

2015

Violent Loss and Religious Coping: A Multi-Group Path Analysis

Andrea C. Walker

John D. Hathcoat
James Madison University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalshowcase.oru.edu/cose_pub



Part of the [Social and Behavioral Sciences Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Andrea C Walker and John D. Hathcoat. "Violent Loss and Religious Coping: A Multi-Group Path Analysis" National Council for Family Relations annual conference (2015) Available at: <http://works.bepress.com/andrea-walker/21/>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Science and Engineering at Digital Showcase. It has been accepted for inclusion in College of Science and Engineering Faculty Research and Scholarship by an authorized administrator of Digital Showcase. For more information, please contact mroberts@oru.edu.

Oral Roberts University

From the Selected Works of Andrea C. Walker, Ph.D.

2015


Violent Loss and Religious Coping: A Multi-Group Path Analysis

Andrea C Walker, Ph.D.

John D. Hathcoat, Ph.D., *James Madison University*



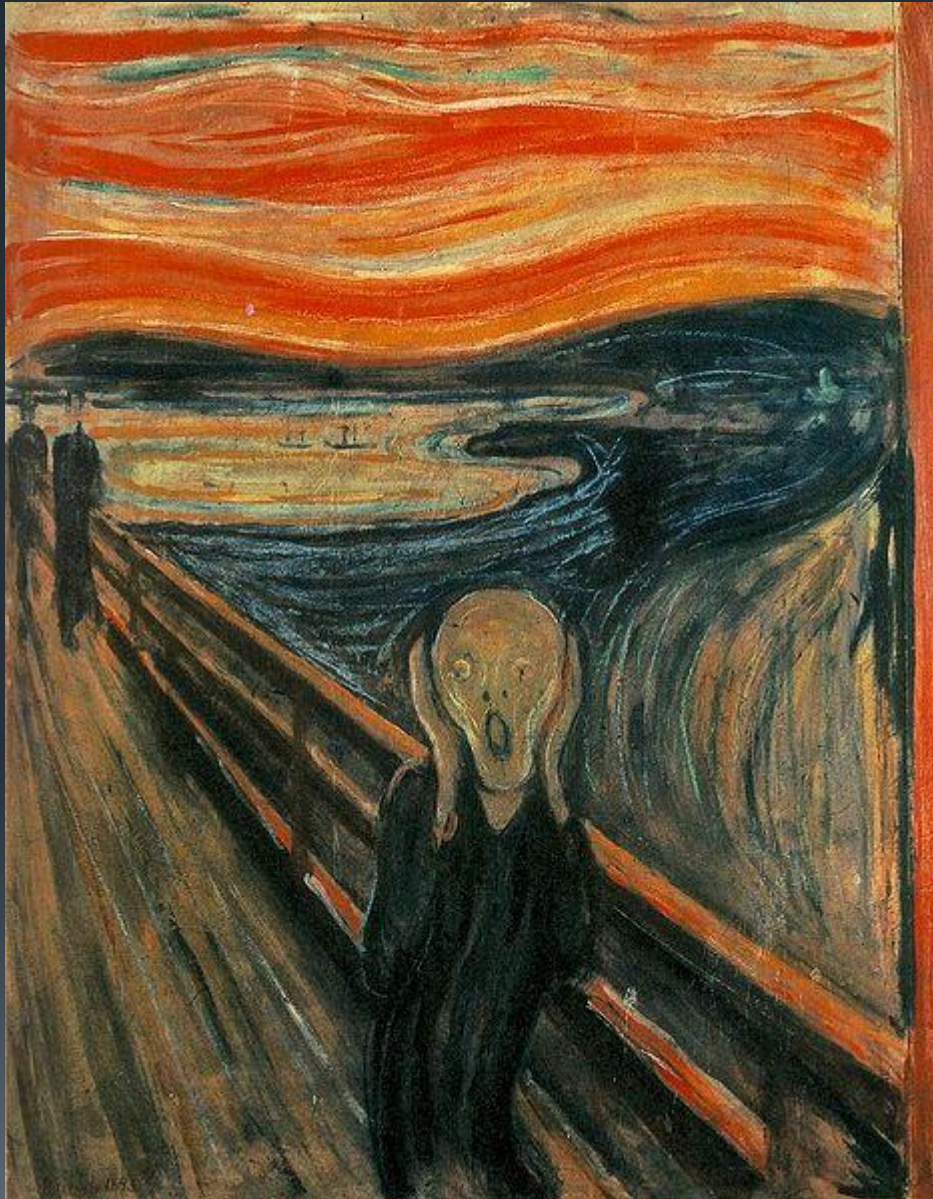
Available at: <https://works.bepress.com/andrea-walker/21/>



