Religion: Helping or Hindering Moral Development

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Introduction

The goal of helping students to become ethical citizens is a concern of college educators. There have been a number of factors, which seem to contribute to this goal. Religious inclination is one factor that researchers have considered. We would expect religious people to be highly ethical. However, research suggests that is not the case. In fact, some research suggests that religion can inhibit moral growth. In most cases, religiosity negatively affected moral development.

Research indicates that there is a complex relationship between morality and religion (Allport and Ross, 1967; Batson, 1976; Ernsberger & Manaster, 1981; Glover, 1997; Sapp & Gladding, 1989). Although, religion has long been associated with morality, Fowler (1981) declared that faith is not always religious in content or context, but there was a high correlation between the development of faith and moral development. Kohlberg (1969) believed that moral development was independent of religious development. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) found inconsistent results in studies concerning religion and moral reasoning. Rest (2000) found a consistent and separate correlation between political attitudes, religion, and moral reasoning.

This study examines the literature to uncover nuances of the relationship between religion and moral judgment. It examines the four arguments researchers often make concerning religion and moral development. It looks at the testing measures that are frequently used to measure religiosity and moral development. It examines whether testing discriminates against certain religious factors. It examines the biases of political conservative and liberal leanings in a religious context. Finally, it looks for clues to enhance moral education in college.

Definitions

Religion.

Religion is a broad and complex concept. Religion is one of the personal outcomes of growth. King and Mayhew (2004) organized personal outcomes in college as cognitive, identity and social. There are many way to measure religious influence in studies. The broad range of measuring religious conviction creates a problem in relating religion to moral development. Religiosity is described as an organized set of beliefs concerning some higher power usually associated with rituals, texts, traditions, practices, and a code of ethics (Helminiak, 2001: Shafranske & Malony, 1990). Batson & Ventis (1982) say that religion is whatever we do to confront existential questions, such as who are we and how should we relate to others.

Research suggests that religions manifest through numerous dimensions (Cornwall et al, 1986; DeJong et al., 1976).

Fowler (1981) speaks of faith in terms we might call religion, morality and identity. Although, religion has long been associated with morality, Fowler (1981) declared that faith is not always religious in content or context, but there was a high correlation between the development of faith and moral development. Fowler found that faith development was parallel to and preceded moral development. He finds that faith can be religious or not religious. His interview looks at what gives a life meaning, life shaping experiences, personal values. Based on his interviews, he places people in his stages of faith. He speaks of religion as the cumulative traditions constituted by texts of scripture including narratives, myths, symbols, traditions, music, dance, teachings, theologies, creeds, rites, liturgies, myths, prophesies, and other elements. Fowler (1981) says that faith is the deeper and more personal response the individual uses to respond to this tradition. Faith is a universal quest for a relation to transcendence. Faith gives purpose and goal to all we do. Fowler believes that people advance through stages of faith from infancy through adulthood.

Roehls (1997) speaks of a broad range of Orthodox Protestants as evangelicals. They believe that the Bible is the final source of authority, God's saving work as a reality, Christ redeemed us all because we have all sinned, the importance of individual evangelism, and the value of a spiritually transformed life through the Holy Spirit. Orthodox religious people who believe that stealing and murder are wrong and can never make a choice to steal or murder. Religious experience takes many forms and affects people differently. Religion is psychologically complex; involving emotions, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviors, and social environments. Wallis (2016) says evangelicals are white political conservatives who overwhelmingly show opposition to abortion and gay marriage.

Allport and Ross (1967) developed terms to describe how individuals experienced religion. They defined an extrinsic individual orientation where people use religions for their own ends. This orientation uses religion to serve as a reflection of their egos. Individuals with an intrinsic religious orientation find religion as the ultimate motive in their lives. Batson (1976) added a quest orientation in which individuals face complex existential questions, recognizing that they do not have answers and probably will never know the ultimate truth of these matters. These individuals still have a religious orientation in their lives (Batson & Ventis, 1982).

We can examine religious influence through individuals' images of God and their degree of certainty about their beliefs. Glock and Stark (1966) called this concept and conviction. Their scale examines religious influence through the individuals' images of God and their degree of certainty about their beliefs. While they claimed that that over 97% of Americans say they believe in God, they found a great variety in the images of God and the certainty of that belief. Some beliefs include belief in God, the Divinity of Jesus, whether Jesus was born of a virgin, whether Jesus performed miracles, the validity of the Bible, life after death, and the devil. It is also worthwhile to examine the attention people devote to the ritual expectations of their beliefs. This includes how often they pray, attend services, and read the Bible. These concepts define religious orthodoxy and can be measured by the Religious Orthodoxy Scale (Glock & Stark, 1966).

