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IMAGES OF GOD AND CONFIDENCE IN SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

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ABSTRACT

In recent decades there has been some interesting research emerging concerning images of God, specifically relating to one's perception of God being more judgmental, authoritative, traditional, and formal versus one's perception of God being more merciful, gracious, loving, and informal. Most of the past research has focused on political or social ideology and opinions on specific issues, often yielding significant results, with some research also focusing on generalized trust levels in relation to God images. Past research has looked at how people feel about social/political issues based on how they feel about God. This research looks at how people feel about social/political institutions based on how they feel about God by assessing whether or not there is a relationship between people's perception of God and their level of confidence in some major institutions in the United States. Statistical analyses show that there is a significant relationship between images of God and level of confidence in organized religion, with an image as more authoritative and judgmental being correlated with greater confidence. There is also a relationship between images of God and confidence in the United States military, with an image of a more authoritative and judgmental God being correlated with greater confidence in the military.

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INTRODUCTION

Almost every day the media present evidence that people in our society have very strong feelings about religion and issues related to religion. Religion plays a key role in shaping beliefs and ideals that may be expected to overlap into other arenas of life. There is evidence of this in the United States in the way we structure our work week, our laws and prescription of punishments, our holidays and traditions, and even our use of common phrases. According to the 2007 Baylor Religion Survey, around 63% of Americans reported having no doubts about the existence of God, with many people holding attendance in a particular religious denomination (ARDA, 2007). While there has been much research utilizing different religiosity measures for several decades, some other researchers have sought specifically to better understand what God looks like to different people and how this perception of God might affect opinions on certain social issues.

One promising measure that has emerged in recent decades is people's image of God. This measure is based on people's feelings about God and their perceived relationship with Him on a spectrum ranging from gracious and loving to judgmental and authoritative, rather than relying on behavioral measures such as church attendance or denominational identification. The measure images of God has yielded some interesting and significant results in reference to different political and social opinions and affiliations, such as political party identification, views on the death penalty, abortion, environmental protection, etc. Several studies have shown that a more gracious and loving God image correlates with what has been defined as a more liberal view concerning different social and political issues. There has also been research on the relationship between images of God and generalized trust in people, showing that those with a more gracious and loving view of God are more trusting of different groups of people.

What past research has not addressed, however, is how images of God are related to confidence and/or trust in major institutions in the United States. Since there have been relationships identified between perceptions or images of God and political/social opinions as well as generalized trust, it could follow that images of God correlate with the opinions about the institutions that surround, encompass, and even endorse many social opinions on different issues. This research seeks to look at this element. Specifically, the focus will be on whether there is a relationship between images of God, based on the gracious/judgmental scale measure that has been used in past research, and the level of confidence in two different and influential institutions in the United States, the church and the United States Armed Forces.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Much groundwork has been laid, mostly in recent years, concerning people's images of God and their propensity to lean toward a certain political or social standpoint in certain issues. Researcher Andrew Greeley pioneered much of the research on images of God as a possible indicator of other views in the 1980s and 1990s. For most of his image of God studies Greeley constructed an index of people's perceived image of God that included questions from the General Social Survey with God on a spectrum from father to mother, master to spouse, judge to lover, and king to friend. There are certainly many factors wrapped up in this God image scale. These images were to range from a view of God as more judgmental, authoritative, formal, and paternal versus a view of God as more gracious, loving, informal, and maternal (Greeley, 1993, 1991). It could also be seen that some of these adjectives used to describe God are more traditional in their view of God, father, master, judge, king, compared to the other end of the spectrum.

In 1988 research using data on white respondents from the 1984, 1985, and 1986 General Social Surveys, Greeley found that images of a more affectionate, warm, loving God are related to taking more gracious or liberal sides on certain political and social issues (Greeley, 1988). Greeley's initial reasoning was simple, "Those who have a gentler image of God are expected to have gentler images about fellow human beings." For this particular study Greeley added variables indicating views of God as creator/healer and redeemer/liberator to his normally four variable scale construction of images of God for the independent variable. Those with a more gracious view of God, as friend and mother, were likely to oppose capital punishment, support civil liberties, support help from the government for black Americans, and support feminist attitudes toward women's participation in both the labor force and political arena. Those with gracious views of God were also less likely to vote for Ronald Reagan in both 1980 and 1984 elections and less likely to support the notion that blacks "ought not to push their way" into white neighborhoods. The data also showed that 30% of those who identified their political orientation as liberal had a maternal image of God versus just 17% of those who identified their political orientation as conservative. Even after controlling for reported voting, orientation toward the Bible, political affiliation, and level of education, the basic relationship between a gracious/maternal image of God being related to liberal social and political views held (Greeley, 1988).

