This research examined the association between religiousness and humility. Participants in Studies 1 and 2 completed measures of religiousness, socially desirable responding, and their own and other people’s adherence to biblical commandments. Participants in Study 2 also rated how characteristic nonreligious positive and negative trait terms were of the self and others. Humility was operationalized as the magnitude of difference between individuals’ evaluations of self and other. Overvaluing the self in relation to others or undervaluing others in relation to the self was considered evidence of less humility. Participants rated the self to be more adherent to biblical commandments than others (the holier-than-thou effect) and rated the self to be more positive and less negative than others (the self-other bias). In both studies, intrinsic religiousness was associated with an increase in the tendency to rate the self as more adherent to biblical commandments than others. Quest was associated with a slight decrease in the magnitude of the holier-than-thou effect. Religious motivations did not account for unique variation in the general self-other bias. Irrespective of motivations for being religious, however, highly religious people (i.e., upper thirds on general religiousness and religious fundamentalism) more so than less religious people (i.e., lower thirds on general religiousness and religious fundamentalism) rated the self to be better on nonreligious attributes than others.

This research examines how religiousness relates to the virtue of humility, the quality of being humble. Although some use the term humility to mean having a low opinion of oneself, we contend humility involves a genuine modesty that does not engender low self-esteem (Lewis 1960; Myers 1995; Richards 1992). That is, humility involves a realistic appraisal of one’s positive and negative characteristics in relation to others (Emmons 1999).

On one hand, it seems reasonable to assert that religiousness and humility will correlate positively. After all, humility is an important component of many religions; whereas pride has long been regarded as a spiritual impediment. Allport and Ross (1967:441) posited that by internalizing the total creed of religion, people with intrinsic motivations for being religious also internalize its values of humility. Some empirical research supports this position. Frequency of a participant’s church attendance and prayer, for example, correlated positively with observers’ ratings of the participant’s humility (Cline and Richards 1965). Also, students at a Christian college had less discrepancy between their ratings of positive attributes for the self and other than did students at a secular state university (Benway and Nesselroade 2000).
It also seems reasonable to think that some forms of religiousness and humility will correlate negatively. People with high "neutralized" religion, the state of preserving a religion’s doctrines without overtly valuing the core claims of religion, score high on measures of authoritarianism and ethnocentrism (Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis 1993). Religious fundamentalism also correlates positively with authoritarianism and prejudice toward minority groups (Altemeyer and Hunsberger 1992). Rudman and her colleagues, for example, found moderate implicit prejudice between Jews and Christians (Rudman, Greenwald, Mellott, and Schwarz 1999). Others who are highly religious tend to be intolerant, judgmental, and egoistic (Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis 1993), characteristics not typically considered to produce humility.

To address the possibility of divergent associations between religiousness and humility, we examined how various forms of religiousness, such as intrinsic, extrinsic, quest, doctrinal orthodoxy, and religious fundamentalism, correlate with estimates of humility. Similar approaches clarified the influence of religious orientations on cognitive complexity, prejudice, helping behavior, mental health, and other psychological and behavioral processes (see Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis 1993 for summaries of this literature).

According to Allport and Ross (1967), intrinsic religious orientation, the devout commitment to religious beliefs and practices as an ultimate end, should be positively associated with humility. The extrinsic religious orientation, on the other hand, involves the use of religion as a means to achieve another self-serving end (Allport and Ross 1967), such as personal comfort or social reward (Kirkpatrick 1989). Extrinsic religiousness is positively associated with various forms of prejudice, dogmatism, and other self-serving attitudes and behaviors (Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis 1993; Donahue 1985). In some situations, people with an extrinsic religious orientation might use religion to appear generous, selfless, or humble in the eyes of others. In other situations, the same people might use religion to appear more moral or righteous than they really are. The quest component of religiousness involves the degree to which a person faces complex existential questions, perceives religious doubts as positive, and remains open to religious change (Batson and Schoenrade 1991). Quest is associated with increased sensitivity to a victim’s desire for help (Darley and Batson 1973; Batson and Gray 1981), increased cognitive complexity (Batson and Raynor-Price 1983), and decreased self-righteousness (Falbo and Shepperd 1986). Increases in quest, therefore, are likely to be associated with more humility.

**Hypotheses**

Based on previous self-evaluation research, we generated the *holier-than-thou hypothesis*: people perceive the self to be more religiously dedicated or righteous than others. This pattern, if present, would be evidence of a *holier-than-thou effect*. Increases in the magnitude of the...
holier-than-thou effect will be interpreted as evidence of less humility. Perceiving others as more religiously devout or righteous than the self would be evidence of a humbler-than-thee effect. Increases in the magnitude of the humbler-than-thee effect, if found, will be interpreted as evidence of more humility.

