

A CUCUMBER FOR A COW

Abstract

Drawing from the religious economies approach this paper offers a theory of religious hypocrisy based on the understanding that religion can be defined as the terms of exchange between a rational individual and his/her god(s). It follows that religious hypocrisy is a rational strategy for minimizing one's costs and maximizing one's rewards by cheating on his/her end of the exchange relationship i.e. cheating on his/her religious commitments. We argue that there are two main types of religious hypocrisy: subjective and objective. Subjective hypocrisy is cheating on subjective religious commitments (beliefs and emotions) in order to gain social rewards; whereas, objective hypocrisy is cheating on objective religious commitments (religious and moral behavioral requirements) in order to gain otherworldly rewards. We specify three types of social conditions that will lead to subjective religious hypocrisy, as well as argue that there are two different types of objective hypocrisy: acts of omission and acts of commission. We then hypothesize that these two types of objective hypocrisy will be more or less prevalent depending on the level of strictness of religious groups, and discuss the nonobvious implication that strictness poses a danger for the long-term vitality of religious groups. We test one hypothesis using data from the 1998 GSS, and find that strict congregations have higher rates of objective hypocrisy.

Introduction

Twenty-two years ago in the 1986 H. Paul Douglass Lecture, David Moberg issued a call to social scientists to focus their efforts on an often overlooked but critically important condition that affects the church as a social institution – hypocrisy. He was surprised by the lack of serious effort in both theoretical and applied religious research to understand the social dynamics, the causes and consequences, of a topic that is a perennial concern to religions themselves. Unfortunately this call to constructive study and action went largely unheeded and today, as then, the social scientific study of religious hypocrisy amounts to a “few scattered and casual references” (Moberg 1987, p.3). This paper offers the beginnings a theory of hypocrisy, its causes and consequences, rooted in the religious economies approach to the social scientific study of religion.

The micro foundations of the religious economies approach to religion are built on a thick version of rational choice theory. The assumption is that people make religious choices in the same way that they make other choices, by weighing the costs and benefits. Thus religious people are rational people who “within the limits of their information and understanding, restricted by available options, guided by their preferences and tastes” (Stark 1999, p 266) attempt to maximize. Given this people seek to gain certain otherwise unavailable rewards, or otherworldly rewards, from their god(s). To do this they will enter into an exchange relationship. In fact, religion, arguably, “consists of very general explanations that justify and specify the terms of exchange with a god or gods” (Stark 1999, p 270). Simply, the terms of exchange determine the costs of the otherworldly rewards and these can range from simple belief to extreme personal and financial sacrifice. Thus the important question becomes - what do the gods want?

The answer this questions depends on a number of factors such as the number of gods worshiped by a group, the dependability of the god(s), how benign the god(s) are, the responsiveness of the god(s) to humans and their problems, and the scope of the god(s) power (Stark 1999). The greater the number of gods worshipped the lower the costs of exchange due to competition, whereas people will be more willing to pay higher prices to gods that are dependable, benign, responsive to humans, and have a greater scope. Given these conditions not only are people more willing to pay higher prices, they are also willing to enter into extended and exclusive exchange relationships, in which they make periodic payments over a great length of time (Iannaccone 1995, Stark 1999).

However, because religious people are rational, then it also follows that they will seek to maximize their payoffs by minimizing their religious costs as well as delaying their payments (Stark 1999). Anthropologists have often noted an endless haggling process in these exchange relationships that clearly demonstrate human self-interest. Our favorite example is provided by Evans-Pritchard (1956, referenced in Stark 1999, p 278): Among the Nuer a ritual may require a number of oxen, however usually they sacrifice fewer oxen than required and often they sacrifice none; sometimes substituting instead a wild cucumber that is treated as though it were a live animal. It is presented and consecrated and then “slain by the spear, being cut in half along its edge”. As Firth (1963) pointed out, “substituting a cucumber for a cow, ‘is a most economical way of meeting one’s ritual obligations’” (quoted in Stark 1999, p 278).

