

RELIGIOUS COPING AND COLLEGE ADJUSTMENT:  
A STUDY OF AN ELITE SAMPLE

by  
Jeannie Shannon Mood

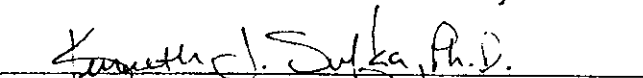
A thesis submitted to the faculty of The University of Mississippi in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the McDonnell-Barksdale Honors College.

Oxford  
May 2001

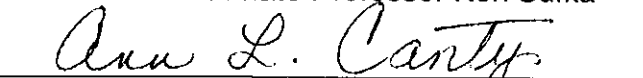
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## ABSTRACT

This study sought to further explore the possible role of religious involvement on college adjustment. Religion was viewed as a multidimensional construct, assessed by means of the Religious Problem Solving Scales (RPSS) developed by Pargament et al. (1988). Nine different areas of adjustment were targeted with the College Adjustment Scales (CAS) developed by Anton and Reed (1991). Freshman honors students were assessed at the beginning and end of their first semester in college. Data analysis was conducted in three parts: the interscorer reliability of both the RPSS and CAS, the temporal stability of the RPSS, and the criterion-related validity of the RPSS correlated with the CAS. It was found that the Deferring coping style was directly related to problems in adjustment and that the Self-Directive coping style was negatively related to problems in adjustment.

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## INTRODUCTION

Religion has not been a topic that modern psychologists have taken up for systematic study with much enthusiasm. In fact, there has been by and large an ambivalent attitude toward religion as subject of psychological inquiry (Bergin, 1980). There are many supposed reasons for this disinterest. Among the most obvious, if not the most outstanding, are that (1) psychologists come from religiously less-inclined backgrounds than the clients they treat (Beit-Hallahmi, 1992; Larson, Pattison, Blazer, Omram, & Kaplan, 1986) and (2) the trait of "religiousness" does not easily lend itself to objective measurement. The latter is exemplified in this statement by Dr. Larry Dossey, a pioneer in the study of the effects of prayer: "We don't have any God meters, we don't have any emptiness meters, but the higher does leave its tracks in the lower. So although we can't apprehend the higher, we can certainly measure its tracks" (p. 26, 1997).

Despite the longstanding indifference and confusion regarding religion's place in psychology, there has been some recent interest in religion. In a very influential article, Bergin (1980) chastised the clinical profession for this longstanding neglect of religion. Bergin (1980) argued that religion could have a variety of therapeutic effects and that psychologists should be more open to the positive aspects of religion. In a response to Bergin, Ellis (1980) put forth the following controversial hypothesis about religion and psychological well-being: "The less religious they [people] are, the more emotionally healthy they will tend to be...devout, orthodox, or dogmatic religion...is significantly correlated with emotional disturbance" (p. 637).

Over a ten-year period, several attempts were made to test this hypothesis of Ellis. In a re-examination of the research through 1979 that looked at the relationship between religiousness and psychopathology, Bergin (1983) found 23 of 30 studies showing no significant ties between religion and psychopathology, thus offering very little support for Ellis' hypothesis. In a further attempt to test Ellis' hypothesis, Sharkey and Malony (1986) examined records of clients who received services at Ellis's Institute for the Advanced Study of Rational Psychotherapy in New York. They concluded that there was "no significant tendency for the 'very religious' to report a higher incidence of problems" in comparison with less religious people and atheists. The records, however, did not represent objective measures of mental health.

Bergin et al. (1987) tested several samples of devoutly religious college students using more objective testing procedures. They found that the religiously oriented group of subjects scored within normal ranges on scales of manifest anxiety, depression, self-concept, irrational beliefs and various other objective measures of personality and mental health. And in the most recent study conducted to date, Richards (1991) examined the relations among religiousness, personality and mental health in a sample of college students. Once again, the findings did not fare well for the Ellis hypothesis, with Richards (1991) arriving at the following conclusion: "This study provided no support for Ellis' (1980) hypothesis that religiously devout and orthodox persons are more emotionally disturbed than less religious persons" (p. 195).

Not only did the above findings not support the Ellis hypothesis, but some pointed to a positive correlation between religious involvement and being emotionally well-adjusted. In addition to finding that devoutly religious college students scored within normal ranges of mental health scales, Bergin et al. (1987) found that “significant religious involvement can be a positive correlate of normal personal functioning” (p. 200). Unfortunately, the extreme homogeneity of the samples did not allow the researchers to make any direct statistical comparisons between the devoutly religious subjects in their study and less religious or non-religious persons.

