

Faith in the broadly defined god/gods is a hallmark of our species. In almost every culture, from primitive to more advanced, we can find some form of faith in supernatural being, which according to people's beliefs, influences their lives. According to a Eurobarometer 2010 study conducted by Eurostat, more than half of the citizens of the European Union declare themselves as believing in personal god. The number is even higher (up to 77%) if we take into account faith in supernatural but impersonal force. Given the omnipresence of the religion, it seems crucial to study the nature of this phenomena, as it seems essential factor for understanding human functioning.

One of the area of interest for the psychology of religion is the relationship between faith and risk-taking. Numerous studies proved that reminders of religion decreases the willingness to engage in risky behaviors; yet there is growing body of research indicating, that the opposite may be true. The contradictions described above may result from different images of god, which are present in all major theistic religions. On the one hand, god is seen as a source of love and care (loving god), while on the other hand (s)he is portrayed as a strict judge, who punishes people for sins (just god). In fact there is plenty of empirical evidence showing that these specific beliefs allow to better predict the behavior than general faith. However, this issue has been so far neglected in the area of risk-taking. Therefore the aim of this project is to investigate whether perception of god may alter risk-taking behaviors, as well as to identify the mechanism responsible for these differences. I assume that the image of just god, due to inducing fear of punishment, will decrease risk-taking. On the other hand, the image of loving god should induce the sense of security and control, what in turn will lead to increase risk-taking.

Hypotheses will be tested in ten experiments, using a variety of psychological measures (questionnaires, behavioral measures, experimental manipulations). Planned research will allow to create comprehensive theoretical model of the investigated issue. It will help to understand how faith affects human functioning in the area of risk-taking. Due to the reference to the religion, which is an important social phenomena, obtained results can also find practical applications, for example in developing support programs for addicts.