwards, all participants were administered a series of measures of different helping intentions, just world beliefs, and religious attitudes. On the average, the entire process took about 40 minutes per participant. Exposure to the picture and administration of the measures were done individually.

Measures

Helping Types

We used the three helping scales of Jackson and Esses (1997, 2000) that distinguish between a *group change* attitude, *direct assistance*, and *empowerment* of people in need. In those two previous studies, the willingness to help referred respectively to the unemployed and immigrants. We adapted the items to have a version which also applied to the homeless. Participants who were in the homeless condition were administered the homeless version and those who were in the illegal immigrants condition were administered the immigrants version. The scales (7-point Likert format) included eight, six, and five items respectively for group change, direct assistance, and empowerment, and the

respective reliabilities in the present study were .87, .77 and .83. Here are sample items: "Illegal immigrants should work harder to adjust" (Group change); "Belgians should provide social programs to help illegal immigrants cope with problems caused by Belgium society " (Direct assistance); and "Illegal immigrants need the cooperation of others to compensate for the obstacles imposed upon them in adjusting to life in Belgium" (Empowerment).

Just World Beliefs

Two scales measuring together four different kinds of belief in a just world were used, i.e. the Lipkus et al.'s (1996) scale that distinguishes between *belief in a just world for self* (BJW-S) and *belief in a just world for other* (BJW-O), and Maes' (1998) scale that distinguishes between *immanent justice* and *ultimate justice*. The first scale (7-points, Likert-format) is composed of 12 items (2 × 6) and the second one (7-points, Likert-format) is composed of 10 items (6 and 4, respectively). Here are four sample items: "I feel that the world treats me fairly" (BJW-S); "I feel that the world treats people fairly" (BJW-O); "Misfortune is the just punishment for a bad character" (Immanent justice); and "Those who have suffered will be rewarded one day" (Ultimate justice). Respective reliabilities for the four scales were .87, .82, .69, and .68.

Religious attitudes. To measure *religiosity* and *spirituality* we used a three-item religiosity index (importance of God in life, importance of religion in life, and frequency of prayer; $\alpha = .87$) as well as a one-item index (importance of spirituality in life). To measure the four *religious attitudes* by distinguishing between literal and symbolic thinking among believers and non-believers, we used the 39-item version (Fontaine et al., 2003) of the Post-Critical Belief scale (Hutsebaut, 1996). Theory on the PCB scale (see also Wulff, 1997) assumes the existence of two orthogonal axes, one referring to the inclusion versus exclusion of Transcendence and the other referring to the literal versus symbolic thinking. The two axes allow for the identification of four attitudes: (a) *orthodoxy*, that is literal religious thinking (sample item: "I think that Bible stories should be taken literally, as they are written"); (b) *second naiveté,* which refers to symbolic religious attitudes (e.g., "If you want to understand the meaning of the miracle stories from the Bible, you should always place them in their historical context"); (c) *external critique*, i.e. literal rejection of everything relative to religion (e.g., "Faith is an expression of a weak personality"); and (d) *relativism* that reflects a symbolic interpretation and acceptance of some positive aspects of religion without believing in a Transcendence (e.g., "Secular and religious conceptions of the world give valuable answers to

important questions about life"). A series of empirical studies using either the four attitudes or the two dimensions has found meaningful differences in correlates with personality, cognitive, and social constructs (Duriez & Hutsebaut, in press, for review). Each subscale (7-point Likert format) contains respectively 8, 9, 11, and 11 items. The reliabilities in the present study were respectively .81, .83, .80 and .77.

Results

Effectiveness of the Target and Context Manipulation on Types of Helping

Means and standard deviations of helping attitudes as a function of context and target are detailed in Table 1. A 2 (target: illegal immigrants vs. homeless) × 2 (context: religious vs. secular) between participants ANOVA was conducted on *group change* and a main effect of the target was observed, $F(1,180) = 7$, $p < .01$, but not a main effect of the context. Participants reported that people in need have to change themselves to improve their situation more when the target was an illegal immigrant ($M = 4.08$) than a homeless person ($M = 3.58$). Similarly, in a 2 × 2 (target × context) ANOVA analysis on *direct assistance*, a main effect of the target but not of the context was observed, $F(1, 180) = 9.65$, $p < .01$. Indeed, participants tended to report more direct helping intentions for homeless people ($M = 4.81$) than for illegal immigrants ($M = 4.29$). Finally, a similar 2 × 2 ANOVA analysis on *empowerment* did not reveal any main effect.

