



Believe as I Believe: Adherence to Beliefs of Caregivers

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Background

Individuals vary in the extent to which they adopt the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of their caregivers. We were interested in the extent to which this variability could be explained by parental behaviors, attachment to parents and religiosity of the participants. Myers (1996) found that in 471 parent & children interviews (over a 12 year interval), three basic factors influenced religiosity - parental religiosity, quality of the family relationship, and traditional family structure. Ozorak, (1989) found that parents and peers are both influential in adolescents' religious beliefs. We were interested in the adoption of beliefs, attitudes and behaviors in a variety of domains (religious, moral, political), and also included control questions about general habits and likes and dislikes. We assessed the extent to which college students' beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors coincided with their perceived attitudes and beliefs of their caregivers. To assess, whether participants generally conform to the beliefs of those close to them (but not specifically to those of caregivers) we also assessed agreement with peers' beliefs and included these correlations as a control predictor.

Methods

141 male and 493 female undergraduate college students responded to online questionnaires assessing various aspects of religiosity, as well as their attitudes and beliefs and their perception of their primary caregiver's and peers' beliefs.

Measures

Parental Behavior Measure: measured adolescents' perception of several supportive and controlling dimensions of behavior that parents direct at adolescents, including the *Conformity to Parental Expectations* and *Respect for Parental Authority* subscales (Supple, Peterson, & Bush, 2004).

Attachment History Questionnaire (Pottharst, 1990): a structured interview designed to elicit information about experiences with primary and later attachment figures. It includes subscales for *secure attachment*, *parental discipline*, *threat of separation* and *peer affectional support*.

Religiosity Measures included:

Socialization-Based Religiosity Scale (Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999); measured parental socialization of religiosity factors: shared religious behaviors, shared cognitive aspects of religiousness, shared values and commitment and shared transmission of religious standards to next generation.

Emotionally Based Religiosity (Granqvist & Hagekull, 1999)

New Age Orientation Scale (Granqvist & Hagekull, 2001)

Quest Scale (Batson & Ventis, 1982)

Extrinsic/intrinsic Religious Orientation (Allport & Ross, 1967)

Religious Fundamentalism (Altemeyer, & Hunsberger, 1992)

Conclusion

Socialization based religiosity appeared to be the most consistent predictor of conformity to parental beliefs, attitudes and behaviors, across a variety of domains. Parental behavior was also influential but in different ways depending on the parent, and the context. A greater fear of separation and stronger degree of discipline also appeared to encourage greater conformity to beliefs, whereas autonomy and secure attachment did not promote greater adherence to the beliefs of caregivers. Thus, parents who are more authoritarian may be more likely to create children "in their own image" at least in terms of religious, moral and political beliefs and attitudes.

Results

A series of multiple regression analyses were conducted that regressed the correspondence between self and caregivers' attitudes/behaviors onto composite measures of parental behavior, attachment and religiosity that were derived from principal component analyses. Separate analyses were conducted for each attitudinal/behavioral domain (i.e., moral, religious, political, and lifestyle). We also included control questions (other). We entered 'agreement with peers' beliefs' as a control for general agreement in the first step of the regression.

Predictors having significant influence over conformity to parental beliefs (after controlling for conformity to peer beliefs):

Religious domain: SBRS ($\beta=.081$, $t=3.132$, $p=.002$), PBM Mother & AHQ Composite 1 (attachment) + (discipline) + (threat of separation) ($\beta=.150$, $t=5.919$, $p<.001$).

Moral domain : SBRS ($\beta=.271$, $t=6.725$, $p<.001$), PBM Mother & AHQ Composite 2a (authority)+ (conformity to parental expectation)+(parental behavior) ($\beta=.126$, $t=2.574$, $p=.010$).

Political domain : SBRS ($\beta=.135$, $t=4.459$, $p<.001$), PBM Mother & AHQ Composite 1 (attachment)+(discipline)+(threat of separation) ($\beta=.156$, $t=5.134$, $p<.001$).

Behavioral domain SBRS ($\beta=.155$, $t=3.361$, $p=.001$), PBM Mother & AHQ Composite 2a (authority)+(conformity to parental expectation)+(behavior) ($\beta=.136$, $t=2.436$, $p<.015$), PBM Father & AHQ Composite 2b (authority) +(conformity to parental expectation)+(parental behavior) ($\beta=.123$, $t=2.198$, $p<.028$).

Other beliefs: PBM_Mother_ & AHQ_ Composite 2d (authority)+(conformity to parental expectation) + (parental behavior) ($\beta=.073$, $t=2.609$, $p=.009$) PBM_Mother_ & AHQ_ Composite 1 (attachment) + (discipline) + (threat of separation) ($\beta=.135$, $t=5.506$, $p<.001$).

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