



Perfectionism, Religious Orientation, and Self-Forgiveness: Mediating and Moderating Factors

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Background

Self-evaluative perfectionism: a maladaptive form of perfectionism; the tendency to set unrealistic expectations for, and excessively scrutinize, oneself (Hill et al., 2004)

Religious orientation: one's motivation toward religion (Allport & Ross, 1967)

Intrinsic orientation: faith is central to self-concept (Allport & Ross, 1967)

Extrinsic orientation: faith is practiced for social benefits (Allport & Ross, 1967)

Self-forgiveness: motivation to cease avoiding reminders of the offense, and to cease damaging behaviors and engage in constructive behaviors toward self (Hall & Fincham, 2005)

Previous research

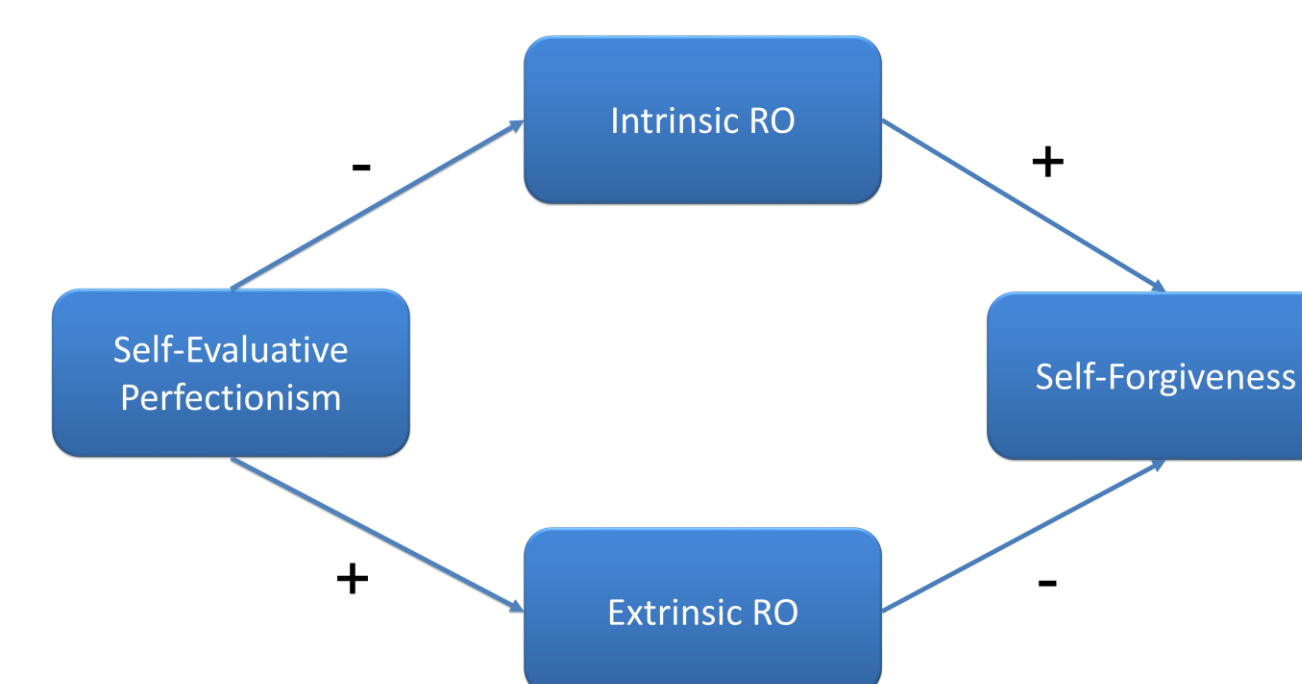
- Self-evaluative perfectionism is negatively associated with intrinsic orientation, and positively associated with extrinsic orientation (Ashby & Huffman, 1999)
- Self-evaluative perfectionism is negatively associated with self-forgiveness (Dixon, Earl, Lutz-Zois, Goodnight, & Peatee, 2014)
- Those with an intrinsic orientation are more likely to self-forgive (Gordon et al., 2008)
 - Contingent on confessional act
- Intrinsic orientation also related to increased interpersonal forgiveness (Gordon et al., 2008)
- Those with an intrinsic orientation are more likely to feel forgiven by God (Meek, Albright, & McMinn, 1995)
- Perceived forgiveness from God is positively associated with self-forgiveness (McConnell & Dixon, 2012)