However, significant interactions between target and context were found in two out of the three ANOVA analyses, i.e. the one on *empowerment*, $F(1, 180) = 8.35$, $p < .01$, and the one on *direct assistance*, $F(1, 180) = 3.34$, $p < .01$. First, as depicted in Figure 1 (top panel), when a religious context was activated, participants increased in comparison to the secular context their endorsement of the need for empowerment of homeless people, $t(85) = 2.53$, $p < .05$, and the difference on empowerment between homeless and immigrants was significant in the religious, $t(82) = 3.37$, $p < .01$, but not in the secular context, $t(95) = -0.83$, n.s. This increase of empowerment of the homeless in the religious—compared to secular—context was not followed by a decrease of empowerment of the immigrants in the religious—compared to secular—context, $t(92) = -1.48$, n.s. Second, as depicted in Figure 1 (bottom panel), participants in the religious condition report more willingness for direct assistance of the homeless compared to immigrants, $t(82) = 3.76$,

Table 1. Means and standard deviations of helping attitudes as a function
of the target and the context

| Context | Target | | | |
| | Immigrants | | Homeless | |
	M	SD	M	SD
	Group change			
Religious	3.93	1.01	3.73	1.07
Secular	4.23	1.46	3.48	1.40
	Direct assistance			
Religious	4.17	0.97	5.03	1.13
Secular	4.41	1.23	4.66	1.17
	Empowerment			
Religious	4.66	1.09	5.47	1.10
Secular	5.01	1.18	4.79	1.33

$p < .01$, but there was no such a difference in the secular context, $t = -1.00$. However, the distinct by target comparisons between the two contexts were not significant, $ts = 1.49, -1.08$. We are thus unsure whether the observed difference between the two targets in the religious condition was due to an increase of willingness to assist the homeless and/or to a decrease in willingness to assist the immigrants when we pass from the secular to the religious context.

Religious Attitudes and Types of Helping

In the following correlational analyses we treated the data as a whole from the total sample. This was in order to avoid Type II error in case of distinct by condition correlations, i.e. disregarding true effects because of the small sub-sample size of each condition. (In addition, distinct by target correlations did not suggest constant differences). As detailed in Table 2, religiosity (but not spirituality) was positively related to group change and empowerment. No relation was found between religiosity or spirituality and direct assistance. When coming to more specific religious attitudes, it turned out that orthodox people tended to endorse the group change attitude; people high in second naiveté (as religious people in general) tended to endorse both group change
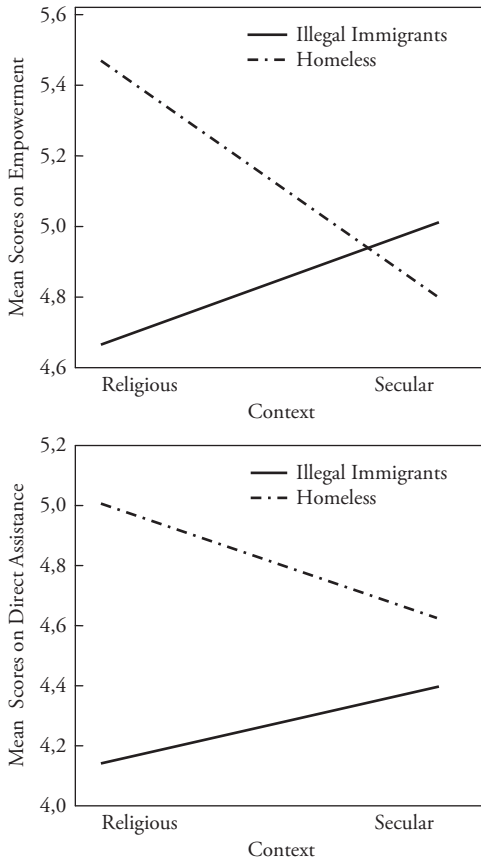
Figure 1. Mean scores on empowerment (top panel) and direct assistance (bottom panel) as a function of context and target.

and empowerment; and people high in relativism tended to endorse both helping attitudes, i.e. empowerment and direct assistance. External critique was unrelated to any type of helping.