In a 1991 study about religion and attitudes toward AIDS policy, Greeley assessed whether or not respondents' image of God was related to their feelings toward different issues concerning AIDS. Although modest, Greeley found a significant relationship between the two variables. The data showed that those nearer the grace, love, and tolerance end of the spectrum were less likely to support the use of identification tags for those with AIDS, the exclusion of

AIDS victims from public schools, and premarital AIDS tests. It was also found that those with a more gracious image of God were more likely to support "safe sex" education in schools (Greeley, 1991).

In a 1993 study, Greeley sought to duplicate and expand the findings of 1989 research reporting a relationship between religion and environmental concern. Along with confirmation that non-support for environmental spending is correlated with belief in Biblical literalism, an approach/interpretation of scripture that is used by Conservative Christians, Greeley found a correlation between a gracious image of God (mother, lover, friend, and spouse) and support for increased spending on environmental protection (Greeley, 1993).

Based on analysis and results of his extensive research, Greeley has made some conclusions about the relationship of images of God and socio-political stances. He points out that those with a more loving and intimate view of reality, represented by God in his empirical research, are likely to be more gracious when it comes to their views on political and social issues (Greeley, 1995).

Building on the previous work of Greeley, researchers Unnever, Cullen and Bartkowski studied images of God and views on the death penalty (2006). They, as well as other researchers coming after Greeley, narrowed down and focused on some specific images within the God image scale that they felt told an interesting story. They focused on both images of God and closeness of a personal relationship with God in their analyses, two variables that they found to be strongly correlated. Unnever et al believed from their review of past research that both factors, images of God and personal relationship, are "symbolic predispositions" that develop during early childhood socialization and have a strong influence on social opinions. Their

analysis of the 2004 General Social Survey data, after correcting for several other indicators of public policy decisions, yielded strong significant results. Greeley's index, based on images of God and personal relationship with God, was found to be a significant predictor, showing that those with a gracious image of God do not support capital punishment (Unnever et al, 2006). But, there was no relationship found between public support for the death penalty and a wrathful, judgmental, authoritative image of God. This led them to conclude that Greeley's index did not extend to the other end of the spectrum (Unnever et al, 2006). Even so, there is strong confirmation that there is a relationship between God image and support for capital punishment.

While researchers Unnever, Cullen, and Bartkowski believed the closeness of relationship and involvement of God in human affairs were the key elements of Greeley's index that helped predict differing social opinions, other researchers and theorists have different ideas about where the real significance of the God image lies. Researchers Froese and Bader prescribed to a different idea when they referenced the theory and conclusions of Rodney Stark. He theorized about the effects of religion on behavior. He concluded that religion will only affect behavior to the degree that God is seen by the individual as or thought to be judgmental. Stark points out that a moral authority simply existing is not enough to deter socially deviant behavior, but the perceived reaction of God to such behavior. But, more in line with Unnever et al's reasoning, he also emphasized the importance of belief in an active and powerful God that is concerned with human affairs in the shaping of our views on moral issues (Stark, 2001).

It was with these conclusions in mind that Froese and Bader constructed some of their theoretical frameworks concerning God images. Froese and Bader conducted a comparative study that involved data from a number of countries obtained from the International Social Survey Program. The countries used in their analysis included Australia, France, Hungary,

Latvia, New Zealand, the Slovak Republic, and the United States. They used a measure of images of God that included levels of engagement and authority. In this study they found that the level of engagement of God was a significant indicator, in all countries except Australia, of sexual attitudes, with a belief in a more involved God predicting more absolutist sex attitudes. In 5 of the 7 countries, including the United States, a view of a more authoritative God was a predictor of more absolutist sex attitudes. There was also a tendency found in most countries that a more authoritative and engaged God indicated negative attitudes toward abortion, or less support for it. In the US, as well as a couple of the other countries in their analysis, there was a correlation between the view of an active God and the support for reduction in income inequalities. In line with past research of Greeley and Unnever et al, Americans with a more authoritative view of God were more likely to support capital punishment. Surprisingly, there was no correlation found between images of God and attitudes toward government spending on things such as education, welfare, healthcare, or the environment in any of the seven countries.