The present study sought to further explore the possible role of religious involvement on college adjustment. Unlike most previous research that has conceptualized religious involvement as a unidimensional construct, the study viewed religious involvement as a multidimensional construct. That is, although people may share the same general religious orientation, many differences may arise when that orientation is put into practice. Thus, it is reasonable to suspect that different uses of religion may be associated with different levels and types of adjustment. In the present study, the relationships between three types of religious practices (i.e., self-directive, collaborative, and deferring) as assessed by the Religious Problem Solving Scale (Pargament, Kennell, Hathaway, Grevengoed, Newman, & Jones, 1988) and nine areas of adjustment (e.g., anxiety, depression, substance abuse, interpersonal problems) as assessed by the College Adjustment Scales (Anton & Reed, 1991) were examined.



The three religious coping styles revolve around how the person coping views his or her relationship with God. Self-directive people view things as if God gave them everything they need to have to get through different situations. They take it all upon themselves. Deferring is just the opposite. These people believe that God alone can do everything they need. So they passively sit back and give God the reins. The Collaborative style falls in between these two extremes. God and the person mutually work together through trials and tribulations in order to achieve the best outcome.

There are several reasons that freshman honors students were chosen as subjects in this study. First, the admission history of the McDonnell-Barksdale Honors College at the University of Mississippi has been one of diversity. The entering class has 104 Caucasians, 9 African Americans and one Hispanic, with only 64% of these students coming from within the state of Mississippi. Second, religious practice is salient in these students' personal lives as well as in their first-year curriculum. Religious texts are frequently read and discussed at length. Such texts as "Genesis" and "Exodus" in the *Bible*, the *Koran*, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and readings from Confucius are common in first-year honors classes. Third, from the author's experience, honors students lead relatively stressful lives due to rigorous and strenuous academic course work. Last, the honors college is home to a large collection of leaders of various organizations on campus. Many of these students are in student government, religious organizations, sororities/fraternities, etc., and they make decisions that affect the whole student body.

The previously mentioned Bergin et al. (1987) was the basis for the main hypotheses tested in the present study. Bergin et al. (1987) found that intrinsically-motivated religious people had negative correlations with anxiety and positive correlations with self-control and “better” personality functioning, whereas the opposite pattern was found for extrinsically-motivated religious people (p. 197). The intrinsic and extrinsic religious differentiation was first suggested by Allport and Ross (1967). Intrinsically-oriented people “internalize beliefs and live by them regardless of the external consequences” and view religion as an end instead of a means. This is a similar approach to the self-directive coping style found in the Religious Problem Solving Scale. Extrinsically-oriented people “use their religion as a means of obtaining status, security, self-justification, and sociability” and view religion as a means rather than as an end (Bergin et al., 1987, p. 197). Such an orientation corresponds to the deferring coping style, in that people who choose this orientation are more concerned about pragmatic aspects of life rather than how to handle different trials and circumstances, and thus are likely to defer to God to resolve their life problems.

Based on this prior research and subsequent comparison of approaches, several hypotheses were formulated. We hypothesized that the self-directing coping style would be negatively related to problems in adjustment and that the deferring coping style would be directly related with problems in adjustment.

We also hypothesized that those embracing the collaborative coping style would be less depressed and anxious and more satisfied with their family and interpersonal relationships and academic performance. (These last hypotheses

stem from the Rutledge and Spilka (1993) findings of lower levels of depression for the collaborative coping style and from the logical extension of the collaborative relationship with God to peer and student-teacher interactions.)

## **METHOD**

### **Subjects**

Prospective subjects in the study were all entering University of Mississippi freshmen that had been accepted into the McDonnell-Barksdale Honors College. Subjects were recruited from required freshman English courses by presenting a short oral description of the study. Participation was voluntary and confidentiality was assured.

### **Instruments**

**Basic Information Questionnaire.** Subjects were asked to fill out a questionnaire consisting of basic demographic and religious information. Information included age, gender, academic major and religious affiliation by which they identify themselves. (A copy of the questionnaire is provided in Appendix A.)