The degree to which people promptly meet the terms of exchange with their god(s) is religious commitment. There are two types of commitment: subjective and objective. Subjective commitment involves “belief in the explanations sustained by a religious organization and having the appropriate emotions” (Stark 1999, p 280). Objective commitment involves aligning

behavior with these explanations. This behavior includes religious participation and practice, material offerings and sacrifice, and conformity to rules of conduct (Stark 1999). Thus subjective commitment has to do with the proper beliefs and emotions, while objective commitment has to do with proper behavior.

Hypocrisy then can be understood as a rational strategy through which religious people seek to minimize and/or delay the costs of the exchange relationship with their god(s) while still getting access to the religious rewards. Often this occurs in the space between subjective and objective religious commitment. When it is otherworldly rewards that people are seeking through their religious involvement then most likely people will be subjectively committed but attempt to cheat on their objective commitments. The opposite is most likely true when people are involved in religious activity in an effort to obtain social rewards and incentives in this world, this will be discussed in more detail below.

Objective Hypocrisy

It makes sense that if people are involved in an exchange relationship with a god or gods in order to receive otherworldly rewards then they believe in the explanations offered in the terms of exchange i.e. the religion. But they may not be willing to pay the behavioral costs. They may try to minimize the amount of participation, level of material sacrifice, or to deviate from the rules of conduct. The latter is what is most often understood as hypocrisy, what we are calling objective hypocrisy because it has to do with behavior. Objective hypocrisy is believing and participating but acting morally in a manner inconsistent with the religion's ethical/moral guidelines. It is an individual's effort to cheat on their objective commitments. Objective hypocrisy is one way to reduce the costs of the exchange with the god(s), since most religions

make behavioral demands on the believer and often these demands are very costly, costly in terms of time, forgone opportunities, and the sacrifice of immediate rewards. A rational individual will try to minimize these costs while also trying to ensure the otherworldly long-term rewards. There are two distinct types of objective hypocrisy: acts of commission and acts of omission.

Acts of commission occur when an individual chooses to act in direct violation of the dictates of their beliefs. The rewards of behaving deviantly outweigh the rewards of inaction, under the condition that the costs of discovery can be controlled. This type of activity should be especially prevalent among religious groups that have extensive behavioral expectation i.e. stricter religious groups, because they place limits on a broader range of human behavior than other groups. This form of hypocrisy visually divides the actions of an individual from their stated beliefs, creating a separation that can often be witnessed by others. For the rational maximizing individual, the visibility of hypocrisy reduces its rewards for fear of sanctions. Since a discrepancy between subjective beliefs and objective behavior is a costly reality in most religious groups, the actor often seeks secrecy to veil the deviant behavior from others. Acts of commission are often performed in social networks outside of their religious group or in environments of seclusion, to reduce the risks of being discovered as a fraudulent religious person. This may cause added stress for the actor as she must balance and manage these conflicting social networks. Despite the pressure created, the rewards of this network management can be substantial, creating a profitable situation for the actor, as she intentionally navigates between social networks and belief structures.

Acts of omission occur when an individual chooses to not act, to intentionally abstain from performing actions that are dictated by their own beliefs. If acts of commission can be

understood as a person acting against the moral strictures of their religion, then acts of omission can be understood as a person abstaining from certain actions that are demanded by their religion. This form of hypocrisy is rooted in a basic dichotomy that allows the actor to separate their subjective beliefs from their objective behavior. As a result of this separation, a person can become educated in the appropriate and expected beliefs of their religious group while continuing to behave in a way that is contrary to that enlightenment. This type of inaction is most likely to occur in religious groups that expect their members to act socially above and beyond their daily normal activities; groups that expect their members to be involved socially i.e. liberal religious groups. To reduce the tension created by acts of omission, justification and explanations are formed to provide an acceptable excuse for why the behavior was never integrated into the person's life. This may be because the behaviors are too costly in time or resources, a disagreement in the particulars of a mandated theology, a lack of venue or information for the behavior to occur within, or a reliance on the other members of the religious group to fulfill the responsibility that is being avoided. They also demonstrate the lack of value placed upon the behavior, which may have a corrosive effect on the perceived value of the religion by outsiders.