The Role of Just World Beliefs

As also detailed in Table 2, just world beliefs were related to both religion and helping measures. First, orthodox people tended to score high in both imma-nent and ultimate justice, and both BJW-S and BJW-O, but when controlling for the rather high overlap between the two latter constructs, orthodoxy was

Table 2. Coefficients of correlations between religion, helping attitudes, and just world beliefs

	Helping			Belief in a just world			
	Group change	Empowerment	Direct assistance	BJW Self[a]	BJW Other[b]	Immanent justice	Ultimate justice
Religiousness							
Religiosity	.17*	.14+	.01	.09 (.04)	.11 (.04)	−.01	.03
Spirituality	−.09	.10	−.01	.02 (.07)	−.07 (−.11)	−.15*	−.02
Religious attitudes							
Orthodoxy	.39***	.07	.08	.17* (−.19*)	.47***(.47***)	.40***	.21**
Second naïveté	.20**	.18*	.11	.25* (.18*)	.17* (.02)	.02	.11
Relativism	−.07	.17*	.17*	.09 (.13+)	−.01 (−.09)	−.04	.14+
External critique	.09	−.03	.12	.00 (−.04)	.06 (.07)	.15*	.15+
Belief in a just world							
BJW for self[a]	.20** (−.07)	.00 (.05)	.02 (−.02)		.64***	.26***	.27***
BJW for other[b]	.40***(.36***)	−.06 (−.08)	.01 (−.01)			.51***	.29***
Immanent justice	.33***	.00	.10				.16*
Ultime justice	.25**	.26**	.32***				

Note. $N = 181$.

[a] In parentheses: partial correlations controlling for BJW for other. [b] In parentheses: partial correlations controlling for BJW for self.

*p <.05. **p <.01. ***p <.001. +p<.10. (two-tailed).

only positively related to BJW-O (and even negatively related to BJW-S). The association with immanent justice was more important than the one with ultimate justice, $z = 1.99$, $p < .05$. Second naiveté was positively related to BJW-S and BJW-O (but the latter association disappeared when controlling for the overlap between these two subscales), whereas it was unrelated to immanent and ultimate justice. These two later kinds of justice were endorsed by people high in external critique. Interestingly, religious relativism was positively related to only ultimate justice and spirituality negatively related to immanent justice.

Second, the group change attitude, where it is clearly assumed that people in need are responsible for their situation, was positively associated with all four just world beliefs scales. Interestingly, when we controlled for the overlap between the BJW-S and the BJW-O, group change was found to be positively associated with BJW-O and not with BJW-S. On the contrary, willingness to help either directly (direct assistance) or through societal structures (empowerment) was positively related to only ultimate justice.

We have hypothesized first that BJW-O (and not BJW-S) would mediate (at least partially) the relation of both orthodoxy and external critique with group change, and second that ultimate justice would mediate (at least partially) the link of both second naiveté and relativism with direct assistance and/or empowerment. The results of the correlational analyses allowed (see Baron and Kenny, 1986) for testing the hypotheses relative to orthodoxy (but not external critique) and relativism (but not second naiveté).