**Religious Problem Solving Scale.** The present study utilized the Religious Problem Solving Scale (RPSS) created by Pargament et al. (1988) for the assessment of the three coping styles of self-directing, collaborative and deferring. The three subscales assess the person's perception of responsibility

when encountering stressful events in life. The self-directing style refers to individuals who view problem-solving as their own responsibility. They see God as having given them the ability to deal with the stressors themselves, without any active participation on God's part to help them. An example of this subscale's items is "When I am trying to come up with different solutions for troubles I am facing, I do not get them from God but think of them myself." The collaborative style is indicative of individuals who view themselves as partners with God in the problem-solving process. Neither is seen as a passive participant, but both actively contribute to the problem at hand and joint responsibility is emphasized. An example of this subscale's items is "When considering a difficult situation, God and I work together to think of possible solutions." The deferring style encompasses individuals who defer the responsibility of problem-solving to God. The individual waits for guidance from God and for "solutions to emerge through the active efforts of God" (Pargament et al., 1988, p. 92). An example of this subscale's items is "Rather than trying to come up with the right solution to a problem myself, I let God decide how to deal with it." Each sub-scale contains 12 items rated from 1 (never) to 5 (always). (A copy of the instrument used in Assessment I is provided in Appendix B.)

In a sample of 197 church members, estimates of internal consistency ranged from .94 to .91 and coefficients of validity were found to be adequate (Pargament et al., 1988). Research utilizing these three scales has verified the view of religious coping as multidimensional, with some styles associated with more positive outcomes than others. For example, Rutledge and Spilka (1993)

studied a sample of single men and women between 41 and 50 years of age and found that the self-directing style was significantly associated with higher levels of depression while the collaborative style was significantly associated with lower levels of depression.

**College Adjustment Scales.** The College Adjustment Scales (CAS; Anton & Reed, 1991) consists of 108 self-report items that address psychological and adjustment problems experienced by college students. The CAS identifies nine areas of adjustment difficulties: anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, substance abuse, self-esteem problems, interpersonal problems, family problems, academic problems, and career problems. Each subscale contains 12 items, which are rated 1 (false or not at all true) to 4 (very true). Example items include "I think that it would be better to kill myself than to go on living," "I have a very positive opinion of myself," "I'm dissatisfied with my lack of plans for the future," and "I have close and satisfying relationships." Higher scores indicate more adjustment difficulties. The CAS was normed on a college student sample within the United States (N = 1,146) so that comparisons from the current sample can be made to the overall population of college students.

Internal consistency reliability coefficients have ranged from .80 to .92 for the nine scales (mean of .86). Validity has been explored through several studies (Anton & Reed, 1991). All CAS scales except for Substance Abuse and Career Problems demonstrated large positive correlations (range .41 to .84) with the Beck Depression Inventory (Beck, Ward, Mendelson, Mock, & Erbaugh, 1961).

## Procedure

All Honors College freshmen agreeing to participate in the study gave their informed consent. (A copy of the informed consent is provided in Appendix C.) Subjects were assessed at two different times over the course of the Fall 2000 semester: the first assessment took place at the beginning of the school year, and called for completion of Demographic Questionnaire and the RPSS. Subjects filled out the questionnaires in class and returned them to the administrator immediately. The second assessment took place right before the fall semester final exams, and called for completion once again of the Demographic Questionnaire and the RPSS, followed by completion of the College Adjustment Scales. Instead of an in-class administration, Assessment II was completed out of class on the students' own time and was returned on a voluntary basis.

It was during the second assessment that the structure and presentation of the RPSS was changed in order to prevent a possible response bias. The original form of the test used in Assessment I is divided into three sections of 12 questions each, with each section corresponding to a different religious coping strategy. For Assessment II, these questions appeared in a random order. (A copy of the Assessment II RPSS is provided in Appendix D.)