This inconsistency between Greeley's prior findings concerning environmental spending may be due to a number of factors. Froese and Bader's added and differing variables compared to Greeley's original scale measuring God image, having added measures with more of an emphasis on perceived level of God's engagement and authority, could be partly to blame. There may also be an inconsistency because of possible differences in attitudes with the changing times, the two studies being conducted about fifteen years apart.

Froese and Bader also found that an active and authoritative image of God is not an indicator of political leaning toward the right in 5 of the 7 countries, including the United States (Froese & Bader, 2008). But, based on many of the other findings in this study, Froese and Bader concluded, "Our findings indicate that Americans with active and authoritative

conceptions of God espouse social and economic opinions that are perfectly in line with conservative political ideology (Froese & Bader, 2008)."

This extensive research shows a strong relationship between images of God and many social opinions, but the research has not explored how these images are related to trust and confidence in large social institutions. Yet the social opinions studied are imbedded and entangled in larger societal institutions, such as organized religion and the military. Because God is obviously the cornerstone/foundation of the institution of religion, it seems very likely that people's images of God could play a role in shaping their feelings toward religious institutions. Also, there is evidence that in the United States religious participation and military participation are linked. One study in 2009 showed that those men that were "highly religious evangelicals" were significantly more likely to enlist in the military than their "nonreligious" counterparts (Burdette et al, 2009). This shows a link between feelings toward the military and religion and religiosity. There is certainly evidence that images of God could be related to levels of confidence in different institutions, but in which direction could these relationships lie?

This past image of God research has understandably sparked some interest among certain researchers and lead to similar research with different dependent variables. Mencken et al. went in a different direction in their analyses of perceptions of God. They assessed whether or not there was a relationship between a loving versus angry God image and generalized trust (Mencken et al, 2009). In this study the perceived images of God of highly religious people were tested against trust in four different groups of people including people in general, neighbors, coworkers, and people who do not believe in God. Results showed those respondents with a view of God as more loving and forgiving were more likely than those with a view of God as angry and authoritative to have greater trust in all four groups of people (Mencken et al,

2009). Although this study was limited to Christian and Jewish respondents who were considered highly religious, based on their response that they have "no doubt about the existence of God," it may still point to a relationship between God images and trust in the larger population (Mencken et al, 2009). Those with a more gracious and loving view of God may generally have greater trust, so this could translate to trust in institutions as well.

While a more gracious and loving image of God may show greater trust in people in general, the institutions of organized religion and the army may certainly be a bit more complicated when looking at God images. For example, at the one end of the God image scale is God viewed as a mother, friend, lover, and spouse and at the other end is a view of God as father, judge, king, and master. Because traditionally, especially in protestant Christian denominations, the words father, king, etc. seem to be more often used to describe God in the institution of organized religion, it seems likely that this may have some affect on the results both relating to confidence in the church and the military.

I hypothesize that there is a relationship between God image and level of confidence in both organized religion and the United States military. Despite the possibility of complications concerning traditional views of God, past research of Mencken et al showing that those with a more gracious image of God have greater generalized trust in different individuals suggests that those with a more gracious image of God are generally more trusting. Therefore, I must hypothesize that a more judgmental, paternal, authoritative, formal image of God will correlate with having less confidence in organized religion and that a more judgmental, paternal, authoritative, formal image of God will correlate with having less confidence in the military.

DATA AND METHODS

In order to test the hypotheses proposed, I have done secondary data analysis on data from the 2008 General Social Survey (GSS). The General Social Survey is a highly reputable and frequently used dataset in the social sciences, with the U.S. Census as the only dataset that is analyzed more often in the field. The GSS, with funding provided by the National Science Foundation, has been conducted regularly since 1972 by the National Opinion Research Center (NORC, 2011). The 2008 sample, with cross-section and panel combined, includes 3,559 cases/respondents and questions concerning 898 different variables. This random sample of the United States population was collected through in-person face-to-face interviews. The General Social Survey is publicly accessible online and available on several sites. I accessed and downloaded the 2008 GSS from the Association of Religion Data Archives website (The ARDA, 2011).