Subjective Hypocrisy

Religious hypocrisy, as we are defining it, is not limited to moral actions or lifestyles that are in contrast to an individual's religious beliefs. It can go the other way as well: individuals may act religious even though they do not actually believe. Subjective hypocrisy is similar to the idea of preference falsification where an individual misrepresents his/her wants in response to a perceived social pressure (Kuran 1995). An easy way to characterize this is to say that an

individual is “living a lie” (Kuran 1995, p. 4); an extreme form of this is religious dissimulation in which individuals, in response to political pressure and persecution, pretend to practice the dominant religion even though they secretly have dissident religious beliefs. This type of religious hypocrisy is most likely to occur as a result of social influences or perceived pressure. Social religious choices can be designated to various categories depending upon the type of motivation that was employed while making the decision. The three distinct social influences on religious choice are: sympathy, example setting; and social sanctions (Sherkat 1997). Due to the social influence that these choices are marked with tension can arise between a consumer’s claimed beliefs and the acceptable social choices that they may feel pressured into.

The first category is choices influenced by sympathy, which are made with a desire to elicit an emotional response from another or are made because of the impact their choice may have on another's satisfaction (Sherkat 1997). In a case of sympathy motivated action a person may make a religious decision to make another happy, in a possible effort to please a parent, or to maintain the cohesion of a tenuous religious group. The desire to appease another is a rational motivation for a making a decision but it can also lead to tension if the beliefs or behaviors of two groups of people diverge in differing directions. Thus a rational individual may choose to be subjectively hypocritical, i.e. belonging to a religious group whose belief they do not actually share, if the impact of their decision outweighs the other option significantly in their cost-benefit analysis. In the case of children and their parents, there can be an increasing separation between the belief systems of the two generation over time, leading to decisions that are made with the intent of peacekeeping rather than religious conviction, silently corroding the religious foundation proposed by the parent.

In the category of example setting, a person performs behaviors in an effort to show others a particular image of themselves or to provide a prototype for others to follow (Sherkat 1997). Similar to choices made from sympathy this category of situations in which subjective hypocrisy is likely to occur result from the nature of the social network in which the individual is embedded. This form of religious decision is performed in an effort to demonstrate appropriate behavior to others but can coexist with religious convictions that deviate from the behavior being advocated. This type of hypocrisy is often viewed as having an altruistic foundation, granting it acceptance in a social network as a justifiable means to the beneficial end. The commonly employed example is that of unbelieving parents joining a religious group in order to provide moral instruction and set a good example for their children. While this form of hypocrisy may be more socially acceptable, the lasting effects of its employment can be substantial. The tongue-in-cheek salesmanship of the religious authority and leadership can turn the victims of intentional hypocrites away from the hollow representation of religion that they have experienced through the perpetrator's example. If the religion is then viewed as an encyclopedia of exemplarily behavior, it will lack the belief structure to support its continuance to other people and subsequent generations.

The final category of social influence is based upon incentives or social sanctions, employed in a social network's effort to curb the way individuals make religious decisions (Sherkat 1997). Shaping religious decision through provision of incentives transforms the decision from being based upon religious convictions to a rawer, cost-benefit analysis. Since the primary motivation for this form of decision-making is external to the consumer, it has likely to create situations where hypocritical decisions are employed to reap the greatest reward, regardless of religious conviction. These incentives remove the volunteerism from religious

choice, making them a calculated science rather than authentic, faith-based expression. This is especially the case in situations in which access to social goods is not available elsewhere and where they are attached to the religious group. When this conflation of goods occurs there is a high likelihood that individuals will be subjectively hypocritical in order to get access to the otherwise scarce goods. Examples of this conflation of social goods or incentives and religious groups have been noted to occur in groups that are socially marginalized such as in the African-American church where the church serves a multifunctional role (Ellison and Sherkat 1995). In this case the church serves as a place to find an eligible mate, a place to be someone, a place to find financial assistance, and a place to organize politically. The overlapping of the religious and political organization can also explain the success of the Polish Catholic Church before the collapse of the communist government (Froese and Pfaff 2001). The conflation of social incentives and religious goods may also help to explain the existence of the near religious monopoly maintained by the Mormons in Utah, Muslims in Iran, and Catholics in Ireland (Sherkat 1997). Thus, the existence of social incentives can lead to a rational individual acting subjectively hypocritical in order to gain access to non-religious, this-worldly incentives.