We also generated three more specific hypotheses concerning the association between religious orientation and the holier-than-thou effect. The intrinsic-humility hypothesis predicts that as intrinsic religiousness increases, the magnitude of the holier-than-thou effect will decrease. The extrinsic-humility hypothesis predicts that as extrinsic religiousness increases, the magnitude of the holier-than-thou effect will increase. Such a pattern would be consistent with the self-serving tendencies of extrinsically religious people. The quest-humility hypothesis predicts that as quest orientation increases, the magnitude of the holier-than-thou effect will decrease. To test these hypotheses, we assessed people’s religiousness, socially desirable responding, and evaluations of self and other’s perceived adherence to biblical commandments.

**Method**

**Participants**

College undergraduates at Baylor University (73 men, 176 women, \( M \) age = 19) participated in this study during the spring of 1999 in exchange for extra credit in a psychology course. Chartered in 1845 by the Republic of Texas and affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas, Baylor is the state’s oldest institution of higher learning and the world’s largest Baptist university. When interpreting this research it is important to realize that Baylor students as a group are not representative of the general population in terms of age, race, state of origin, or religious background. Of these participants, for example, most were Protestant (47 percent Baptist, 23 percent Catholic, 8.3 percent Methodist, 7.4 percent Presbyterian, 4.2 percent Lutheran, 3.7 percent Episcopalian, 1.8 percent Church of Christ, 1.3 percent Assembly of God, 3.3 percent other), 81 percent were members of a church, and most reported attending church regularly (46.9 percent almost every week, 23.8 percent at least once a month, 21.3 percent a few times a year, 8 percent did not attend worship services). Although we did not ask participants to indicate their race or state of origin, in 1999 the student body at Baylor (\( n = 13,334 \)) was somewhat racially diverse (77 percent white, 7 percent Hispanic, 7 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, 6 percent African American, 1.5 percent other, 1 percent not specified, 0.5 percent Native American), and predominantly southwestern. For example, in 1999 the leading state of Baylor student origin was Texas (80 percent) followed distantly by California (2 percent), Oklahoma (1.7 percent), Louisiana (1 percent), and Colorado (1 percent).

**Materials and Procedure**

Each participant completed Allport and Ross’s (1967) nine-item intrinsic religious orientation scale (\( \alpha = 0.82 \)) and 11-item extrinsic religious orientation scale (\( \alpha = 0.74 \)), along with Batson and Schoenrade’s (1991) 12-item quest scale (\( \alpha = 0.61 \)), and Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis’s (1993) 12-item doctrinal orthodoxy scale (\( \alpha = 0.93 \)). Items on these four measures were rated on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree). Participants also completed the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding, composed of two 20-item subscales measuring impression management and self-deception components of social desirability (Paulhus 1988; \( \alpha = 0.83 \); 1 = not true; 7 = very true). After completing these measures, participants rated the degree to which the self and others follow 12 biblical commandments using nine-point rating scales (1 = strongly disagree; 9 = strongly agree; see Table 1; cf. Rosenblatt 1993). The 12 commandments were comprised of 10 from the Old Testament and two from the New Testament (see Exodus 20:1–17 and Matthew 22:37–39). Finally, participants answered some demographic questions.
TABLE 1
RATINGS OF THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE SELF AND OTHERS FOLLOW BIBLICAL COMMANDMENTS (STUDY 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biblical Commandment</th>
<th>Self Mean</th>
<th>Self SD</th>
<th>Other Mean</th>
<th>Other SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do not take the Lord’s name in vain.</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship no one else before God.</td>
<td>6.45</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2.68</td>
<td>2.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honor your father and mother.</td>
<td>6.73</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>3.61</td>
<td>2.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not kill.</td>
<td>7.79</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>5.64</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attend services on Holy Days.</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not commit adultery.</td>
<td>7.02</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>2.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not steal.</td>
<td>6.75</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>2.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not bear false witness.</td>
<td>6.11</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not covet your neighbor’s spouse.</td>
<td>6.56</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not envy your neighbor’s possessions.</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>1.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love God with all your heart, soul, and mind.</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>2.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love your neighbor as yourself.</td>
<td>5.39</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-item average</td>
<td>6.22</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>1.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cronbach α</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To test the holier-than-thou hypothesis, participants’ ratings of the degree to which the self and other people followed the 12 commandments were summed to create two aggregate variables. On average, college students perceived the self adhered more closely to biblical commandments than others, \( t(250) = 30.91, p < 0.0001 \) (see Table 1). To determine the magnitude of this holier-than-thou effect, participant’s overall estimates of others’ adherence to the commandments were subtracted from the respondent’s ratings of self-adherence to the commandments. A large discrepancy was found between individuals’ ratings of self and others’ adherence to these biblical commandments (\( M = 35.45, SD = 18.17, \text{Median} = 37 \)). Very little evidence of humbler-than-thee attitudes was found. Only 2 percent of this sample believed that other people followed biblical commandments more closely than the self.