## Data Analysis

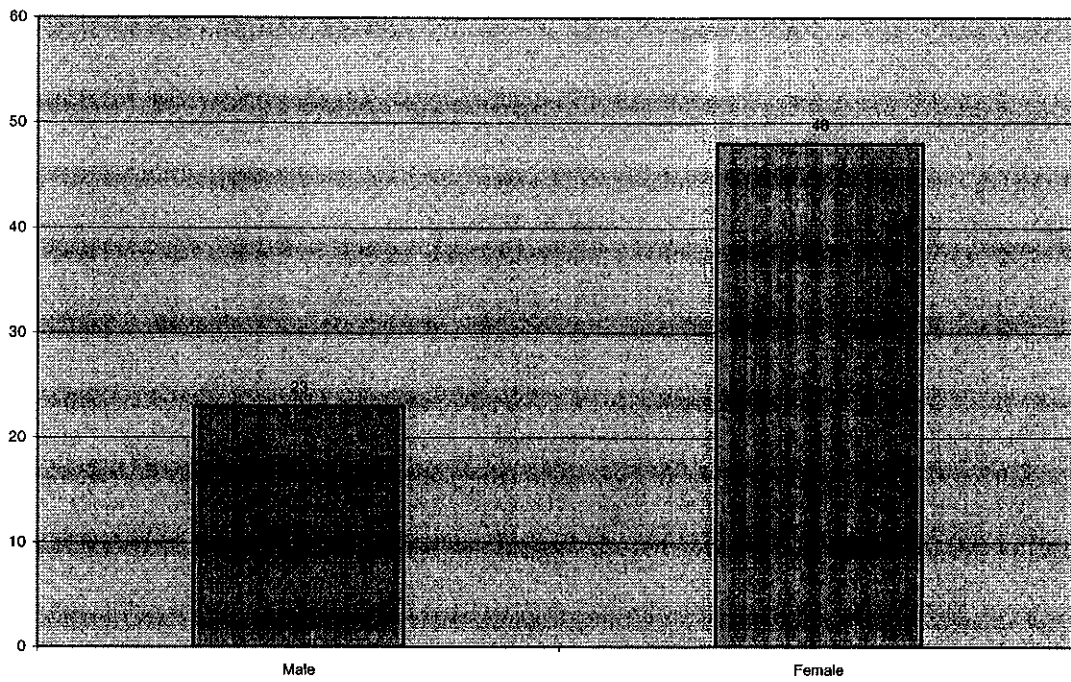
Data analysis for the present study was conducted in three parts. The first analysis was of the interscorer reliability of the instruments. All of the coefficients were expected to be high. The second analysis was of the temporal stability of the RPSS scores for Assessment I and II. Here, too, the correlations were expected to be high. The third analysis was of the criterion-related validity (i.e., RPSS I and II scores correlated with each of the nine sub-scales of the College Adjustment Scales). The proposed hypotheses were that (1) the self-directive coping style would be negatively related to problems in adjustment, (2) the deferring coping style would be directly related to problems in adjustment, (3) the collaborative coping style would show positive relations to family, interpersonal and academic adjustment, with decreased depression and anxiety.

## **RESULTS**

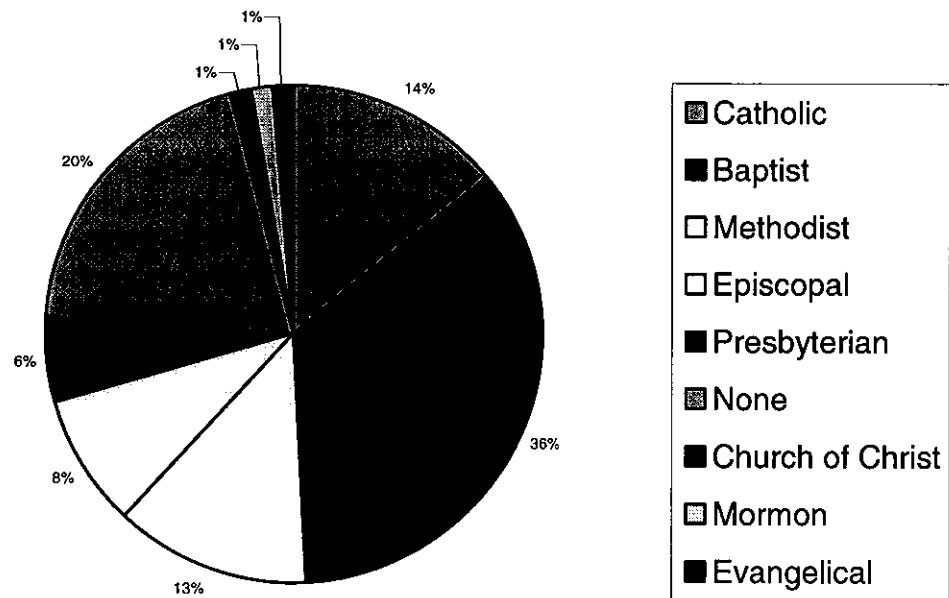
### Sample

A total number of 111 students completed Assessment I. Of these, 70 subjects returned the second assessment. The sample was 67% female and 33% male (see Table 1) and on average 18 years old. They varied in their religious affiliation, the majority (36%) being Baptist, 20% having no denomination or affiliation, 14% Catholic and 13% Methodist (see Table 2). Educational pursuits fell mainly within the liberal arts (47%), with 16% in business and accounting, and 20% undecided at the time of assessment (see Table 3).