In fact, when we controlled for the belief in a just world for self, the association between orthodoxy and group change did not decrease (r changed from .39 to .37). We calculated a Sobel test, $z = 1.61$, which was not significant, $p > .10$. On the contrary, as detailed in Figure 2 (top panel), when we controlled for the belief in a just world for other, the association between orthodoxy and group change decreased (from .39 to .26), although it remained significant. The Sobel test, $z = 3.32$, was significant, $p < .01$. The belief in a just world for other seemed thus to be a partial mediator of the relation between orthodoxy and group change. Moreover, as detailed in Figure 2 (middle panel), when we controlled for the belief in ultimate justice, the association between relativism and direct assistance decreased (from .18 to .13, marginally significant) and this in a significant way, as indicated by the Sobel test, $z = 1.96$, $p < .05$. Similarly, when also controlling for the belief in ultimate justice (see Figure 2, bottom panel), the association between relativism and empowerment decreased (from .17 to .13) with marginal significance, Sobel test = 1.71, $p = .09$. These two results suggested that belief in ultimate justice partially mediates the religious relativism-helping attitudes association.
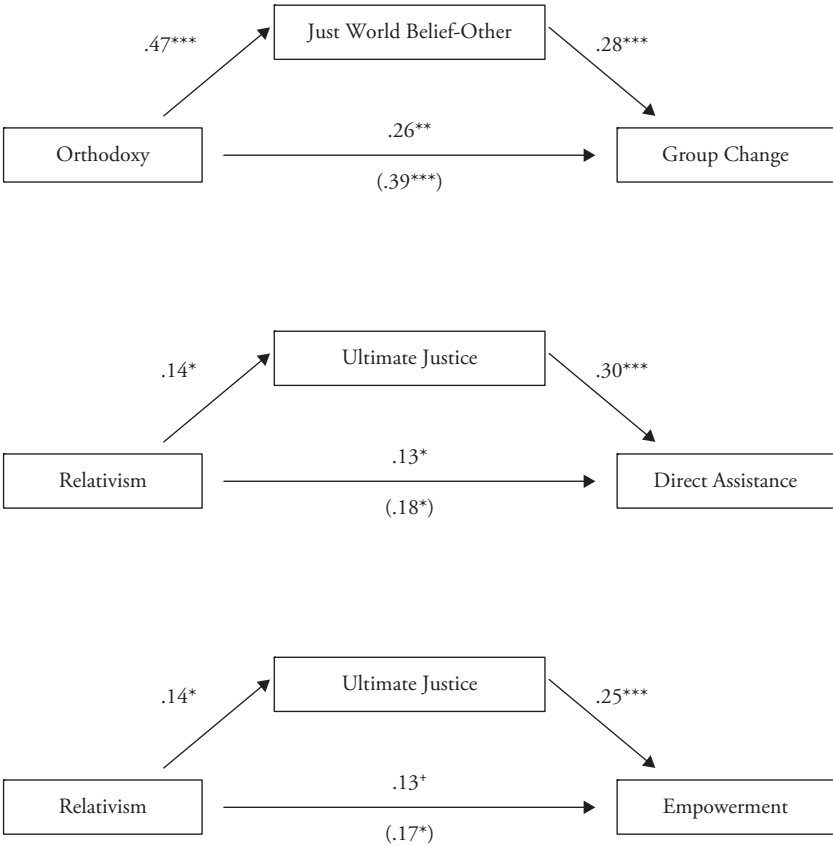
Figure 2. Belief in a just world for other as mediating the association between orthodoxy and group change (top panel); belief in ultimate justice as mediating the association between religious relativism and direct assistance (middle panel); and belief in ultimate justice as mediating the association between religious relativism and empowerment (bottom panel). *Note*: All weights represent standardized betas. In brackets, the direct link before partializing is provided.
$^+p < .10.$ $^*p < .05.$ $^{**}p < .01.$ $^{***}p < .001.$(two-tailed).

Discussion

The present study provided new information on the limited but not non-existent role religion may play on helping behavior—at least helping intentions. With regard to previous literature where much evidence is based on correlational

information—religious dispositional measures are related to helping and pro-sociality measures—the present study goes further and suggests one directional causal link: activation of a religious context (church as a framework in a picture presented to participants) increased the willingness to assist directly or to help indirectly (empower) people in need. However, this effect was limited to proximal people (homeless) and was not extended to distant, outgroup-like targets, i.e. illegal immigrants.

As far as the causal link is concerned, the present study is in line with the two previous studies where priming participants with positive religious elements influenced them subconsciously to behaviorally express prosocial humanitarian intentions (Pichon, Boccato, & Saroglou, 2007; see also Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007). As far as the distinction between local people and foreigners is concerned, this study is in line with a previous one where religious people (dispositional measure of religiousness) were found to be immediately willing to help relatives and known people in need but not necessarily willing to help unknown people in need in the same hypothetical situations (Saroglou et al., 2005, Study 2). Note also that, whereas Benevolence, a prosocial value in the context of interpersonal relationships, is systematically valued within religion, this is not the case with Universalism that includes broader openness to all people (Schwartz & Huismans, 1995; see also Saroglou et al., 2004, for a meta-analysis). The present study also complements and provides insight into two previous ones carried out by Jackson and Esses (1997). In those studies, religious fundamentalists were not particularly willing to help (directly or indirectly) native unemployed peers and even discriminate against unemployed people who threatened their values (homosexuals and single mothers) by reporting low willingness to help them and by considering them responsible of their situation (high scores on group change). In the present study, the distinction is present but displaced as we shift from fundamentalism to religion: activation of a religious context inclines people to report more willingness to help but the effect is not extended to distant, outgroup-like targets. Future research needs to test more systematically whether fundamentalism implies prejudice and negative, including antisocial, attitudes and behaviors towards outgroups, whereas religion per se may imply positive and prosocial attitudes and behaviors limited to ingroups and close people.