Associations Between Measures of Religiousness and Humility

A multiple regression analysis revealed intrinsic religiousness, quest, and impression management accounted for significant variation in the difference between self versus others’ adherence to biblical commandments (see Table 2). Contrary to the intrinsic-humility hypothesis, college students who were more intrinsically religious reported following commandments more than they estimated other people did after controlling for social desirability and other measures of religiousness. In other words, as intrinsic religiosity increases, so does the difference between one’s evaluation of self and of other people on characteristics deemed righteous. Contrary to the extrinsic-humility hypothesis, when controlling for the other variables shown in Table 2, the personal and social components of extrinsic religiousness did not appear to be associated with the magnitude of the holier-than-thou effect. In support of the quest-humility hypothesis, as quest increased, the positive difference between a college student’s evaluations of the self and others’ adherence to biblical commandments decreased slightly, controlling for social desirability and the other forms of religiousness.
TABLE 2
MULTIPLE REGRESSION OF RELIGIOUSNESS MEASURES AND IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT PROPENSITY ON DISCREPANCY BETWEEN SELF-OTHER ADHERENCE TO BIBLICAL COMMANDMENTS (STUDY 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>β</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctrinal orthodoxy</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>1.64+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>5.84***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic-personal</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic-social</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quest</td>
<td>−0.11</td>
<td>−2.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIDR-impression management</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>3.11**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: +p < 0.10; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01 ***p < 0.001. Multiple R: 0.58, Squared multiple R: 0.34.

The finding that intrinsic religiousness correlated positively with the discrepancy between ratings of the self and others’ adherence to biblical commandments was unexpected. The discrepancy could be due to intrinsically religious persons’ high ratings of self, low ratings of others, or both. To be more humble, however, people’s ratings of others should not be significantly lower than ratings of the self. To address this possibility, we examined the mean ratings of self and others’ adherence to commandments for people in the lower, middle, and upper thirds of the religious orientation measures.

A 2 (target-person: self, other) × 3 (intrinsic religiousness: low, medium, high) repeated measures ANCOVA was conducted using self-adherence to biblical commandments and other-adherence to the commandments as the dependent variables, and impression management as the covariate. The within-participants analysis revealed a large holier-than-thou effect when the significant effect of impression management was statistically controlled, $F(1,240) = 8.11$, $p = 0.005$ (see Figure 1). College students self-reported following biblical commandments ($M = 6.20, SD = 1.24$) more than they reported others did ($M = 3.28, SD = 1.25$), $F(1,240) = 416.53$.
p < 0.0001. A target-person by intrinsic religiousness interaction was also found, $F(2,240) = 33.80, p < 0.0001$. Students with high intrinsic religiousness scores rated the self to adhere more closely to commandments ($M = 6.86, SD = 1.09$) than those with medium ($M = 6.13, SD = 1.08$) or low intrinsic religiousness ($M = 5.56, SD = 1.35$). However, people with high intrinsic religiousness scores also rated others to adhere significantly less closely to commandments ($M = 2.95, SD = 1.16$) than those with medium ($M = 3.42, SD = 1.22$) or low intrinsic religiousness ($M = 3.40, SD = 1.31$). Intrinsically religious persons’ perceptions that the self was more adherent to commandments and that others were less adherent to commandments was further evidence of a holier-than-thou effect.

Repeated measures ANCOVAs did not reveal a target-person by extrinsic religiousness or target-person by quest religiousness interactions on ratings of self and other adherence to commandments. However, because the multiple regression analysis revealed that increases in quest were associated with a small significant decrease in the magnitude of the holier-than-thou effect (see Table 2), and the repeated measures analysis revealed no effect (see note 2), we conducted another multiple regression analysis. Quest and impression management scores were regressed on the difference between ratings of self- and other-adherence to biblical commandments. Both quest ($\beta = -0.12, p < 0.05$) and impression management ($\beta = 0.27, p < 0.001$) were associated with the difference between ratings of self- and other-adherence to the commandments.