Violent Loss and Religious Coping: A Multi- Group Path Analysis

Andrea C. Walker
John D. Hathcoat
Sean A. Harnas

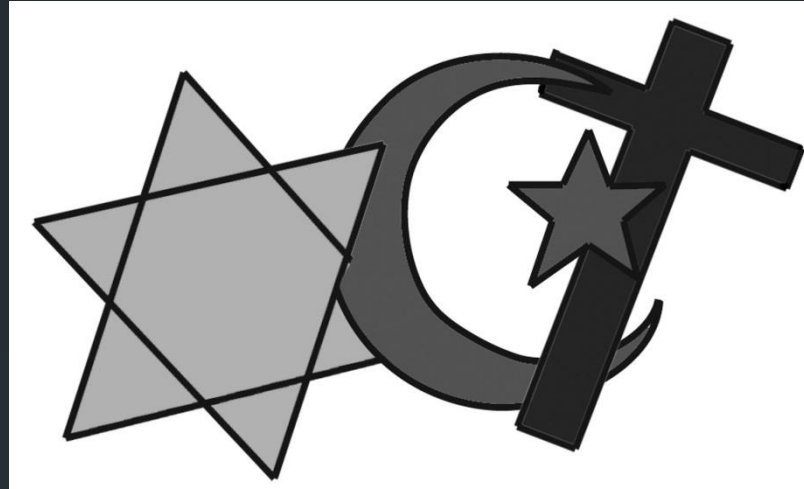
Violent Death Loss



- Greater risk for complicated bereavement (Hardison et al., 2005)
- Bereavement outcomes depend on ability to make meaning of violent event (Currier et al., 2006)
- Ability to make meaning depends on how one copes religiously (Lichtenthal, 2011)
- When religious, survivors have greater PTG (Currier et al., 2013)

(Left) *The Scream*, painted 1893 by Edward Munch

Meaning Making Theory and Religion



- Meaning making theory suggests that resolving religious belief-experience discrepancies impacts subjective sense of global meaning (Park, 2010) through a process of negotiating these dilemmas.
 - *Assimilating* event into existing religious schemas
 - *Accommodating* event by changing existing religious schemas

Religious Coping

- Religious coping is “a specific mode of coping inherently derived from religious beliefs, practices, experiences, emotions, or relationships” (Abu-Raiya & Pargament, 2015, p. 25).
 - Positive: maintains current religious beliefs
 - Negative: results in sense of disconnecting from current religious beliefs



Aim of Study

- Aim: To answer the following questions pertaining to these loss types:
 - (a) violent death loss
 - (b) natural death loss
 - (c) non-death related stressors

- What are the differences in religious development and the presence of meaning in life among loss types?

- How does the predicted effect of positive and negative religious coping on both religious development and the presence of meaning in life differ among loss types?

Methods

- Procedures: Cross-section, web-based, survey design
- Participants:
 - N=785 students self-identified as Christian
 - 65% were female (male = 35%).
 - Approximately 63% were White, about 14% African American, and 8% “other”
 - Three groups based on their responses to bereavement-related loss questions:
 - (a) “violent” ($n = 113$), death losses due to murder, suicide, and accident
 - (b) “non-violent” ($n = 256$), other death losses
 - (c) “non-death” related stressors ($n = 416$), no death losses

Instruments

- Religious Coping: Brief RCOPE (Pargament et al., 2011)
 - Positive coping (Alpha=.91)
 - Negative coping (Alpha=.84)
- Religious Schema Scale (Streib et al., 2010)
 - Truth of texts and teachings (Alpha=.89)
 - Fairness, tolerance, and rational choice (Alpha=.66)
 - Xenosophia (Alpha=.66)
- Faith Maturity Scale (Ji, 2004)
 - Vertical (relationship with God; Alpha=.88)
 - Horizontal (relationship with others; Alpha=.77)
- Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger et al., 2006)
 - Presence (Alpha=.87)



Differences in Religious Variables among Loss Type

- Wilk's lambda was statistically significant $\lambda = .927$, $F(16, 1594) = 3.82$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .037$.
- Non-death related stressor group ($M=18.80$, $SD=5.54$) had on average higher PCOPE scores than the violent and non-violent death groups.
 - Violent ($M=16.68$, $SD=5.89$) ($MD=2.12$, $SE=.59$, $p=.001$)
 - Non-violent ($M=16.50$, $SD=5.89$) ($MD=2.20$, $SE=.44$, $p<.001$)
- Mean differences between the non-violent and violent death groups failed to be statistically significant

Coping and Religious Schemas by Loss Type

- PCOPE and NCOPE had similar predicted effects on religious development for students experiencing non-violent or violent death loss, with the exception of TTT.
- PCOPE predicted higher levels of certainty in TTT for students experiencing violent death ($\beta = .55, p < .001$) than both the natural death ($\beta = .39, p < .001$) and the non-death groups ($\beta = .23, p < .001$).

