

# Effect of Religiosity on Interpersonal Attraction at a Speed-dating Event

April Marquez • Jessica Cerda • Bruce Bainum

The relationship between similarity and interpersonal attraction has been well documented but little research has investigated religiosity and interpersonal attraction.

- Overall, religious individuals are viewed in a more positive light than nonreligious targets (Bailey and Garrou, 1983).
- People who put religious information about themselves on their *Facebook* profile were more likely to mark "single" on their relationship status suggesting that religiosity may be important when searching for a future romantic partner (Young, Dutta, and Dommety, 2009).
- The present study employed a speed-dating event as a setting in which to measure interpersonal attraction. Some of the benefits of this type of study include the ability to examine the first moments of attraction between two individuals and the strong external validity it offers (Finkel & Eastwick, 2008).

## Purpose and Hypotheses

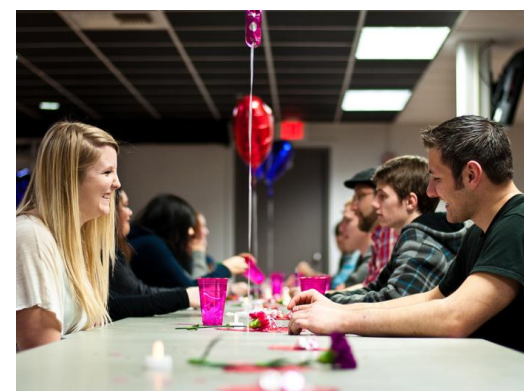
The purpose of the present study was to explore the effect of a confederate's religiosity on interpersonal attraction at a speed-dating event.

- It was hypothesized that those high in intrinsic religiosity would be more attracted to the highly religious confederate compared to the non-religious confederate.
- It was also hypothesized that those high in extrinsic religiosity would be more attracted to the highly religious confederate as compared to the non-religious confederate.
- Additionally, it was hypothesized that participants irrespective of their religiosity, would be more attracted to low religious confederates as compared to the highly and the non-religious confederates.

## Participants

Seventy-nine college students (38 women and 41 men) from a small liberal arts college in northern California participated in exchange for research participation credit. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 27.

## Confederates



## Materials

- An Interpersonal Attraction Survey (IAS) was constructed to measure attraction to the key confederate. It was modeled after a survey used in a similar speed-dating study (Eastwick and Finkel, 2008).
- The Intrinsic/Extrinsic Religiosity Measurement (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989) was used to measure the religiosity of participants.
- Cue cards, containing five specific discussion topics: name, age, hometown, future aspirations, and hobbies were used to provide structure to the conversation.

## Procedure

A 22 year old male student and 19 year old female student were confederates in this study. Both were Caucasian and were of similar attractiveness as determined by a poll of independent raters. The key confederates varied what they said about their future aspirations and hobbies according to scripts corresponding to the relevant condition. In the high religious condition, key confederates mentioned a religious concept three times. In the low religious condition, a religious concept was mentioned once, and in the non-religious condition there was no mention of a religious concept. Female participants were called first and seated in the inner square in random order; male participants were called second, and seated on the outer square, also in random order. The confederates started each session seated in front of each other and alternated between the three scripts with each consecutive participant. Each speed-date lasted four minutes, during which time daters conversed about the topics on the cue cards. After each speed-date, participants were allotted two minutes to complete the IAS. At the end of those two minutes, another round of speed-dates began. The cycle repeated until the key confederate had dated each participant. At the conclusion of each speed-dating event, participants completed the Intrinsic/Extrinsic Religiosity Measurement.

## Abstract

Participants interacted with a confederate who mentioned a religious concept either three times, once, or not at all at a speed-dating event. It was hypothesized that participants would be more attracted to a confederate perceived as moderately religious compared to one perceived as highly religious or not religious. Those high in extrinsic religiosity had a higher attraction rating for the low religious confederates as opposed to the highly religious and non-religious confederates. This suggests that even in situations where time is short information about oneself conveyed to another may lay the foundation for attraction.

Figure 1. Attraction as a Function of Participant and Confederate Religiosity

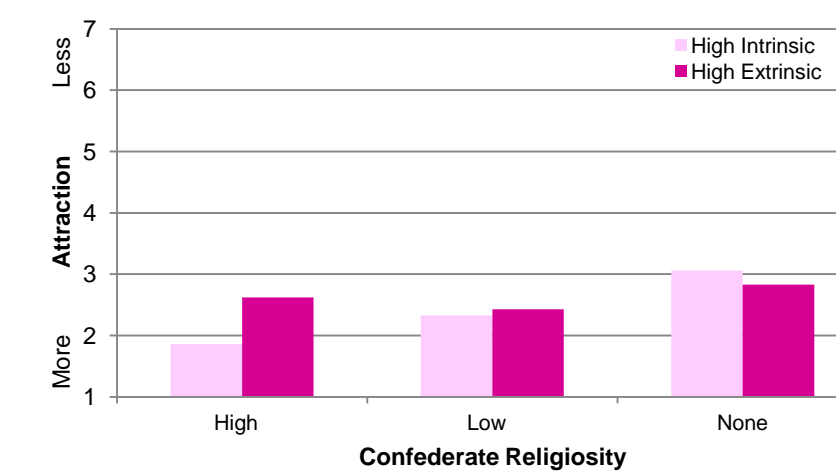


Figure 2. Attraction to the Highly Religious Confederate as a Function of Participant Religiosity