**Table 1 Gender of Subjects**

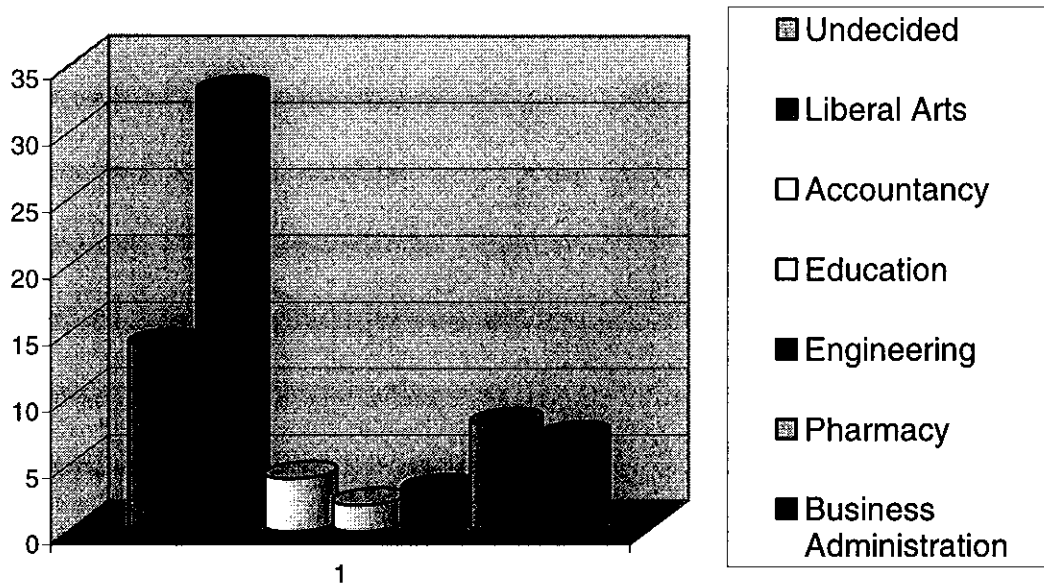


**Table 2 Religious Affiliation**





**Table 3 Academic Pursuits**



Interscorer Reliability

The author and an independent examiner arrived at scale scores for each of the subjects for each assessment phase. The interscorer reliability coefficients for the Religious Problem Solving Scales completed in August were as follows: .99 (Collaborative), .94 (Self-Directive) and .99 (Deferring). Reliability coefficients for the RPSS taken in December were .98 (Collaborative), .84 (Self-Directive) and .97 (Deferring). (see Table 4)

**Table 4. Interscorer Reliability of Religious Problem Solving Scales**

	August RPSS	December RPSS
Collaborative	.99	.98
Self-Directive	.94	.84
Deferring	.99	.97

Interscorer reliability coefficients for the College Adjustment Scales were as follows: 1.00 (Academic Problems, Career Problems, Family Problems, Suicidal Ideation), .99 (Interpersonal Problems, Anxiety, Self-Esteem), and .98 (Substance Abuse, Depression). (see Table 5)

**Table 5. Interscorer Reliability of College Adjustment Scales**

	AP	IP	CP	SA	FP	AN	DP	SI	SE
December	1.00	.99	1.00	.98	1.00	.99	.98	1.00	.99

Temporal Stability

The test-retest stability of the Religious Problem Solving Scales from August to December was assessed. The correlation was expected to be high (i.e., people's religiosity would remain unchanged over the course of their first semester in college). The temporal stability coefficients were .47 for Collaborative, .41 for Self-Directive, and .74 for Deferring. (see Table 6)

**Table 6. Temporal Stability of RPSS**

	August Mean	December Mean	Temporal Stability
Collaborative	39.46	28.80	.47
Self-Directive	25.59	30.98	.41
Deferring	25.97	28.84	.74

### Criterion-Related Validity

The CAS subscales had means that came very close to the means of the normative data. (see Table 7) Listings of the correlations between the RPSS scores and the College Adjustment Scale scores are presented in Tables 8 and 9 for August and December assessments, respectively. Inspection of the August RPSS and CAS reveals one significant negative correlation, specifically between the Collaborative Coping Style and academic problems CAS subscale ( $r = -.22$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

**Table 7 Mean Scores of CAS Compared to Normative Data of CAS**

	AP	IP	CP	SA	FP	AN	DP	SI	SE
Means	21.1	20	18.7	15.31	16.7	20.8	17.1	13.2	21.33
Norms	23.70	20.83	19.40	16.39	19.06	21.50	18.09	14.20	21.98

December RPSS and CAS reveal two significant positive correlations, both found within the Deferring Coping Style. People practicing the Deferring style were found to have significantly higher amounts of anxiety and family problems, according to the CAS subscales of Family Problems and Anxiety (both  $r_s = .24$ ,  $p_s < .05$ )