Strictness

Religious hypocrisy is a rational strategy for individuals to maximize their benefits and minimize their costs. This can be in both a subjective sense in which religious dissimulation occurs in order to gain access to social rewards and in an objective sense where the individual is an active believing partner in an exchange relationship trying to minimize the costs they pay for the otherworldly rewards. Thus religious hypocrisy can be understood as a micro-level phenomenon; however this is not to say that context and social structure do not matter. In fact

social structure, namely social networks and the social arrangement of rewards, drives subjective hypocrisy because it is through belonging to a particular religious group that an individual can gain access to these rewards, be they pleasing or even finding an employer, making a spouse or parent happy, or finding a suitable mate. This is true for objective hypocrisy as well, but in a different way. The nature of the religious group, namely its strictness, shapes the type and prevalence of objective hypocrisy.

Religious groups vary in the degree of tension with their surroundings. High-tension groups demand more from their members. They are costlier and stricter: requiring more exclusive, expensive, and extensive commitments from their members than low-tension groups (Stark 2000). These stricter, or more conservative, groups demand more in terms of cost from the individual members. These demands are more pervasive, encompassing a greater degree of the behaviors and time of the religious individuals. This creates a situation in which a rational actor is more likely to cheat on their end of the exchange relationship, since the demands are so numerous and so consuming. Thus we expect conservative religious groups to have a greater amount of objective hypocrisy through acts of commission.

Low-tension, or liberal, religious groups tend to demand less in terms of behavior and time although they often tend to emphasize the importance of activity and involvement in social justice causes as an essential component of a vital faith (Wellman 2008). But these activities are costly in terms of time, commitment, energy, money, emotional investment, and forgone opportunities. Therefore we would expect to see a greater amount of objective hypocrisy through acts of omission in liberal religious groups. Individuals will seek to gain access to the otherworldly rewards but find the costs of actively working for social justice to be too high. If the majority of the religious group regards certain altruistic behaviors as too costly, the sanctions

concerning the behaviors may loosen, causing them to be reclassified as optional behavior or token examples of religious excellence, no longer imperative within the mandated religious duty.

The Cost of Strictness

Exchanges with god(s) are plagued by the fact that the rewards are intangible. That is individuals who enter into this exchange have to pay long-term costs in the present with hopes of an otherworldly payoff. For those who believe this leads to two related problems; the first concerning value and the second with confidence. First, how do you assess the value of otherworldly goods and therefore how much you are willing to ‘pay’ - in terms of time, commitments, beliefs, religious activities, and following a moral code – for those goods? Secondly, how can you know, with some degree of confidence, that your god exists and that the terms of exchange will be honored in the afterlife?

Religion has been referred to as the ultimate ‘credence’ good since “no amount of experience suffices fully to evaluate most religious claims” (Iannaccone 1995, p.286), and therefore there are a number of assurances that people seek in order to minimize this risk. These range from the presence of miracles and mystical experience, to participation in ritual services and personal prayer, to the expression of confidence of other individuals who have entered into an exchange with the same god (Stark 1999). Thus the testimony and experiences of others become important for the maintenance of one’s own belief. Testimonials from people one knows are more valuable than testimonials from strangers, and testimonials from people with nothing to gain are stronger than those with some vested interest in the success of the religion (Iannaccone 1995). Thus the testimony and lived experience of other congregational members carries more weight than that of the paid clergy and that of unattached outsiders.

Relying on the testimony and experience of fellow members is also one of the easiest ways to assess the value of the otherworldly rewards and, subsequently, the appropriate costs that an individual should pay in exchange (Iannaccone 1995). What others are paying for these otherworldly goods and their confidence that their payments are worthwhile serves as a baseline in determining the value of the otherworldly goods for the skeptical. Thus the testimony and lived experience of other congregants serves to mitigate the two confidence problems inherent in religious exchanges (Iannaccone 1995).

It is here that hypocrisy, especially when individuals cheat on their objective commitments, can be damaging to the vitality of religious group because it undermines other people's confidence in their own exchange relationships with the same god(s). When hypocrisy is noticed or is uncovered in a scandal it demonstrates that the person who was cheating on their commitment was not willing to pay the costs they said they were paying. Their non-conformity to the groups' behavioral norms signals to the others that they did not value the goods nearly as much as they claimed. This then undermines everyone else's confidence because they relied on others to both assure themselves that the exchange will happen and to determine how much they should pay for the goods. Thus hypocrisy can devalue the otherworldly goods and lead to doubt and insecurity in the religious goods being offered. This can result ultimately in individuals exiting the religious group, denomination, religion, or even the religious economy in general.

