The essential cognitive function of memory has also been shown to be influenced by prayer. Fabbro, Munin, Belles, Calacino, and Bava (1999) report that working memory tasks administered while participants prayed resulted in significant reduction of spontaneous, intruding thoughts thereby facilitating memory. Based on evidence from brain scan studies performed during the administration of memory tasks on individuals who practiced prayer and meditation, Newberg and Waldman (2009) found positive and permanent changes in the brain. Another study demonstrated a transformation of personality and increased productivity resultant from the affect of prayer on participants’ memory, imagination, and emotions (Simon, 1984). Given its cognitive influence on memory, the role of prayer warrants further study.

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

The purpose of the current study is to research the hypothesis that better verbal memory, nonverbal memory, and learning will be documented among an experimental group (individuals who report being spiritual) as compared to the control group (individuals who report being non-spiritual). Any positive findings may have implications for a variety of individuals who experience challenges with memory such as our senior population as well as those with differing brain function.

One of the more unique neural processes being recently addressed is the affect of belief and spiritualism—the sense of being connected to something larger than oneself—on the human brain. Substantiation of the influence of the mind on the body is plentiful. Biofeedback, visualization, meditation, and practices such as prayer and control of behavior are used in medical and psychological treatments associated with mind-body healing. A body of studies has identified prayer, specifically, as having a significantly positive influence on memory, and learning will be documented among an experimental group (individuals who report being spiritual) as compared to the control group (individuals who report being non-spiritual). Any positive findings may have implications for a variety of individuals who experience challenges with memory such as our senior population as well as those with differing brain function.

FURTHER STUDY

Once finished with the current study, we hope to follow up by broadening the definition of our participants to include a wider age range, more diverse ethnicities, and individuals with cognitive injuries or disorders. One limitation to our current study is that we do not include participants who claim to be agnostic. Including agnosticism may give us a better understanding of the relationship between spirituality and memory.

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