College students are less likely to endorse orthodox religious beliefs than those who have not gone to college (Batson, Schoenrade & Ventis, 1993).

Getz (1984) reviewed a number of articles that surveyed religious variables and their relationship to moral development. She divided the articles into variables including religious affiliation, religious knowledge, religious ideology, religious experience, intrinsic-extrinsic motivation, and religious education. She concluded that the complexity of the religious variable makes any conclusions tentative. Some areas did provide consistent relations with moral development. Conservative religious ideology consistently related to conventional (limited) moral development (Brown and Annis, 1978; Cady, 1982; Clouse, 1979; Ernsberger, 1977; Ernsberger and Manaster, 1981; Lawrence, 1979; Sanderson, 1974). Liberal religious groups were more likely to prefer principled (higher) moral development. She speculated that conservative religious groups may let their religious ideology override their independent thinking. The dominant theory of moral development before Kohlberg was the socialization view or behaviorism. This view suggested that individuals learn the norms of their culture, accept and internalize them, and behave accordingly. Kohlberg (1981, 1984) adopted a constructionist view in which the individual determines what is moral. He defined moral reasoning as characterized by three different types of relations: between self, society, and rule expectations. The individual interprets situations, derives psychological and moral meaning from social events, and makes moral judgments. Sometimes, conforming to social norms can be wrong. Kohlberg was interested in how people arrive at moral judgments.

Other measures of religion include the willingness to engage in unethical behavior, prosocial behavior, seminarian behavior, college attended, church affiliation, dogma, faith, orthodoxy, ethical business behavior, and various assembled scales. In general, there are many facets of religion mentioned in research. While most of these facets seem to be positive influences it has been difficult to find religious influences that increased moral development.

Moral Development.

To measure religious influence we need to define moral development. We need to determine the best moral solution to a moral dilemma. We need to agree on the best moral solution. This is not always true.

Two common measures of moral development have been the Reflexive Judgement Interview (MJI) and the Defining Issues Test (DIT). The DIT is used extensively in moral research. Higher levels of morality can be complex. Turiel (1983) cited morality as prescriptive judgments of justice, rights and welfare considering how people should relate to each other. Moral judgment is measured in the research by the DIT *p*-score. This *p*-score represents the percentage of responses that agree with theoretical philosophers and psychologists. The DIT is used extensively to measure moral judgment based on its ease of use and popularity in many fields. The DIT consists of a number of small vignettes that present moral dilemmas. Subjects choose a course of action and list reasons for their choice. Bampton and Cowton (2009) claim that around 25% of all accounting moral research since 1990 has used it. The DIT boasts face validity (Rest, 1993), test retest reliability (Davidson and Robbins, 1978), criterion group validity (Rest, 1993), longitudinal validity (Rest, 1979), convergent divergent correlation (Rest, 1979), discriminate

validity (Rest, 1979), validation through experimental enhancement studies (Rest, 1979), validation of faking studies (McGeorge, 1975), and validation through studies of internal structure (Davidson, 1978).

Much of modern moral development theory begins with Lawrence Kohlberg. He could not accept that the people of Nazi Germany in World War II could eliminate the Jewish people. Kohlberg believed that development is the transfer of reasoning to more complex cognitive structures that result from interaction with one's environment. Individuals seek equilibrium within themselves and with others. He believed that moral development and religious development are separated on parallel paths. Developments that occur within individuals are parallel to changes in our perceptions of others. Experiences of role taking and the opportunities to react to differing perspectives provide for cognitive disequilibrium, which leads to moral growth. Successful development involves restructuring ourselves, our relationships, and our role in the social world (Kohlberg, 1969, 1981, 1984).

Kohlberg described six stages within his pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional moral levels. His first stage is obedience and punishment driven, which focuses on the direct consequences of the individual's behavior. His second stage is self-interest driven, where individuals determine what is in their own self-interest yet are aware of family and friends' needs. The third stage includes individual accord and conformity concerns of an individual's role in society. His fourth stage centers on authority and social order, which includes maintaining a functioning society. His fifth stage is social contract driven. Individuals hold different views and values. Laws are social contracts that should provide the greatest good for the greatest number. He believed that advancement to this stage required an identity crisis, which is sufficiently resolved to develop adult commitments that establish care toward others. This requires sustained care for the welfare of others, and living with irreversible moral choices. The sixth stage includes universal ethical principles, which mandate doing the right thing because it is the right thing to do, whatever laws and the social order prescribe. Kohlberg developed the Moral Judgment Interview to measure moral development (Kohlberg, 1976).