**Table 8 August RPSS with CAS Scales**

	Collaborative	Self-Directive	Deferring
Academic Problems	-.22	.16	-.07
Anxiety	.05	-.10	.13
Interpersonal Problems	-.10	-.04	-.04
Depression	-.08	.03	-.09
Career Problems	-.20	.08	-.02
Suicidal Ideation	-.11	.09	-.05
Substance Abuse	-.10	.06	.04
Self-Esteem Problems	-.10	.02	-.13
Family Problems	.11	-.16	.14

**Table 9 December RPSS with CAS Scales**

	Collaborative	Self-Directive	Deferring
Academic Problems	-.05	-.10	-.09
Anxiety	.18	.05	.24
Interpersonal Problems	-.12	-.04	.03
Depression	-.01	-.03	.02
Career Problems	-.03	-.10	.02
Suicidal Ideation	.08	.08	.05
Substance Abuse	.02	.05	.12
Self-Esteem Problems	-.08	-.10	-.05
Family Problems	.17	-.04	.24

## DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to explore the possible role of religious involvement and orientation on college adjustment among an elite group of incoming students. Specifically, it was hypothesized that the Deferring coping style would be directly related to problems in adjustment, whereas the Self-Directive coping style would be negatively related to problems in adjustment. The Collaborative coping style was hypothesized to be the forerunner to good adjustment in family, interpersonal and academic areas, and thus lowering depression and anxiety.

The first set of analyses examined the interscorer reliability of the measures. The coefficients were expected to be very high, and the results indicated that they were. One exception was the coefficient of .84 obtained for the Self-Directive coping style for Assessment II in December. But this can be easily explained by the template used in scoring. Created by the author to evaluate Assessment II of the RPSS, the template required extremely precise alignment. Small variations in alignment are likely the reason for the less than perfect correlation obtained between the two scorers.

The second set of analyses examined the temporal stability of the RPSS. The correlation was expected to be high because it was believed that people's religiosity would remain unchanged over the course of their first semester in college. The results, however, indicated relatively low coefficients. There are two possible explanations for this outcome. The first is the possibility that the students' religiosity actually did change over the course of the semester. The

second and possibly more likely explanation is that the change in RPSS scores was a function of the change in the RPSS format from the August administration to the December administration. Recall that this change in format was to guard against a response bias. The students appeared to have been more thoughtful and careful in their December responses, given the pattern of responses for items for each scale. The December RPSS scores are therefore probably more valid than the August RPSS scores and the resulting correlations are likely more critical.

The third set of analyses examined the criterion-related validity of the RPSS. The findings were quite consistent with those of other studies, particularly Bergin et al. (1987). It was found that students who chose to defer life decisions to God and be only passive participants tended to be higher in anxiety and family problems. (It should be noted that for the December assessment, the Deferring coping style is correlated in the hypothesized direction with seven of the nine adjustment subscales.) This parallels the Bergin et al. (1987) finding that extrinsically-oriented religious people were high in anxiety. A marginally significant correlation was obtained between the Deferring style and substance abuse problems, which would concur with the Bergin et al. (1987) finding that extrinsically-oriented people were lower in self-control.

Contrary to expectations, the Self-Directive coping style had no significant ties to adjustment. It should be noted, though, that the vast majority of the December correlations with the nine CAS subscales were in the hypothesized direction, indicating positive adjustment. This also mirrors Bergin et al. (1987)

results. The hypotheses regarding the Collaborative style were partially realized. In both assessments, the Collaborative style was associated with decreased depression, interpersonal problems, and academic problems, reaching significant levels for the latter in August. It was not anticipated that the Collaborative style would have increased amounts of anxiety or family problems, but adjustment in these two areas got increasingly worse from August to December.

The implications of this research would be of use to campus ministries of all denominations. Since religion is a salient issue in the lives of many students, campus ministers stand to play an important role in their adjustment. Ministers should seek to instill in students a self-directive approach to life when they counsel them for spiritual and emotional guidance. For example, those of Christian orientation could direct students to the passage in the *Bible* from Chapter 4 of the book of "Philippians." "I can do all things through Christ, who gives me strength."

There were several limitations in this study that could be improved upon in future research. First, the sample size was relatively small and possibly too homogenous in nature. Even though the honors college is home to students from diverse backgrounds, this sample could have been too homogenous in terms of adjustment. Specifically, there was little variation in terms of adjustment difficulties, which is probably not the case for the student population at large.