Coping and Faith Maturity by Loss Type

- Horizontal Maturity (Relationship with others)
 - PCOPE predicted greater increases for the natural and violent death groups ($\beta = .75, p < .001$) than the non-death group ($\beta = .21, p < .001$).
 - NCOPE yielded no differences
- Vertical Maturity (Relationship with God)
 - PCOPE predicted increases for the non-death group ($\beta = .44, p < .001$) yet failed to be a significant predictor for both the natural and violent death groups ($\beta = -.13, p = .06$).
 - NCOPE failed to be a significant predictor for the non-death group ($\beta = -.13, p = .06$) but predicted increases for the natural and violent death groups ($\beta = .11, p = .04$).

Coping and Meaning in Life by Loss Type

- PCOPE (Positive coping)
 - For non-death students, PCOPE predicted increases ($\beta = .21, p < .001$).
 - For both non-violent and violent death groups ($\beta = -.09, p = .02$) PCOPE predicted similar decreases.
- NCOPE (Negative coping)
 - For non-death students, NCOPE predicted decreases ($\beta = -.18, p < .01$)
 - For both non-violent and violent death groups ($\beta = .14, p < .001$), NCOPE predicted similar increases.



Limitations and Directions

- Religion informs meaning through a myriad of factors, such as intrinsic/extrinsic religiosity; more examination of this would be of benefit.
- Study would have benefited from qualitative explanations of participants' subjective experiences of religious development and meanings made.
- Greater diversity of religious backgrounds to compare how coping informs religious development for various groups.

Implications for Violent Loss Survivors

- The power of negative coping!
- “Aha moment”: *Traumatic nature of violent loss may have unique utility in facilitating certain kinds of growth* (corroborated by PTG research (Currier et al., 2013))
- Implications for family therapists

Take Away

*If you are a good man,
Then reject violence.*

*If you are a better man,
Then detest violence.*

*If you are the best man,
Then transform violence
Into the heart of oneness-
love.*

- Sri Chinmoy



References

- Abu-Raiya, H., & Pargament, K. I. (2015). Religious coping among diverse religions: Commonalities and divergences. *Journal of Psychology and Theology, 7*(1), 24-33.
- Currier, J. M., Holland, J. M., & Neimeyer, R. A. (2006). Sense making, grief, and the experience of violent loss: Toward a mediational model. *Death Studies, 30*, 403-428. doi: 10.1080/07481180600614351
- Currier, J. M., Mallot, J., Martinez, T. E., Sandy, C., & Neimeyer, R. A. (2013). Bereavement, Religion, and Posttraumatic Growth: A Matched Control Group Investigation. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, 5*(2), 69-77. doi: 10.1037/a0027708
- Hardison, H. G., Neimeyer, R. A., & Lichstein, K. L. (2005). Insomnia and complicated grief symptoms in bereaved college students. *Behavioral Sleep Medicine, 3*, 99-111.
- Ji, C. C. (2004). Faith maturity and doctrinal orthodoxy: A validation study of the faith maturity scale. *Psychological Reports, 95*, 993-998. <http://www.amsciepub.com/loi/pr0>
- Lichtenthal, W. G., Burke, L. A., & Neimeyer, R. A. (2011). Religious coping and meaning making following the loss of a loved one. *Counseling and Spirituality, 30*(2), 113-135.
- Pargament, K. I., Feuille, M., & Burdzy, D. (2011). The Brief RCOPE: Current psychometric status of a short measure of religious coping. *Religions, 2*, 51-76. doi:10.3390/rel2010051
- Park, C. L. (2010). Making sense of the meaning literature: An integrative review of meaning making and its effects on adjustment to stressful life events. *Psychological Bulletin, 136*(2), 257-301. doi:10.1037/a0018301
- Park, C. L. (2013). Religion and meaning. In C. L. Park (Eds.). *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality, 2nd Ed.* (pp. 357-379). New York, NY: The Guilford Press.
- Steger, M. F., Frazier, P., Oishi, S., & Kaler, M. (2006). The meaning in life questionnaire: Assessing the presence of and search for meaning in life. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 53*(1), 80-93. doi: 2048/10.1037/0022-0167.53.1.80
- Streib, H., Hood, R. W., & Klein, C. (2010). The Religious Schema Scale: Construction and initial validation of a quantitative measure for religious styles. *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 20*, 151-172. doi:10.1080/10508619.2010.481223