The Current Study

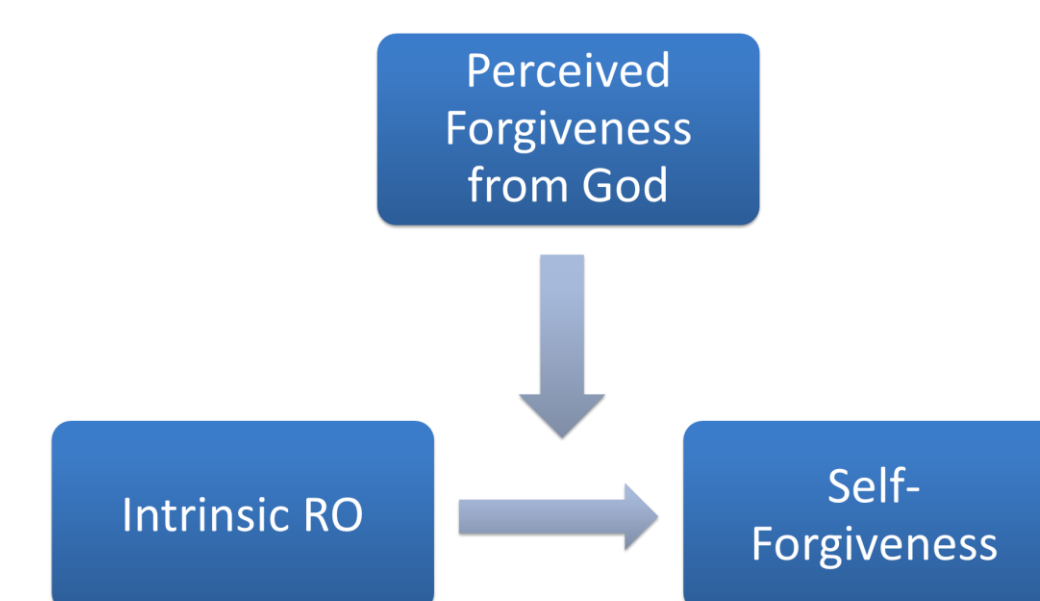
The goal of the current study was to understand the roles religion and perfectionism play in self-forgiveness. We explored the role of religious orientation as a mediating factor, as well as the mechanisms by which religious orientation may affect self-forgiveness.

Hypotheses

1. Self-evaluative perfectionism is related to self-forgiveness through religious orientation. Specifically, S-E perfectionism is negatively related to intrinsic RO, which is positively correlated with self-forgiveness. Additionally, S-E perfectionism is positively related to extrinsic R-O, which is negatively correlated with self-forgiveness.



2. People higher in intrinsic religiosity who also report feeling more forgiven by God will be more likely to self-forgive than those who are higher in intrinsic religiosity and report feeling less forgiven by God. This relationship was not expected for those higher in extrinsic religiosity.



Methods

Participants: 160 undergraduates, ages 16-24, 53.8% female

Measures:

Age Universal Religious Orientation Scale: (Gorsuch & Venable, 1983); A 20 item scale assessing motivations behind religious behavior