Rest built upon Kohlberg's research to develop the cognitive theory of moral development. James Rest (1979, 1986, 1999) described Kohlberg's work as biased on concepts of organizing cooperation. Rest stated that cooperation is a fundamental structure for interpreting the social world. Cooperation helps people to arrive at the most important aspects of a moral situation. Rest believed it provides a way to link the relationships of the parties to each other. Cooperation leads to a strategy to determine which considerations are the most important and helps to identify the moral course of action. Rest (1999) calls this macro morality where people think about the formal structures of society, including laws, roles, institutions, and general practices.

Rest furthered the work of Kohlberg in moral development. He found correlations between moral judgment and those who love to learn, seek new challenges, take risks, take responsibility for themselves and their environments, and operate in social milieus that support them. Much of moral development occurs as people develop socially (Rest, 1986).

Rest developed the Four Component Model to explain moral behavior. He recognized that judgment is just a part of moral action. The model explains the psychological processes needed to perform morally in a dilemma. It includes moral sensitivity or the ability to identify a moral issue in a dilemma, the

use of a moral judgment framework, the moral motivation to put moral values ahead of other values, and the moral character to take the morally correct action (Rest, 1986).

Rest developed an objective systematic test called the Defining Issues Test based on the scenarios of Kohlberg's Moral Judgment Interview. People at different points of development interpret moral dilemmas differently, have different determinations about what is right and fair in any situation. This test measures one's preference for more complex differentiating and discriminating moral considerations. Respondents encounter moral dilemmas and choose alternative courses of action, noting reasons behind their choices. This test calls on respondents to reflect their current moral judgment framework. The test measures the percentage of post conventional moral reasoning used in responding (the *p*-score). This *p*-score reflects the percentage of reasons that respondents tell us refer to rights, values, and universal principles.

Much of the debate today concerning religion centers on Kohlberg's level 4, conventional reasoning, and level 5, post conventional or principled reasoning. Conventional reasoning centers on following rules. Rest (1999) uses the term Maintaining Norms Schema stating that society needs normative rules and role systems to address common needs in ways that are reliable and provide for safety and coordination among the community. Post-convention reasoning centers on being aware of what is best for society despite the rules. Rest (1999) states that moral criteria such as human rights are a higher priority over social conventions such as laws, roles and contracts.

Research on Religion and Morality

Research regarding the effect of religion and moral development is abundant, but the results are inconclusive. The main categories of studies centered on moral development and what is the correct moral action, religious beliefs and activities, liberal and conservative congregations and colleges, and non-moral actions such as cheating and breaking the law. Often conservative religious ideology lead to conventional (limited) moral development. Liberal religious groups were often more likely to prefer principled (higher) moral judgment. Kohlberg (1969) believed that moral development was independent of religious development. There are other arguments regarding religion and moral judgment. King and Mayhew (2004) reviewed 600 studies covering religion and moral development. They found that students with liberal religious orientations were more likely to use post-conventional moral reasoning. Getz (1984) reviewed over 30 studies and found a consistent relationship between religion and moral reasoning. She believed that religion brings out the best and worst in people, but found a consistent if not direct relationship between religion and moral reasoning. Rest (2000) reviewed over 20 studies and found a consistent and separate correlation between political attitudes, religion, and moral reasoning. Liberal and conservative influences affect moral judgment studies. Study results were inconsistent, but most reported higher levels of moral reasoning in liberal schools and congregations.

Religion may influence students in choosing a college. Researchers have found a significant difference in the growth of moral development depending on the type of college attended and the major studied. The literature refers to this phenomena as the college effect. In 172 studies, differences in types of colleges produce differences in moral reasoning (King & Mayhew, 2002). Allport and Ross (1967)

reviewed studies of prejudice and volunteering. Moral reasoning differs significantly depending on college type (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). The type of institution influences moral development (Ponemon, 1990). McNeel (1994) studied religious congregations and their relationship to moral development.