In summary, most college students perceive they are more adherent to biblical commandments than other persons, a finding that generalizes to other populations (cf. Rosenblatt 1993). When religiousness was defined in terms of an intrinsic orientation, the magnitude of this holier-than-thou effect increased, even when controlling for intrinsics’ concerns with making a good impression (cf. Leak and Fish 1989). Instead of counting others as better than the self as a traditional reading of scripture suggests (see Philippians 2:3), intrinsically religious people rate the self as morally better than others. When religiousness was defined in terms of a quest orientation, the magnitude of the holier-than-thou effect decreased, indicating the possibility of higher relative levels of humility. In Study 1, the social and personal forms of extrinsic religious orientation did not appear to be associated with our operationalization of humility.

**STUDY 2**

The primary purposes of Study 2 were to replicate the holier-than-thou effect and examine the scope of the influence of religiousness on the self-other bias. If the scope of the influence of religiousness on the self-other bias is broad, religious persons should perceive nonreligious positive attributes as more characteristic of the self than others and nonreligious negative attributes to be less characteristic of the self than others. If the scope of the influence of religiousness on the self-other bias is narrow, religiousness would not correlate with people’s ratings of nonreligious positive and negative attributes for self and other.

**METHOD**

**Participants**

Undergraduates at Baylor University (40 men, 151 women, $M$ age = 19.19, $SD$ = 1.04) volunteered to participate in this study during the spring of 2000 in exchange for extra credit in a psychology class. Of participants in this convenience sample, 89 percent were members of a church; most were Protestant (55 percent Baptist, 13.3 percent Catholic, 10.6 percent Methodist, 9.5 percent nondenominational, 2.2 percent Presbyterian, 2.2 percent Lutheran, 2.2 percent Episcopal, 1.1 percent Church of Christ, 1.1 percent Assembly of God, 1.1 percent other); and most reported attending church regularly (57 percent almost every week, 22.5 percent at least once a month, 17.3 percent a few times a year, 3.2 percent did not attend worship services).
Materials and Procedure

Participants completed the same measures of intrinsic religious orientation ($\alpha = 0.76$), extrinsic religious orientation ($\alpha = 0.68$), quest religious orientation ($\alpha = 0.68$), doctrinal orthodoxy ($\alpha = 0.93$), and impression management ($\alpha = 0.73$) described in Study 1. In addition, participants completed Altemeyer and Hunsberger’s (1992) 20-item religious fundamentalism scale ($\alpha = 0.90$) and DeNeve’s (2000) general religiousness scale ($\alpha = 0.82$), an 11-item measure of religious belief and behavior designed to be independent of religious ideology (e.g., “My religious beliefs are the foundation for my life. I devote some time each day to religious practices.”).

Each participant then rated the extent to which three target-persons—the self, other Baylor students, or the average person—followed the biblical commandments listed in Table 1. Participants also rated the three target-persons on eight positive traits (loyal, sincere, kind, intelligent, athletic, well liked, talented, attractive) and eight negative traits (inconsiderate, phony, insensitive, unintelligent, dumb, unattractive, unwise, unpopular) using a nine-point rating scale (1 = well below average, 9 = well above average; see Brown 1998). The order in which participants rated the self, other Baylor students, and the average person was counter-balanced. No order effects were found. Finally, participants answered some demographic questions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Holier-Than-Thou Effect Replicated

A 2 (target-person: self, other) x 3 (intrinsic religiousness: low, medium, high) repeated measures ANCOVA was conducted using self-adherence to biblical commandments and a typical person’s adherence to biblical commandments as dependent variables, and impression management as the covariate. The holier-than-thou effect was replicated. Controlling for the influence of impression management, $F(1,159) = 19.53$, $p < 0.0001$, people reported the self followed biblical commandments more closely ($M = 7.54$, $SD = 1.09$) than others ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.35$), $F(1,159) = 145.93$, $p < 0.0001$. Further analysis revealed that only 2 percent of the participants rated others as adhering more closely to biblical commandments than the self. Similar to the pattern shown in Figure 1, the within-participants analysis indicated a target-person by intrinsic religiousness interaction, $F(2,159) = 16.05$, $p < 0.0001$. Controlling for impression management, people with high intrinsic religiousness scores ($M = 7.80$, $SD = 0.98$) and those with medium intrinsic religiousness ($M = 7.88$, $SD = 0.86$) rated the self as adhering more closely to commandments than did individuals with low intrinsic religiousness ($M = 6.92$, $SD = 1.15$). Controlling for impression management, people with high intrinsic religiousness scores rated others as adhering significantly less closely to biblical commandments ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.42$) than those with medium intrinsic religiousness ($M = 3.86$, $SD = 1.31$) or low intrinsic religiousness ($M = 4.52$, $SD = 1.16$). This pattern of high ratings for the self and low ratings for others is further evidence of lower levels of humility among intrinsically religious persons.