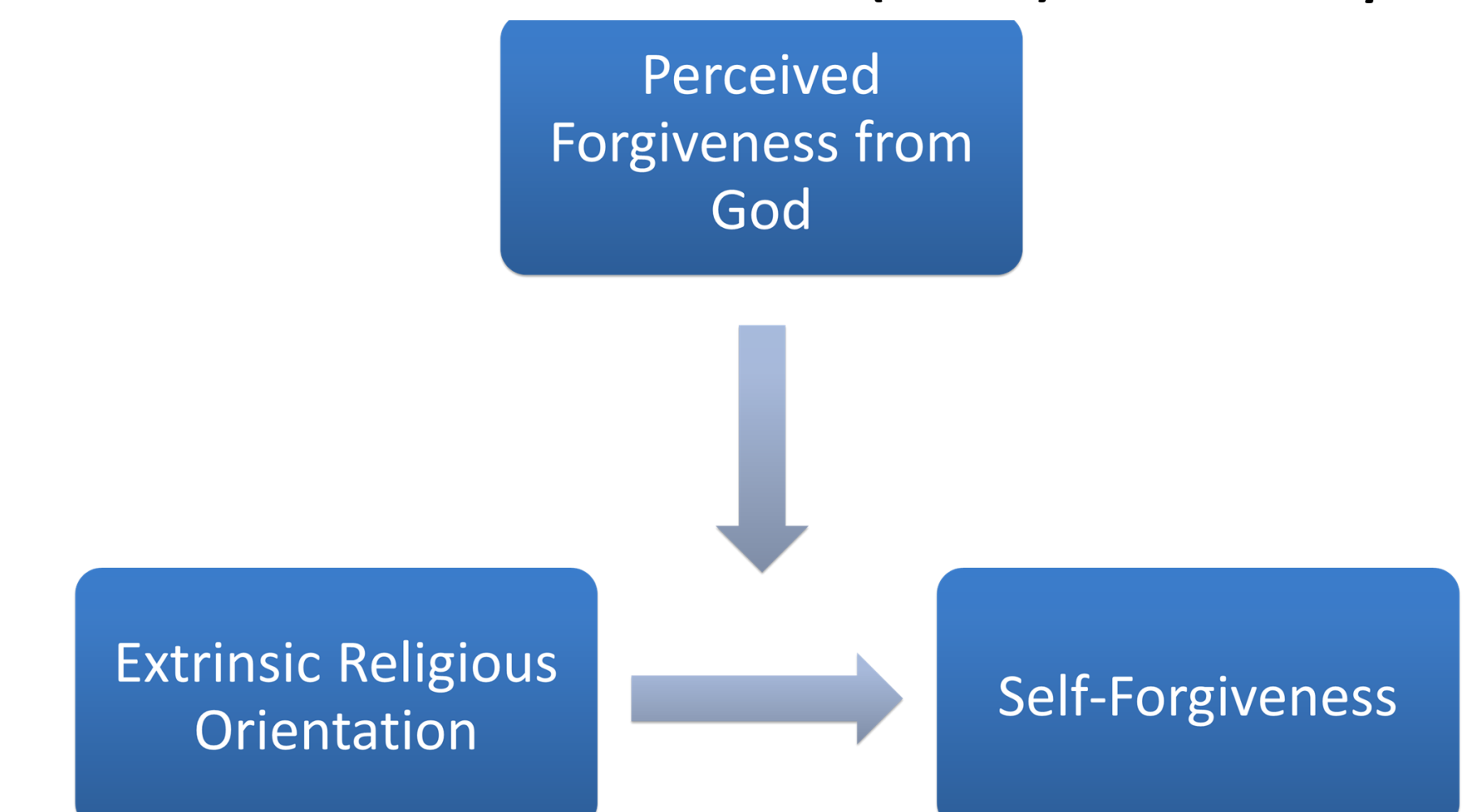
The Perfectionism Inventory: (Hill et al., 2010); A 59 item scale assessing two general types of perfectionism: Conscientious and Self-Evaluative

God Image Inventory: (McConnell & Dixon, 2012); Adapted from the full GII, a 19 item scale assessing the participants view of God as forgiving or punitive

Self-Forgiveness Measure: (Dixon et al., 2014); Participants were asked to write about a time they had betrayed someone and then answered a single-item measure assessing the degree to which they had forgiven themselves

Results

The association between higher extrinsic religious orientation and self-forgiveness was dependent upon the degree to which one felt forgiven by God. After decomposing the interaction at one standard deviation above and below the mean, the association between high extrinsic orientation and self-forgiveness was only significant for those who reported greater feelings of forgiveness from God, $B = .07$, $t(155) = 2.13$, $p = .035$.



Discussion

- Findings were unexpected
 - Did not confirm either hypothesis
 - Found that people higher in extrinsic religiosity and report feeling more forgiven by God are more likely to self-forgive than those higher in extrinsic religiosity who feel less forgiven by God.
- A Possible Explanation
 - Those who are extrinsically oriented view God and His forgiveness as a social factor. Since social benefits are their motivation to practice their religion, God's forgiveness would carry a heavy weight.
- Limitations
 - Narrow sample, primarily Caucasian, Christian students
- Future Directions
 - Empirically test whether those high in extrinsic religiosity view God as a social construct
 - Do other religions have a similar God Image? Focus on forgiveness?
 - What would be the effects of a Quest orientation?
 - Replicate Gordon et al. (2008) using more religious confession