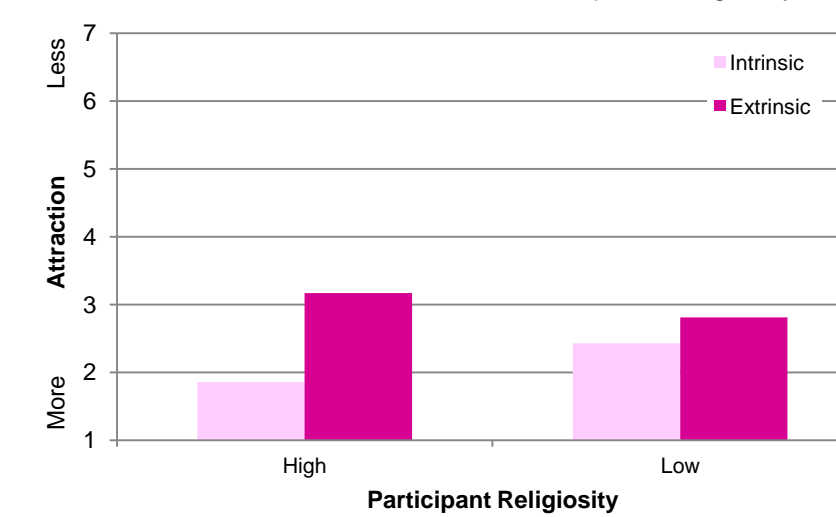
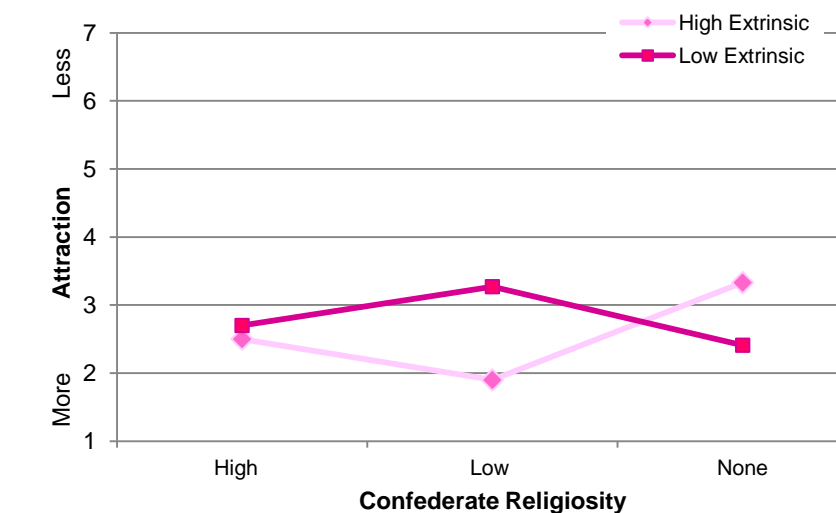


Figure 3. Attraction as a Function of Extrinsic Religiosity



## Results

- A median split was used to separate those that were high and low in intrinsic/extrinsic religiosity.
- The first, second, and third hypotheses were not supported. However, it was found that those high in extrinsic religiosity had a higher attraction rating for the low religious confederates as opposed to the non-religious confederates,  $F(2, 31) = 3.75, p = .04, \eta^2 = .21$  (see Figure 1).
- It was found that participants high in intrinsic religiosity were more attracted to the highly religious confederate compared to those low in intrinsic religiosity,  $t(17) = 2.28, p = .036, d = 1.17$  (see Figure 2).
- Participants high in extrinsic religiosity were more attracted to the low religious confederates compared to the non-religious confederates. Conversely, participants low in extrinsic religiosity were more attracted to the non-religious confederates compared to the low religious confederates,  $F(2, 65) = 4.51, p = .015, \eta^2 = .13$  (see Figure 3).
- It was found that the combination of perceived maturity and perceived religiosity of the confederate were the best predictors of attraction,  $R^2 = .59, F(1, 65) = 45.76, p < .001$ .

## Discussion

- Confederates in the low and high religious conditions were perceived similarly. Those high in extrinsic religiosity were more attracted to the low religious confederate (who nonetheless was viewed as religious) compared to the non-religious confederate, partially supporting the second hypothesis.
- The extrinsically religious individual values outward displays of religiosity. Those high in extrinsic religiosity were more attracted to the low religious confederate, who mentioned they wanted to obtain a medical degree to help people, an external act.
- Although the positive relationship between similarity and attraction is not new, it is perhaps noteworthy that perceived similarity of religiosity can influence attraction after only a four-minute interaction.