An in-group righteousness effect was also found. People perceived that members of the in-group (i.e., other Baylor students) adhered more closely to biblical commandments ($M = 5.67$, $SD = 1.45$) than typical persons who were not members of the in-group ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.35$, $t(189) = 20.17$, $p < 0.0001$; cf. Tajfel 1982).

Additional Associations Between Religiousness and Humility

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine the influence of religious orientations on humility, controlling for impression management, doctrinal orthodoxy, general religiousness, and religious fundamentalism (see Table 3). When controlling for these variables, a small positive association between intrinsic religiousness and the holier-than-thou effect was found.
TABLE 3
MULTIPLE REGRESSION OF RELIGIOUSNESS MEASURES AND IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT PROPENSITY ON DISCREPANCY BETWEEN SELF-OTHER ADHERENCE TO BIBLICAL COMMANDMENTS (STUDY 2)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Effect</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctrinal orthodoxy</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>1.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>2.44*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic-personal</td>
<td>−0.15</td>
<td>−2.21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extrinsic-social</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quest</td>
<td>−0.12</td>
<td>−1.73+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General religiousness</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious fundamentalism</td>
<td>0.07</td>
<td>0.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIDR-impression management</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>2.44*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: + $p < 0.10$;  $^*$ $p < 0.05$. Multiple R: 0.63, Squared multiple R: 0.40.

($\beta = 0.25$). Controlling for the same variables, a small negative association between extrinsic-personal religiousness and the holier-than-thou effect was found ($\beta = −0.15$). A small negative association was also found between quest and the holier-than-thou effect ($\beta = −0.12$), controlling for social desirability and the other measures of religiousness.

The Scope of the Influence of Religiousness on the Self-Other Bias

The general self-other bias was replicated (cf. Brown 1986). On nonreligious positive attributes, participants rated themselves ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 0.93$) and an in-group member (i.e., Baylor student; $M = 3.31$, $SD = 0.68$) as more positive than the typical other person ($M = 2.91$, $SD = 0.47$), $t_{s} (190) > 6.40$, $p < 0.001$. On nonreligious negative attributes, participants rated the self ($M = 1.91$, $SD = 1.09$) and another Baylor student ($M = 2.34$, $SD = 0.75$) as less negative than the typical other person ($M = 2.46$, $SD = 0.60$), $t_{s}(190) < −2.32$, $p < 0.01$. Twenty-six percent of the participants rated others to be better than the self on nonreligious trait terms.

The scope of the influence of religiousness on the self-other bias was narrow. Repeated measures analyses of covariance revealed no between-participants main effects of high, medium, or low intrinsic, extrinsic, or quest religiousness on the discrepancy between one’s evaluation of self and others on nonreligious trait terms, controlling for impression management, $F_{s}(2, 163) < 1.73$, $p > 0.10$. Within-participants analyses indicated the magnitude of the discrepancy between participants’ evaluations of self and other people was not different from the discrepancy between participants’ evaluations of self and Baylor students, $F_{s}(2, 163) < 2.03$, $p > 0.10$. A table with descriptive statistics for these repeated measures is available from the first author.

In a final test of the scope of the influence of religiousness on humility, we identified participants who were “highly religious” and “less religious.” Participants with scores above the 66th percentile on the general religiousness scale and the religious fundamentalism scale were included in the highly religious group ($n = 28$). Participants with scores below the 33rd percentile on the general religiousness scale and the religious fundamentalism scale were included in the less religious group ($n = 36$). For this analysis, participants’ ratings of the eight negative items for self and other were reverse-keyed, added to the sum of their ratings for the eight positive items for self and other, and the two totals were divided by 16. Participants’ ratings of the typical person were then subtracted from their ratings for the self. A positive value would be evidence that the self was
rated more positively than the typical person. Controlling for impression management, people in the highly religious group \((M = 2.78, SD = 0.60)\) had a larger positive difference between their ratings of self and others on the nonreligious trait terms than those in the less religious group \((M = 0.93, SD = 0.68)\), \(F(1, 61) = 3.81, p < 0.05\). In other words, when compared with people who were not very religious, highly religious people, regardless of their religious orientation or impression management propensity, evaluated themselves to be better than other people on nonreligious attributes.