In my data analysis I used SPSS statistical software. First, I constructed an images of God scale similar to those used in much of the past literature of Greeley and some others following him. This was due to availability of very similar questions on the GSS and evidence from past research that such a scale yielded significant results in other instances. My scale included variables from the 2008 GSS that measured images of God contrasted between two extremes. These questions asked, "There are many different ways of picturing God. We'd like to know the kinds of images you are most likely to associate with God. The first set of contrasting images shows mother at 1 on the scale and father at 7. If you imagine God as a mother, you would place yourself at 1. If you imagine God as a father, you would place yourself at 7. If you imagine God as somewhere between Mother and Father, you would place yourself at 2, 3, 4, 5,

or 6." The other three questions were only different in that they contrasted images of God as master/spouse, friend/king, and judge/lover.

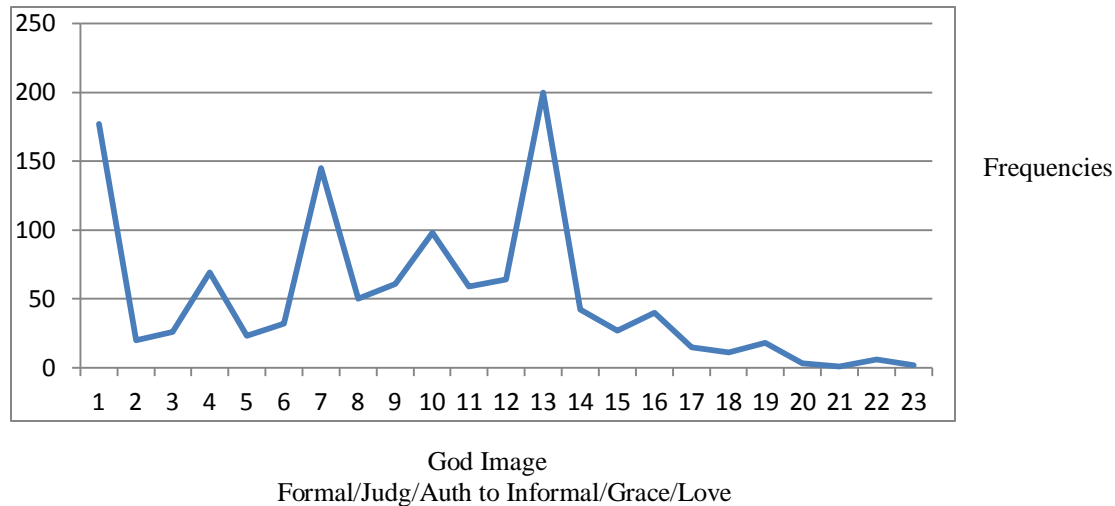
After inversely recoding the spouse/master and friend/king variables and taking out any missing cases from the data, the scale constructed, named FORMALTOPERSONAL with a more authoritative and judgmental view of God on the lower end, was tested for internal consistency using Cronbach's Alpha. Cronbach's Alpha is a coefficient of reliability often used to test how closely related the different variables in a scale construction are to one another (Experiment-Resources, 2012). These four variables had a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of reliability of .617. While it is desirable that this level of consistency be a bit higher, this level is by no means unacceptable and because this same scale has been used in past research by other researchers, such as Greeley in his research about God image and attitudes toward AIDS policy (Greeley, 1991), it could be considered an acceptable Alpha of reliability for my level and type of analysis. My God image scale includes several images of God, with one end of the spectrum representing not only a more judgmental image of God, but also more authoritative and formal images of God, so each question within the scale is not necessarily asking the same thing.

As shown in Table 1 below, the God image scale in my analysis showed that 14.9% were on the extreme end of the scale seeing God as more judgmental and authoritative, 1 on the 1-7 range, and .2% of respondents were on the extreme end of the scale seeing God as more gracious and loving, 7 on the 1-7 range. About 63.9% of the respondents perceived God to be more authoritative and judgmental, with responses ranging on the first half of the scale from 1-3.5, and the remaining 36.1% of respondents perceived God to be more gracious and loving, with responses ranging on the second half of the scale from 3.5-7. This distribution of responses is also shown in Chart 1 below.