Independently of the effect of the religious versus secular context activation, participants of the present study tended in general to endorse more negative helping attitudes (group change) towards immigrants than towards homeless people and more positive helping attitudes (direct assistance) towards the latter than the former. This may be understood in the light of previous evidence

suggesting that prosocial behavior and helping are higher when the targets are close than unknown people or outgroup members (see Burnstein, Crandall, & Kitayama, 1994, for an evolutionary psychology perspective). A limitation however of our design (the two types of target in the pictures corresponded respectively to two versions of the helping scales, one adapted to immigrants and the other to homeless people) means we are unable to know whether these differences were found on the sole basis of the two versions of the question- naire or whether the activation of two different targets through the pictures was (also) responsible.

The role of religion on helping seems more nuanced when one focuses on the specific dispositional religious attitudes. When taking our data as a whole—without distinction between targets—in order to avoid a Type II error, we found that religiosity per se was associated with both a negative (group change) and a positive helping attitude (empowerment). It is not unlikely that besides "religiosity" as a global construct different if not opposite tendencies were hidden. This can be argued on the basis of the results provided by the Post-Critical Belief scale. Indeed, it was orthodox religious people who only tended to endorse group change. Religious people with symbolic think- ing (second naïveté) endorsed both the group change and the empowerment attitude, whereas non-religious but not critical to religion symbolic thinkers (relativism) clearly endorsed helping attitudes, both direct (direct assistance) and indirect (empowerment) ones. These results are in line with our expecta- tions and previous research on the Post-Critical Belief scale, although they do not fit perfectly with that research line. According to the latter, both literal thinkers, i.e. orthodox people and people scoring high in external critique, show discriminatory attitudes and racism, whereas empathy and low prejudice characterizes both symbolic thinkers, i.e. believers and non-believers (Duriez & Hutsebaut, in press, for a review).

Finally, the two hypothesized mediational models were partially confirmed by the present data. First, as hypothesized, people with a symbolic approach to religious issues although non-religious themselves (relativism) tended to endorse the belief in ultimate justice, a belief that partially explained the fact that relativism was also related to the two helping attitudes, i.e. direct assis- tance and empowerment. Having a contextualized and relativistic thinking style on religious and existential issues may be helpful for maintaining a sense of non-concretely *hic and nunc* "measurable" justice and for actively making efforts in order to help victims and compensate injustice: justice will be achieved only in a long future. We were however unable to confirm the same pattern for the symbolic believers. It remains also unclear why religiosity in

general was unrelated to ultimate justice, although this kind of belief is assumed to correspond with religious beliefs (Bègue, 2002; Maes, 1998). Nevertheless, spirituality was negatively related to immanent justice, a finding suggesting a rather mature character of modern spirituality with regard to moral reasoning.

Second, contrary to symbolic thinking, orthodoxy (literal religiosity) was related to immanent justice rather than ultimate justice; and to the belief in a just world for other and not to the belief in a just world for self. Not surprisingly thus, our second hypothesis on the mediating role belief in a just world for other may play on the association of orthodoxy with group change was confirmed. Apparently, orthodox people who are characterized by a literal and dualistic thinking in religion (Desimpelaere, Sulas, Duriez, & Hutsebaut, 1999), excessive moralization (Nucci & Turiel, 1993) and, to some extent, prejudice (Duriez & Hutsebaut, in press), tended to believe that as the world is just, other people deserve what they get and get what they deserve. This belief explained partially the tendency of orthodox people to consider socioeconomically marginal people (the homeless and illegal immigrants) as responsible for their situation and thus are soley responsible for finding a solution to their problem. A group change attitude was then adopted by the orthodox people. However, the non-religious literal thinkers (external critique) did not seem in the present study to fit with the above-presented pattern applied to the orthodox people; they did not necessarily endorse neither BJW-O nor a group change attitude. Interestingly, when one examines more carefully, some previous evidence with the PCB scale suggests that external critique is not just a non-religious mirror of religious orthodoxy: for instance, the racism of the latter is double that of the racism in the former (see Duriez & Hutsebaut, 2000).

Finally, caution is needed to avoid definite conclusions or quick generalizations from the present study. First, we only measured helping intentions through a paper-and-pencil measure and not real helping behaviors in everyday life. Second, some content overlap between subscales of the same construct (four religious attitudes, four belief in a just world scales, three helping attitudes) may be responsible for not finding results as clear-cut as hypothesized. Third, research is needed to explore further and understand the psychological mechanisms that can explain how the activation of a religious context may have an effect by increasing prosocial intentions, at least towards some targets. In conclusion, the conditions, the extent, the motivations, and the underlying processes of helping behavior as stimulated by religion are an important area of study which require further research.

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