Many studies found that religion did not promote ethical reasoning. However, the means of testing of moral development and degree of religiosity seem to influence the results. All of these studies used either the Moral Judgement Interview or the Defining Issues Test (DIT). These studies used different instruments to evaluate religious factors but found religious inclination limited moral development (Dirks, 1988; Holly, 1991; Kohlberg, 1969; Lawrence, 1979; Wahrman, 1981). Other studies reported similar conclusions (Batson, 1976, Burwell et al., 1992; Buier et al., 1989; Cummings et al., 2001; Foster & LAFarge, 1999; Gongre, 1981; Good & Cartwright, 1998; Hood, 1984; Icerman et al., 1991; Jeffery, 1993; King and Kitchner, 1994; McNeel, 1994; Metkowski & Straight, 1983; Needham & Friedman, 2012; Ponenman & Gabhardt, 1994; Shaver, 1985 & 1987; St Pierre et al., 1990; Whitely, 1982; Zeidler &Schafer, 1984). The majority of these studies relied on the Moral Judgment Interview or the Defining Issues Test.

Thomas and Dunphy (2011) also surveyed 270 students at a regional campus and found religious orthodoxy to have a significant negative effect on moral judgment. The regression analysis revealed that religious Orthodoxy was significantly, negatively related to ethical development using the DIT. Participants were asked if they attended religious services. Participants who expressed views high in religious orthodoxy tended to attend church services more frequently than those whose expressed views that were not high in religious orthodoxy (r= -.54**). Although attending religious services was positively related with moral judgment scores (r=.117), the regression analysis revealed that the relationship was not significant when other variables were included in the analysis.

Another way to measure religious influence is to refer to the university or religious group in political terms such as conservative or liberal. Many studies concentrated on liberal and conservative congregations and colleges. These studies typically found the conservative congregations and colleges limited moral development.

Many scholars reported conservative religious beliefs limited moral judgment with the DIT (Dirks, 1988; Lawrence, 1979; Rest, 1979). Needham & Friedman (2012), using the DIT acknowledge that religious conservatives are inferior in moral decision-making. Bible colleges seem to inhibit moral reasoning (Rest, 1979). Rest (1979) using the DIT reported that the conservative Christian commitment of Bible colleges is associated with lower levels of principled reasoning. Evangelical students at Bible colleges obtain lower moral development *p*-scores using the DIT (Dirks, 1988). Conservative schools reported lower levels of moral judgment (Rest 1979, 1986) associated a conservative Christian focus with lower levels of moral reasoning. Lawrence (1979) using the DIT found fundamental seminarians exhibited lower moral growth than ninth graders. Shaver (1987) using the DIT believed that Bible colleges inhibited moral growth. Sanderson (1974) using the DIT found that moral reasoning had a strong negative correlation to conservative religious and political orientations. Clouse (1985) using the DIT found conservative religious and political views limited moral development.

Many other studies examined moral development and liberal and conservative colleges both religious and secular and found that liberal colleges increased moral development. McNeel (1994) using the DIT

found that even conservative religious Christian liberal arts colleges showed strong longitudinal growth in moral reasoning. McNeel (1994) using the DIT found that moral development fits nicely with a liberal arts focus. Research found that higher moral reasoning resulted using the DIT in a number of studies of Christian liberal arts colleges (Buier, Butman, Burwell, & Van Wicklin, 1989; Bridges & Priest, 1983; Burwell, Butman, & Van Winkler, 1992; McNeel, 1991; Metkowski & Straight, 1983; Shaver, 1987). Buier, Butman, Burwell, and Van Wicklin (1989) used both qualitative and quantitative methods including the DIT with freshmen and seniors at three Christian colleges. Buier et al. (1989) found that students attending Christian institutions make significant improvements in their ability to reason at higher moral levels and are similar to students at secular institutions. Ponemon (1990) declared that accounting students and alumni from liberal arts colleges reported higher moral reasoning. This is one of the few studies showing moral development in accounting students probably due to the liberal arts college. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) reanalyzed Rest's 1979 study of 2,500 college students from across the country. They believe different institutional environments may have differing impacts on the development of moral reasoning. Their results reported the greatest level of moral judgment measured by *p*-scores at church-affiliated liberal arts colleges, followed by public research institutions and two-year colleges. Lower scores resulted at private liberal arts colleges, private universities, and public comprehensive universities.

Other studies found that certain elements of religion did promote ethical reasoning. Batson and colleagues (Batson, 1976: Batson et al., 1989) using the MJI found that people driven to find religious truth and question their own faith are more likely to use higher stages of Kohlberg's principled reasoning. Agle and Van Buren (1999) found a small relationship between religious beliefs and measures of corporate social responsibility using a Guttmann like social responsibility scale. Ernsberger (1976) and Ernsberger and Manaster (1981) using the DIT found liberal church congregations reported increased moral development. Clouse (1979) using the DIT reported religious and political liberals displayed higher moral reasoning. Cady (1982) using the DIT found those congregations that considered a flexible interpretation of the Bible displayed higher moral reasoning. Needham-Penrose (2012) using the Christian Fundamentalist Belief Scale, the Moral Identity Measure and the Christian Inventory of Moral Belief found religious individuals enjoyed higher moral development. Fowler used his Faith scale and found students in higher levels of faith possessed a higher moral development. Holley's (1991) study using a modified DIT found students with more liberal religious orientations were as likely to use post-conventional moral reasoning as were students from more conservative religious orientations. Divergent results typically revolve around religious and moral measures.