Table 1: Frequencies and Valid Percent of God Image Responses

	God Image Scale	Frequency	Valid Percent
Judge/Formal/Auth.	1	177	14.9
	1.25	20	1.7
	1.5	26	2.2
	1.75	69	5.8
	2	23	1.9
	2.25	32	2.7
	2.5	145	12.2
	2.75	50	4.2
	3	61	5.1
	3.25	98	8.2
Midpoint	3.5	59	5
	3.75	64	5.4
	4	200	16.8
	4.25	42	3.5
	4.5	27	2.3
	4.75	40	3.4
	5	15	1.3
	5.25	11	0.9
	5.5	18	1.5
	5.75	3	0.3
Grace/Informal/Love	6	1	0.1
	6.25	6	0.5
	7	2	0.2

Chart 1: Frequencies of God Image Responses



The dependent variables measuring level of confidence in organized religion and level of confidence in the U.S. military, were recoded so that any missing or non-response answers were taken out of the analysis. The original question for both these variables, as well as several other institutions, on the 2008 GSS reads, "I am going to name some institutions in this country. As far as the people running these institutions are concerned, would you say you have a great deal of confidence, only some confidence, or hardly any confidence at all in them?," naming organized religion and the military respectively. Of the respondents, 19.9% had a great deal of confidence, 56.2% had only some, and 23.9% had hardly any confidence in organized religion. When it came to the United States military, 48.4% of respondents had a great deal, 39.4% had only some, and 12.2% had hardly any confidence. These percentages, as well as frequencies, are shown in Tables 2 and 3 below.

Table 2: Levels of Confidence in Organized Religion

Confidence In Org. Religion	Frequency	Valid Percent
Hardly Any	559	23.9
Only Some	1314	56.2
A Great Deal	466	19.9

Table 3: Levels of Confidence in the U.S. military

Confidence in Military	Frequency	Valid Percent
Hardly Any	289	12.2
Only Some	930	39.4
A Great Deal	1142	48.4

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) tests were done using the SPSS program to assess whether or not there was a statistically significant relationship between God image and confidence in organized religion. ANOVA tests statistical significance by combining the cases into groups. In this research the cases were combined into three groups including "only some," "a great deal," and "hardly any" confidence, representing the dependent variables and measuring the extent to which these groups differ in reference to the independent variable. This difference between groups is compared to the standard of random distribution, assessing whether or not the same differences could be expected if the cases were assigned to the groups randomly. A significant relationship, determined by a value of less than .05, shows a difference between the different groups that could not be explained by chance, meaning that these differences could not be expected if the cases were assigned to the groups randomly (Babbie, 2010). This same procedure was then used to test whether or not there was a relationship between God image and confidence in the United States military. If significant relationships are found, this would mean

that God image is correlated to level of confidence in these different institutions, and can therefore be used to predict level of confidence.

The results of these ANOVA tests were also used to determine the direction of these relationships. In the SPSS program, a procedure was done where the results of the ANOVA tests were divided into three different charts showing the group means, or the mean values on the God image scale for each response. This made it easier to look at the group means individually and determine the direction of their movement.

Lastly, there was a need to correct for certain common variables that could be confounding, meaning they might explain some or even all of the observed relationships. These controls included age, sex, political party identification, and race. Age, sex, and race are standard controls that are often used in sociological research in order to rule out some factors that can have a significant influence. Researchers Greeley (1988, 1991, 1993), Froese et al (2008), Unnever et al (2006), and Mencken et al (2009) used some or all of these standard controls in their similar analysis dealing with images of God. Political party identification was controlled for in my analysis because images of God have been shown to significantly correlate with party identification and many political and social issues that could be associated with party identification in past research. This often observed correlation in past research may show up in this research as well and it is important to control for it so that we are sure that any relationships that may be observed between images of God and confidence levels in our institutions is not simply due to this possibly confounding variable.

In order to correct for these variables, regression analysis was done in the SPSS program. Before completing this regression analysis, some dummy variables were created for sex and race.

The dummy variable for sex was coded 1 for MALE and 0 for female (or not male). The dummy variables for race included BLACK, with a value of 1 for blacks and 0 for whites and other races, and OTHERRACE, with a value of 1 for other races and 0 for whites and blacks.

RESULTS

This statistical analysis showed some interesting results. The ANOVA test revealed a significant difference of means, at a level of significance at .000, showing a correlation between the God image scale and level of confidence in organized religion. God image is therefore a predictor of level of confidence in the institution of organized religion. The ANOVA test between the images of God variable and level of confidence in the military also showed a significant difference in means, at a level of significance at .001, showing a correlation between God image and confidence in the military. This means that image of God is also a predictor of level of confidence in the institution of the United States military.