Second, the time period addressed in the study was relatively brief. The assessment period covered only the first semester. A more telling period for

adjustment might be at the end of their second semester, toward the end of their freshman year. Third, the present study employed only a single self-report questionnaire for the assessment of adjustment.

A look at the average honors college dropout rate would prove useful, as well. Those that stay in the honors college are probably better adjusted than those who dropout either by will or force. The average dropout rate for the honors college is about 50%, which is actually better than the national average completion rate of honors colleges that require a senior thesis. Many dropouts report that the honors college is geared toward liberal arts majors, which might explain the rather large liberal arts ratio in comparison to business or engineering.

Future research in this vein should include a larger sample. Following the same sample over a longer course of time might be beneficial, although too long of a longitudinal study would negate the college adjustment interest by entering in several more variables. A future study should be done in which the format of the RPSS remains constant, (preferably using the RPSS form from the second assessment in December).

Another improvement upon this study would be including additional measures of adjustment, such as class attendance and grades, drinking, weight loss, roommate reports, motor vehicle violations, and disciplinary measures taken by the school.

The present study represents a renewed interest in examination of the relationship between religion and mental health among college students. Given



the prominent role religion plays in peoples' lives, it is beneficial to continue to examine the positive and negative aspects of religious coping strategies.

## APPENDICES

## Appendix A

### Demographic Questionnaire

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Birth:** \_\_\_/\_\_\_/\_\_\_

**Gender:** M / F

**Major:** \_\_\_\_\_

**E-mail:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Religious Affiliation:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix B

### Assessment I Religious Problem Solving Scale

Presented below are several statements concerning the role of religion in dealing with problems. Please: (a) READ each statement carefully, (b) THINK about how often the statement applies to you, (c) decide whether each statement is true of you; (1) never; (2) occasionally; (3) fairly often; (4) very often; or (5) always. DRAW A CIRCLE around one of the five numbers to indicate how often the statement applies to you.

- 1 = Never
- 2 = Occasionally
- 3 = Fairly Often
- 4 = Very Often
- 5 = Always

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. When it comes to deciding how to solve a problem, God and I work together as partners.                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. When considering a difficult situation, God and I work together to think of possible solutions.            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Together, God and I put my plans into action.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. When I feel nervous or anxious about a problem, I work with God to find a way to relieve my worries.       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. The Lord works with me to help me see a number of different ways that a problem can be solved.             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. After solving a problem, I talk with God to make sense of it.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. When I have a problem, I talk with God about it and together we decide what it means.                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. In carrying out solutions, I work hard at them knowing God is working right along with me.                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. When faced with a question, I work together with God to figure it out.                                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. God and I talk together and decide upon the best answer to the question.                                  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. When a hard time passes, God works with me to help me learn from it.                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. When I'm upset, I try and soothe myself, and also share the unpleasantness with God so He can comfort me. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. After I've gone through a rough time, I try to make sense of it without relying on God.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. When I have difficulty, I decide what it means by myself without help from God.                           | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 15. When a difficult period is over, I make sense of what happened on my own without involvement from God.                             | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. When faced with trouble, I deal with my feelings without God's help.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. When deciding on a solution, I make a choice independent of God's input.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. When I feel nervous or anxious, I calm myself without relying on God.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. When thinking about a difficulty, I try to come up with a solution without God's help.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. When faced with a decision, I make the best choice I can without God's involvement.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. When I am trying to come up with different solutions to troubles I am facing, I do not get them from God but think of them myself. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. I act to solve my problems without God's help.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 23. God doesn't put solutions to my problems into action, I carry them out myself.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. When I run into a difficult situation, I make sense out of it on my own without divine assistance.                                 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. Rather than trying to come up with the right solution to a problem myself, I let God decide how to deal with it.                   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. In carrying out solutions to my problems, I wait for God to take control and know somehow He'll work it out.                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. I do not think about different solutions to my problems because God provides them for me.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. When a troublesome issue arises, I leave it up to God to decide what it means to me.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. When a situation makes me anxious, I wait for God to take those feelings away.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. When faced with a decision, I wait for God to make the best choice for me.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. I don't spend much time thinking about troubles I've had; God makes sense of them for me.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. When I have a problem I try not to think about it and wait for God to tell me what it means.                                       | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. I do not become upset or nervous because God solves my problems for me.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 34. When I run into trouble, I simply trust in God knowing that he will show me the possible solutions.                                | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 35. I don't worry too much about learning from difficult situations, since God will make me grow in the right direction.               | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 36. God solves problems for me without my doing anything.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

## Appendix C

### Consent To Participate In An Experimental Study

TITLE: Religious Coping and College Adjustment: A Study of an Elite Sample

INVESTIGATOR:

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DESCRIPTION: This study is a look into how college freshman, in particular honors students, are influenced by their religious background as they cope with stress and adjust to changes brought on by entering college.