Other studies reported mixed results or no influence. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) found inconsistent results in studies concerning religion and moral reasoning for all studies published in the 1990's. Tittle and Welch (1983) along with Weaver and Agle (2002) reported mixed conclusions regarding religion and ethics. Others (Hood et al., 1996; Smith et al., 1975) found no difference between religious and nonreligious individuals on unethical behaviors. Kidwell et al. (1987) found no relationship between religiosity and ethical behavior of managers. Hood et al. (1996) concluded that relating religion to ethics is a roller coaster ride. Vittle and Paolillo (2003) reported insignificant results comparing religion and consumer ethics. Harris (1981) found no correlation between moral judgment and religious belief.

It appears that there is an inconsistency in reporting study results when researchers are using one facet of the broader concept we call religion.

Four Arguments

Let us examine some of the issues surrounding religious orientation and moral development. While there are numerous studies looking at religion and moral development from a multitude of perspectives, there is seldom any conclusions. The complexity of the concepts and measures involved make meaning conclusions difficult. Four possible conclusions are available to describe the effect of religion on moral development.

Some studies represent special issues. Wahrman (1981) found that religious dogma negatively correlated with higher levels of morality. This study ignored individual differences. Getz (1984) and Richards (1992) question the use of affiliation as a means of defining religiosity. Thomas and Dunphy (2009) found individual's measure of orthodoxy significant but not unique in influencing moral development. For example, Wahrman grouped Roman Catholics and Orthodox Jews as orthodox, while Conservative and Reformed Jews as liberal. The broad strokes used to measure religion, detract from the results.

Another argument for influencing moral development was Fowler's (1981) use of the term faith. Fowler found a positive relationship between faith and moral development. His faith term uses concepts of religion, morality and identity. Possibly, due to measuring similar dimensions Fowler's work is not used to contribute to the religious moral development argument (Getz, 1984).

The third argument states that the DIT is prejudiced against conservatives. Evangelicals often claim that there is war against religion as evidenced but the DIT. The DIT has been accused of using terms that decrease the scores of conservative people and increasing the scores of liberal people. Conservatism is any political philosophy that favors tradition in the face of external forces for change, and is critical of radical social change. Conservatives favor a yardstick such as the Bible. Liberalism is a philosophy advocating measures of progressive political reform including the freedom of the individual and government guarantees of individual rights. Liberals favor a yardstick such as the greatest good for the greatest number.

In other words, the DIT may have a liberal bias. One possible explanation for the results of religion and moral research is the handling of conservative issues by the DIT. This goes back to the issue of what defines the highest level of moral development. One critique of the DIT implies that moral judgment is influenced by political persuasion, and understates the moral judgment of conservatives (Sweeney and Fisher, 1998/9). Bay (2002) implies that biases including gender, politics, culture and religion influence results along with dated questions. While these critiques do not invalidate results, they suggest that results may be subject to various influences.

Thoma (2014) answers this claim by stating that the DIT measures an individual's understanding of social cooperation in terms of justice and fairness within the context of laws, governments and social institutions. Thoma (1999) points to four studies (Getz, 1985, Rest, 74, Rest 1979, Thoma, 1993) which control for liberal/conservative issues and still relate the DIT scores to public policy and moral development. Liberal/conservative leaning are a limited influence. He states the DIT captures decisiveness

of actions, agreement with philosophy and political science students who achieved high DIT scores.. Thoma (2014) believes that much of the conflict is due to the distinction between micro-morality which is the morality of everyday exchanges, and macro-morality which focuses on society wide considerations. The DIT measures the schema or framework an individual uses to judge a moral dilemma. It does not measure motivation to correct a moral wrong or whether an individual will take action against the wrong.

The last argument with religion and moral development deals with the measures and words the DIT uses to define moral development. The issue is how can we always define the correct moral action. The DIT measures results consistent with philosophers and psychiatrists views. As a constructionist, Rest and Kohlberg believed the individual needs to create truth and not rely on existential laws.