By then splitting the groups and comparing means based on the ANOVA tests in the SPSS statistical program, the directions of these relationships could be determined. Between images of God and confidence in organized religion, mean comparisons of God image values for each confidence response showed that as level of confidence in organized religion increased, the means for images of God decreased, meaning they showed movement toward the more authoritative/judgmental/traditional view of God. As shown in Table 4 below, at "hardly any" confidence the images of God mean was 3.23, at "only some" confidence the images of God mean was 2.95, and at "a great deal of" confidence the images of God mean was 2.68. So, a more authoritative and judgmental view of God predicts greater confidence in organized religion.

Table 4: Comparing God Image Means between levels of Confidence in Organized Religion

		Confidence in Organized Religion		
		Hardly Any	Only Some	A Great Deal
Images of God (Judge to Grace)		3.2339	2.9487	2.6847

This same comparison of means through analysis of variance between images of God and confidence in the military showed similar results. As shown in Table 5 below, at "hardly any" confidence in the military the images of God mean was 3.27, at "only some" confidence the images of God mean was 3.03, and at "a great deal" of confidence the images of God mean was 2.86. So, a more authoritative and judgmental view of God predicts greater confidence in the United States military too.

Table 5: Comparing God Image Means between levels of Confidence in U.S. military

		Confidence in U.S. military		
		Hardly Any	Only Some	A Great Deal
Images of God (Judge to Grace)		3.2702	3.0377	2.8581

In order to assess whether or not these relationships still hold after controlling for age, sex, race, and political party identification, regression analysis was done. Significant relationships were found between images of God and party identification, age, sex, and African American race at the levels of .000, .007, .000, and .000 respectively. Despite these significant relationships between confidence in organized religion and the controls, the significant relationship between God image and confidence in organized religion still held, at a significance

level of .000, even after all the controls were taken into account. The results of this regression analysis are shown in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Regression Analysis for Confidence in Organized Religion

	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	Significance
(Constant)	1.935	0.087		22.346	0
God Image	-0.064	0.016	-0.12	-4.098	0
Party ID	0.04	0.01	0.123	3.949	0
Age	0.003	0.001	0.079	2.692	0.007
Male dummy variable	-0.15	0.039	-0.112	-3.858	0
Black dummy variable	0.216	0.06	0.113	3.618	0
Other race dummy variable	0.129	0.072	0.053	1.793	0.073

This was also true of the relationship between God image and confidence in the military. There were significant relationships found between level of confidence in the military and party identification, sex, and other race, at the levels of .000, .041, and .002 respectively. But, the relationship still held at a level of significance of .000 between God image and confidence in the military even after these controls. The results of this regression analysis are shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Regression Analysis for Confidence in the Military

	B	Standard Error	Beta	t	Significance
(Constant)	2.392	0.086		27.729	0
God Image	-0.048	0.015	-0.089	-3.095	0.002
Party ID	0.062	0.01	0.192	6.236	0
Age	0	0.001	-0.004	-0.145	0.885
Male dummy variable	0.079	0.039	0.059	2.046	0.041
Black dummy variable	-0.086	0.06	-0.045	-1.442	0.15
Other race dummy variable	-0.226	0.072	-0.092	-3.141	0.002

It was confirmed that there were significant relationships found between images of God and confidence in organized religion and also between images of God and confidence in the military. But, these results dispute the parts of my hypotheses about the direction of these relationships. The directions of these relationships were the opposite of what I predicted based on the prior research that was available to me. As image of God becomes more authoritative, judgmental, paternal, and formal, confidence in both organized religion and the military increases. As image of God becomes more gracious, loving, maternal, and informal, confidence in both organized religion and the military decreases.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

It is clear that the scope of predictive power of images of God is even broader than what prior research has displayed, now being shown to predict level of confidence in some institutions in the United States. Both the military and organized religion are important and far reaching facets of our society that have connections to other broader institutions and social opinions. This research is valuable in that it shows that God image, or views and perceptions of the personality and relationship of God with humans, can be used to predict levels of confidence in the military and the church, with more authoritative and judgmental views predicting greater confidence and more gracious and loving views predicting less confidence. This gives us a greater understanding of and appreciation for God image and how this religious factor relates to many other areas of life.

It is important to note that this outcome is quite the opposite of what was suggested by prior research, which showed that more gracious images of God correlated with more confidence in the general public. There are a number of possible reasons for such an outcome. In order to make hypotheses about the direction of the relationships between God images and the military

and the church I referenced researchers Mencken et al who found that those in their study with a more gracious image of God had more generalized trust in different individuals such as neighbors, people in general, etc. The first concern could be that Mencken used a "highly religious" sample, or those who have "no doubts about the existence of God (2009)." The sample used in this research, selected by the General Social Survey, is a representative sample of the population of the United States, which includes a range of people with different levels of religiousness. These differing populations could account for the differing results in reference to directions of relationships.