**GENERAL DISCUSSION**

This research clarifies the influence of religiousness on one aspect of humility, appraisal of self in relation to others. In general, people perceive the self adheres more closely than others to biblical commandments (the holier-than-thou effect). Although it seems intuitive that intrinsic religiousness would correlate negatively with this self-serving bias, this was not the case. In both studies, evidence disconfirming the intrinsic-humility hypothesis was found. That is, as intrinsic religiousness increases, the magnitude of the holier-than-thou effect increases (see Figure 1). A possible interpretation of this finding is that people who are more intrinsically religious are relatively less humble than those who are less intrinsically religious. This interpretation is consistent with other research showing intrinsically religious persons are generally less sensitive to others in need (Batson and Gray 1981) and are more interested in appearing unprejudiced than being unprejudiced (Batson, Flink, Schoenrade, Fultz, and Pych 1986). Another possibility is that people with high intrinsic religious motivation recall information about personal experiences easier than information about similar experiences of others.

Inconsistent associations between extrinsic religiousness and humility were found. In Study 1, no association between the dimensions of extrinsic religiousness and the holier-than-thou effect was found. In Study 2, an increase in the extrinsic-personal form of religiousness was associated with a slight decrease in the magnitude of the holier-than-thou effect, suggesting the possibility of more humility. Because extrinsic religiousness is positively correlated with frequency of committing adultery (Leak 1993), this finding, which is limited to Study 2, might be due in part to an extrinsic’s report of being less adherent to commandments dealing with adultery or coveting a neighbor’s spouse. Additional research will be necessary to confirm whether the extrinsic-personal form of religiousness leads to genuine humility or just the appearance of humility for some other end.

Some evidence supporting the quest-humility hypothesis was found. When controlling for social desirability, as quest increases, the magnitude of the holier-than-thou effect decreases slightly, indicating more humility. This outcome is consistent with Batson and Gray’s (1981) finding that people with high quest scores are relatively sensitive to the needs of others. Something about embracing existential questions without reducing their complexity, viewing religious doubts positively, and remaining open to religious change seems to be associated with more humility.

Before concluding, it is important to reconsider a few issues related to our theoretical and methodological approach, as well as some directions for future research. First, our social-psychological perspective on religiousness and humility operated within the framework of empirical science and Judeo-Christian religion (cf. Batson, Schoenrade, and Ventis 1993). Equally viable qualitative research methods (e.g., case study of Mother Teresa) and religious perspectives (e.g., Taoism, Zen Buddhism) would almost certainly enrich our understanding of the dynamics of humility. Second, self-report measures were used to assess religiosity and humility. Future research could incorporate multiple methods and behavioral measures (cf. Epley and Dunning 2000). Finally, an unrepresentative sample was used. Future research could examine associations between religiosity and humility among older adults, people who are less religious, and people affiliated with Eastern religions, looking especially at whether humility varies with age, spiritual maturity, or across world religions.
NOTES


2. A 2 (target-person: self, other) × 3 (extrinsic religiousness: low, medium, high) repeated measures ANCOVA was also conducted using self- and other-adherence to biblical commandments as dependent variables, and impression management as the covariate. No interaction between the target rated and extrinsic religiousness was found. When controlling for impression management, evaluations of self-adherence to commandments among people with low (M = 6.06), medium (M = 6.40); and high extrinsic religiousness (M = 6.16) did not interact with evaluations of other-adherence to commandments among the same people with low (M = 3.07), medium (M = 3.41), and high extrinsic religiousness (M = 3.32), $F(2, 236) = 0.35, ns$. A 2 (target-person: self, other) × 3 (quest religiousness: low, medium, high) repeated measures ANCOVA was also conducted using self- and other-adherence to commandments as the dependent variables, and impression management as the covariate. When controlling for impression management, evaluations of self-adherence to commandments among people with low (M = 6.32), medium (M = 6.37), and high quest religiousness (M = 5.93) did not differ from evaluations of other-adherence to commandments among the same people with low (M = 3.27), medium (M = 3.36), and high quest religiousness (M = 3.24), $F(2, 240) = 1.52, ns$.

REFERENCES