Are there absolute measures or moral development and if so what are they? Is there agreement on what is right or wrong? Philosophers refer to the concept of moral absolutism. This concept refers to the belief that there are absolute standards that we can use to address moral questions. Under this concept, actions are inherently right or wrong. This implies that morals are inherent in the laws of the universe, the nature of humanity, the will of God, or some other fundamental source. Plato, Aristotle and Kant were followers. (philosophybasics.com/branch_moral_absolutism.html 9/8/2016).

An example of moral absolutism would be the Ten Commandments which include "Thou shalt not steal and Thou shalt not murder" (biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus+20 9/8/2016). This concept would be particularly relevant to orthodox religious people.

Another related concept is Nonmaleficence which is the obligation not to inflict harm intentionally. This is part of the Hippocratic Oath taken by doctors and considered bioethics first obligation to physicians. (guides.library.jhu.edu/c.php?g=202502&p=1335752 9/8/2016).

An alternative version of moral absolutism is moral relativism. It states that moral positions do not reflect universal truths. Instead, moral truths are relative to social, cultural, historical, or personal circumstances (philosophybasics.com/branch_moral_absolutism.html 9/8/2016). This questions whether there is any universally accepted source of what is right. It also questions why there are so many possible opinions of what is morally correct. Kohlberg believed in a constructionist philosophy where individuals define what is moral (1975). Rest concurred saying that morality should not be shielded by a privileged source of authority (1986).

The DIT 2 Test (Rest & Narvaez, 1998) offers one of these dilemmas. A trolley on a track is careening out of control down a hill. The trolley is headed toward a group of unsuspecting people who will surely be killed unless an individual chooses to pull a lever which will cause the trolley to divert to another track where it will surely kill one other unsuspecting individual. The DIT relies on self –reported choices which are linked to levels of moral development. The DIT associates the response of pulling the switch to kill less people with a higher moral development. A conservative orthodox religious person would find switching the track to kill only one person an active commission of murder defying a divine commandment not to kill. The utilitarian school of morality would argue that the loss of one life is better than the loss of many lives. The evangelical would argue that each life is sacred and divinely inspired. Only God can take a life. Evangelicals argue that the DIT values this life over the life after death; it dishonors conservative religious

teachings such as the Bible, and is biased by mistaking higher levels of morality by favoring utilitarian answers to dilemmas (Needham & Friedman, 2012).

Another dilemma in the DIT 2 Test (Rest & Narvaez, 1998) is in the disease dilemma. A woman was dying from a unique disease. One drug existed that could possibly save her. The woman's husband, Heinz, could not get or borrow the money to buy the drug, which the druggist was selling at ten times what he paid for it. The druggist refused to lower the price. Should the husband steal the drug? The DIT associates stealing the drug with a higher level of moral development. A conservative religious person would equate stealing with a lower level of moral development since stealing is against the Ten Commandments.

There appears to be a divide between conservative religious groups such as evangelical orthodox Christians and the psychologists and philosophers who developed the DIT (Needham-Friedman, 2012). Needham (2012) suggest a subtle ant-religious bias against orthodox religious people. Cummings, O'Donohue and Cummings (2009) believe there is a war against religion waged by liberal ideology and psychologists. Some (Al-Shebab, 2002; Lawrence, 1987; Richards and Davidson, 1992; Shweder, 1990; and Walker et al., 1990) argue that religious conservatives are not lacking in moral development at all, rather they adhere to a different set of moral values as suggested by the Bible. Rest (Rest, et al., 1999) noted that the conservative (religious) perspective poses a problem to his DIT. There could be a number of reasons for this.

These four arguments are mentioned in the literature and point to issues involved in relating religious influence and moral development.

Discussion

After reviewing the literature there are a number of dominate if not universal themes that can be identified. These themes are blurred by the myriad of measures used to measure religious influence used over the last 60 years. While DIT and MJI are by far the most dominate measures used to gauge moral development, there are many others. Many of the studies used influences defined by large groups such as Protestants, which possibly could have been more meaningful had individual measures been applied. All of these issues complicate the ways we can associate religion to moral development.They diminish our progress to influence the growth of morality in students.

There are over a hundred different measures of religious influence. They include religious affiliation, religious knowledge, religious ideology, religious experiences, intrinsic- extrinsic motivation, religious education, quest orientation, evangelical orientation, various religious scales, reversion to unethical actions and many others. The vast majority of studies bare little influence to each other. This dilutes the results and encompasses a lack of consistency of the research.