Participation will involve filling out a series of questionnaires that ask about the way you deal with stress and how God does or does not play a role in that, as well as some general demographic information.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: The benefits of taking part in this study include the satisfaction of contributing to research.

Some level of discomfort may occur when considering the stress of college adjustment.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Any information obtained about you from this study will be kept private. If the study results are published, it will not be possible to identify you.

RIGHT TO WITHDRAW: You are free to refuse to take part in or leave this study at any time by simply telling the experimenter. Your decision will not negatively affect your status with the McDonnell-Barksdale Honors College or the University of Mississippi.

IRB APPROVAL: This study has been reviewed by the University of Mississippi's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University standards. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding this study, please contact the IRB at 915-7482.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix D

### Assessment II Religious Problem Solving Scale

Presented below are several statements concerning the role of religion in dealing with problems. Please: (a) READ each statement carefully, (b) THINK about how often the statement applies to you, (c) decide whether each statement is true of you; (1) never; (2) occasionally; (3) fairly often; (4) very often; or (5) always. DRAW A CIRCLE around one of the five numbers to indicate how often the statement applies to you.

**1 = Never      2 = Occasionally      3 = Fairly Often      4 = Very Often      5 = Always**

1. When faced with trouble, I deal with my feelings without God's help.	1	2	3	4	5
2. The Lord works with me to help me see a number is different ways that a problem can be solved.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When thinking about a difficulty, I try to come up with a solution without God's help.	1	2	3	4	5
4. When I run into trouble, I simply trust God knowing that he will show me the possible solutions.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I do not become upset or nervous because God solves my problems for me.	1	2	3	4	5
6. When faced with a question, I work together with God to figure it out.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I act to solve my problems without God's help.	1	2	3	4	5
8. When a situation makes me anxious, I wait for God to take those feelings away.	1	2	3	4	5
9. God and I talk together and decide upon the best answer to the question.	1	2	3	4	5
10. When considering a difficult situation, God and I work together to think of possible solutions.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I act to solve my problems without God's help.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I don't spend much time thinking about troubles I've had; God makes sense of them for me.	1	2	3	4	5
13. When I feel nervous or anxious about a problem, I work with God to find a way to relieve my worries.	1	2	3	4	5
14. When I'm upset, I try to sooth myself, and also share the unpleasantness with God so he can comfort me.	1	2	3	4	5
15. When I have a problem, I talk with God about it and together we decide what it means.	1	2	3	4	5
16. When I have a problem I try not to think about it and wait for God to tell me what it means.	1	2	3	4	5
17. When deciding on a solution, I make a choice independent of God's input.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Together, God and I put my plans into action.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I don't worry too much about learning from difficult situations, since God will make me grow in the right direction.	1	2	3	4	5
20. When a difficult period is over, I make sense of what happened on my own without involvement from God.	1	2	3	4	5
21. After I've gone through a rough time, I try to make sense of it without relying on God.	1	2	3	4	5
22. When it comes to deciding how to solve a problem, God and I work together as partners.	1	2	3	4	5
23. God doesn't put solutions to my problems into action, I carry them out myself.	1	2	3	4	5
24. When a hard time passes, God works with me to help me learn from it.	1	2	3	4	5
25. When I have a difficulty, I decide what it means by myself without help from God.	1	2	3	4	5
26. I do not think about different solutions to my problems because I know God provides them for me.	1	2	3	4	5
27. God solves problems for me without my doing anything.	1	2	3	4	5
28. Rather than trying to come up with the right solution to a problem myself, I let God decide how to deal with it.	1	2	3	4	5
29. After solving a problem, I talk with God to make sense of it.	1	2	3	4	5
30. When a troublesome issue arises, I leave it up to God to decide what it means to me.	1	2	3	4	5
31. When I run into a difficult situation, I make sense out of it on my own without divine assistance.	1	2	3	4	5
32. When I feel nervous or anxious, I cam myself without relying on God.	1	2	3	4	5
33. When faced with a decision, I wait for God to make the best choice for me.	1	2	3	4	5
34. When faced with a decision, I make the best choice I can without God's involvement.	1	2	3	4	5
35. In carrying out solutions, I work hard at them knowing God is working right along with me.	1	2	3	4	5
36. In carrying out solutions to my problems, I wait for God to take control and know somehow He'll work it all out.	1	2	3	4	5

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