There are also differences in the dependent variables between this research and that of the past. Mencken's study looked at confidence/trust in the general public and was more individualized, not specifically looking at levels of confidence in institutions as the dependent variables (Mencken et al, 2009). Clearly, trusting individuals and small groups of people could have different motivations and implications when compared with trusting large institutions that are in some ways connected with government and yield great power.

Lastly, there is a difference in the measure of God image. Mencken et al looked at images of a loving versus an angry God (2009). Although this is similar in its definition of God image when compared with the scale used in this research and some of the attributes described in the more formal end of my God image scale could relate or have anger wrapped up in them, anger does not perfectly equate to authority, judgment, formality, and mastery. This difference could be partly to blame for some of the differences between the outcomes of the two studies.

There are several possible explanations for the direction of relationships found in this research, those with a more authoritative/judgmental view showing greater confidence in the

church and military, which have important implications regarding future research. As noted in the literature review, it is in some ways not surprising that the more authoritative, judgmental, and formal views on the God image scale would correlate with greater confidence in organized religion. Those words used to describe this image of God, father, king, judge, and master, seem to be more "traditional" religious views of the Christian Godhead compared with some of the views on the other end of the scale, such as mother, lover, friend, and spouse. Because the more traditional terms are often used in the church to describe God, those that are more religious are likely those with these views, and it is not much of a reach to predict that these people are those who would have more confidence in the church.

Researcher Burdette found that those men that are "highly religious evangelical" are more likely to enter the military than their "non-religious" and "non-evangelical" counterparts (2009). This is one evidence revealing a historical relationship between religious participation and military participation. Those with more traditional views of God, or views more often espoused in the church, could also be more likely to participate, support, or have confidence in the military.

Keeping some of these possible confounding factors in mind, including the military and religiosity connection, the more traditionally religious language used in the God image measure, etc, it would be wise in future research to account for such variables and test whether the relationships between images of God and confidence in institutions still hold after taking level of religiosity out of the equation.

Greeley's original and fairly simple conclusion which lead to his theory concerning God images may also, on some level, apply here. Greeley found and concluded that those with a

more gracious image had what could be considered "more liberal" views on social and political issues (1995). It seems plausible that because the institutions of organized religion and the United States military are both generally considered conservative institutions, it would follow that those with a more liberal view would not be as confident in or trustful of them.

Another factor that should be considered here as a possible explanation for the relationships between images of God and the military and church involves adherence to authority. Many past researchers that looked at social opinions focused on particular aspects of the God image scale, in order to better understand which aspects of this scale were truly to blame for relationships. For example, Rodney Stark (2001) called out the judgment aspect of the scale as the main factor, Unnever et al (2006) and Froese and Bader (2008) saw the activity or engagement parts of the God image scale as most important, and Froese and Bader (2008) also looked at authority of the God image construction. These conclusions and theories focused on the relationship between images of God and social opinions. For this reason, the focus would likely be a bit different when trying to narrow down what about the God image scale would be important concerning levels of confidence in social institutions.

It is likely that the important part of the God image scale when considering levels of confidence in institutions is in God's level of authority. It could be assumed that in order to follow the principles of organized religion and have confidence in both the church and the military, one must have a certain level of compliance with authority. It is possible that there is a link between this acceptance of authority and the acceptance of God's authority and belief in His authoritativeness. Those who see God as more authoritative could be more comfortable with and respectful of authority and this could translate to the institutions of organized religion and the military. Future research could dig deeper into this idea of authority, construct some kind of

measure relating to it, and control for this measure to see if images of God is still a significant predictor concerning institutional confidence.

Other possible areas of research could include looking further into some of the relationships that were found between the control variables I used and the dependent variables of confidence in organized religion and the military. There are certainly some interesting stories to be told here and a significant area of sociological religious research that has hardly been touched.

It is clear from this research as well as past research that images of God play an important role in shaping the views and attitudes of individuals concerning many different facets of our social system. This research has shown that images of God predict confidence levels in two of the most important and powerful institutions in our country. There is certainly much more research to be done on this topic, as this was in many ways a starting point. Nevertheless, this research is an important addition to the existing body of knowledge on the way our images of God shape our belief systems.

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