On the other hand, the DIT and RJI are the predominate tools used to measure moral development. There are tens of thousands of studies using these measures. Not that there is universal agreement on whether these are the best measures. Criticisms involve whether the DIT is influenced by political orientation or verbal ability. Another criticism involves if the DIT measures the correct universal moral goal.

The dominate theme indicates that religious appears to diminish moral judgment. Most but not all studies support this conclusion. Results depend on the myriad of measures used to measure religious influence. Religion is influential in moral development.

Another dominate theme is that liberal religious groups and liberal universities support moral development. Hundreds of studies support this conclusion. Conversely, conservative religious affiliation and conservation universities limit moral development. Which would seem to follow.

In general, there are correlations between religion and moral judgment in the literature. However, the direction and strength depends on the measures used in the studies. Most studies resulted in showing diminished moral judgment as religious influence increased, particularly when measuring moral judgment with the DIT or RJI. Other results were recorded when studies used other scales. These included a Quest or prosocial scale, corporate responsibility, or helping behavior. Other religious scales included conservative religious colleges with a liberal arts focus, the Christian Fundamentalist Belief Scale, the Moral Identity Measure, and the Christian Inventory of Moral Behavior.

Conservative religious groups point to the dilemma of moral judgment. They question whether moral judgment is relative or absolute. They question whether killing is ever justified. They question whether stealing is ever justified. We can question whether an evil act is ever justified. We can question who makes this determination. Since the purpose of the DIT and RJI is to determine the moral framework of the individual, we need to define the best moral outcome. We must weigh the betterment of society and a high moral code.

The final dominate theme is that there is a strong correlation in the literature between political attitudes in religious group and university settings and moral judgment. The more liberal focus of the setting, the greater the gain in moral judgment. The more conservative focus of the setting the more limited the gain in moral judgement. This is particularly true when using the DIT, which admittedly has a liberal bias.

Conclusions

It is not the individuals that determine the results, it's the measures used that determine the results when studying religious influence. This study is a review of literature relating religious measures and moral development. Research suggests that religion is less important to morality development than political persuasion. Religious measures are too numerous to find a generic norm. Research finds that the DIT or RJI is the primary method to measure moral development. This helps us to standardize the responses and provide some validity and verifiability.   The nature of morality is complex. Morality is subject to cultural, religious and other influences. Most of the studies relating religion and moral development have been located in the United States with Christian subjects. The stories in the DIT and RJI are dated.   The language in the DIT and RJI seem to make them susceptible to political influences. The highest moral responses in the DIT reflect constructionist, social and philosophical assumptions. The wording of the DIT limits the responses of certain persuasions. The language may cause responses to fall from post conventional reasoning to conventional reasoning. There are lessons in the literature that should be used in universities to encourage moral development. There are a number of themes suggested in the literature.

The first theme is that political persuasion predicts moral development better than religion. While the term religion is used extensively in the research as a predictor of moral development, the results are primarily negative or limiting when measuring moral development with the DIT or RJI.   Only when other measures of moral development are used, does religion influence become more pronounced. Religion limits moral development when aspects of religion are measured. These aspects include beliefs, affiliations, and other individual characteristics.

Taken as a separate variable, religious influence on moral development has produced a variety of results. Parboteeah, Hoegl, and Cullen ((2008) suggest some reasons for the lack of consensus. Religion is complex and studies often include only unidimensional conceptualizations of religion such as church attendance. Those studies that include multiple dimensions of religion fail to include a theoretical model that justifies their choice. Most studies use only one religion and ignore cognitive, affective and behavior components of religion. Many studies include ethical measures that suffer from social desirability biases. Many studies focus on narrow groups of subjects.

When religion is coupled with political characteristics such as liberal congregations or liberal religious universities, the political aspects dominate. Conservative religious congregations and universities limit moral development in the literature. Liberal congregations and universities foster moral development in the literature. McNeel (1994) reported on strict religious students attending a liberal arts college. He reported that the liberal arts focus had the greater influence on the students fostering moral development. He concluded that the liberal arts focus fits nicely with the DIT. Further research could verify this.

The second theme involves the wording of the scenarios in the DIT and RJI. Strict religious groups object to defining the highest moral action in some scenarios. They object to conclusions where individuals should steal or kill to defend human rights because this defies moral laws. Strict religious groups define moral development in terms of following moral laws such as the Ten Commandments or the Bible. This is a different scale from that used in the DIT. Rest and Kohlberg would argue that philosophers and psychologists would state that moral criteria such as respect for human rights have precedence over social conventions such as laws, roles and contracts. Kohlberg might ask if citizens today should follow lows that persecute groups.This is the dilemma.

Part of the issue revolves around the wording used in the original scenarios dating back sixty years. Kohlberg worked with mostly male students at Harvard University. To force students to choose the best alternative they purposefully chose situations where students could weigh situations where stealing, murder, and breaking laws might better protect human rights. Perhaps, by updating the language and situations to exclude breaking laws and commandments a compromise could be achieved. Is there a way to assimilate the higher level goals while not offending individuals who look to the Bible for moral truth? Rest and Kohlberg may not agree.

Holley (1991) found a way to modify the DIT's language to negate the normal results. In this study religious influence increased moral development. Perhaps, instead of forcing an individual to switch the tracks in the trolley scenario, an earthquake could switch the tracks. This would take the individual guilt out of the equation. This might also take the guilt out of the decision to take the drug. Or those scenarios which require a decision to break a commandment could be eliminated from the DIT. Ultimately, post-

conventional reasoning requires an individual to choose between human rights and social constructs. Is there a way to word the scenarios that enables evangelicals and other conservative religious individuals to achieve post-conventional reasoning? Further research is needed.

The third theme involves how we can use these studies to foster moral development in college students. "American postsecondary education has a role in the development of citizens who both think and act morally" (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005, p. 345). The National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges (2006) reviewed the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education paper which indicates that the public expects graduates to have certain abilities. They include a sense of maturity, the ability to self-manage, the ability to get along with people, problem solving and thinking abilities, technology skills, career expertise, writing and speaking abilities, and good citizenship practices. Religion and political persuasion are both identity outcomes of growth (King and Mayhew, 2004). Research implies we can influence moral development by helping students to develop their identity. Unfortunately, Astin (2002) documents a decline in entering students expressing a goal of developing a meaningful philosophy of life.

Experiences and opportunities to react to differing perspectives provide for cognitive disequilibrium, which leads to moral growth. Successful development involves restructuring ourselves, our relationships, and our role in our social world (Kohlberg, 1969).

Rest found correlations between moral judgment and those who love to learn, seek new challenges, take risks, take responsibility for themselves and their environments, and operate in social milieus that support them. Much of moral development occurs as people develop socially (Rest, 1986). Rest's concept of separate correlations between political attitudes, religion and moral development suggest that identity development may be the key to moral development.

Chickering's model of student development, for example, included seven vectors that act as roadmaps to help determine where students are and which way they are headed. These vectors include developing competence, managing emotions, moving through autonomy toward interdependence, developing mature interpersonal relationships, establishing identity, developing purpose, and developing integrity (Chickering & Raiser, 1993).

The literature provides example of many activities in universities that encourage student identity development. They include community service, dealing with community problems, dealing with social injustice, experiential learning, reflection, group work, active leaning, decision making, small classes, student interaction, working with diverse peers, ethics courses, membership in professional associations, mentoring, logical training, and providing students safe environments (King & Mayhew, 2004). Encouraging students to develop support systems also has been reported (Thomas & Dunphy, 2009). Further research is needed to determine how best to utilize these tools with various groups of students.

There are many limits to this review. While many studies and mega studies are examined, thousands of other studies and variables were not. Many of the variables were studied in isolation. Certain variables may influence other variables. Kohlberg studied male students in the 1950's. Students are more varied than they were in Kohlberg's era. Students today come in a greater variety of backgrounds and certain variables

may have a varying influence on certain groups of students. As education has become more commoditized, aspirational goals may have become less relevant than employable skills.

This review of the relationship between religion and moral development has pointed to a number of factors that intervene. The lack of a consistent religious measure accounts for much of the confusion. The use of the DIT and RJI measures of moral development seem to be limited somewhat by an individual's political persuasion. Identity development appears to one of the results of student education and may play a role in ethical development. The issue of religion is intermixed with the issue of political orientation. Students have political leanings which can influence religious leanings and moral development. Religious leanings may or may not be a part of identity development. Further research is needed to explore the concept of religion, political persuasion and moral development as identity development. While religion seems to limit the growth of ethical development, the influence of conservative political persuasion may be the real influence. What element will bring these issues together? These issues require further research.

Finally, we are reminded of the results of many years of studies of moral development. Rest (1986) postulated that although a number of factors are known to influence moral development, we are unable to determine why. Derryberry and Thoma (2000) concluded we have no specific advice from the literature on academics for creating programs designed to foster moral reasoning. Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) suggested the effects of academic contexts on moral reasoning are indirect. Although we can appreciate the efforts to increase moral reasoning, the inconsistent results of studies suggest that we have much to learn about how religion influences moral development.

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