Hypocrisy from the religious leadership or elder generation in a religious group can undermine the credence of the religion for the subsequent generation of believers. This claim is supported by research performed by the Barna Research Group highlighting the reaction of individuals between the ages of 23 and 41 to their experiences with Christianity. "Eighty-five percent of young outsiders have had sufficient exposure to Christians and church that they

conclude present-day Christianity is hypocritical" (Kinnaman & Lyons 2007, p.42). Within the churching cohort of this generation, "47% agreed that Christianity is hypocritical" (Kinnaman & Lyons 2007). It can be hypothesized that one of the reasons that this generation is statistically the least likely to attend a religious institution or adhere to religious beliefs is because of this perceived hypocrisy. The members of this group "are among the least likely to attend church regularly: 32% attend at least once a week compared with 40% of those over age 25, and 16% say they never attend (compared with 12% among the older age groups)" (Pew Research Group 2007, pg. 25). This distinct shift in the church attendance of young people may be partially explained by the fact that they do not have vested interest in attending religious meetings for the sake of their children (Sherkat and Wilson 1995). However, it may also point to a more rudimentary cause, demonstrating that the shaping forces of hypocrisy and the increasing intolerance of its presence are altering the landscape of religious involvement.

A Theory of Hypocrisy, Summarized

The core theoretical argument of this paper is that because religion can be understood as the terms of exchange between a rational individual and his/her god(s), then it follows that religious hypocrisy is a rational strategy for minimizing one's costs and maximizing one's rewards. This occurs because in return for access to otherworldly rewards the god(s) demand religious commitments from the individual. These commitments are both subjective (belief and emotion) and objective (religious and moral behavior), and it is in these two areas that individuals can cheat on their end of the exchange. We theorize that individuals will engage in subjective hypocrisy, i.e. belonging without believing, if they are seeking social incentives through religious participation. Whereas we propose that individuals will engage in objective

hypocrisy when they are seeking otherworldly rewards but find the behavioral costs too high for their liking. We specify that there are two types of objective hypocrisy, acts of commission and acts of omission, and that the prevalence of these types depends in a large part on the level of strictness of the religious group.

Stricter, conservative churches will lead to a greater amount of acts of commission, whereas less strict, liberal churches will lead to a greater amount of acts of omission. This variation is a result of the difference of in the terms of exchange specified by the god(s) of the groups. Liberal churches demand less morally and religiously but seek to compel members to act socially on behalf of social justice and thereby create situations in which rational individuals are likely to cheat by abstaining from costly social involvement. Strict churches will demand extensive and expensive commitments from their members creating incentives for individuals to cheat on their extensive moral living requirements. This leads to an interesting dilemma for strict churches. On one hand strict churches are strong (Iannaccone 1992, 1994), but they also contain the seeds of their own destruction. This is because religion is a credence good whose value is assessed in a large part by the witness of others and the costs that they are willing to pay for the goods. Stricter churches, we predict, will have a greater occurrence of objective hypocrisy, which when uncovered may undermine the value of the religious good and lead to long-term negative effects for the vitality of the congregation.

To begin testing this theory of hypocrisy we have derived one testable hypothesis from our model. For the purposes of this paper we are focusing only on objective hypocrisy and more specifically only on acts of commission. Our hypothesis is that: *Stricter religious groups will have higher rates of acts of commission than other groups.*

Methods and Results

To test our hypothesis concerning acts of commission we used data from the 1998 General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS is the biennial questionnaire conducted by the National Opinion research Center at the University of Chicago as part of a program of social indicator research designed to facilitate time-trend studies. The GSS is a full probability sampling of all 18 years or older, non-institutionalized, English-speaking individuals residing in the US; collected through personal interviews. The 1998 GSS included special modules on religion, culture, medicine, jobs, interracial friendships, national security, and social security. While somewhat dated, the 1998 GSS is the best existing dataset to test our theory of hypocrisy because of the special religion module. It contains data on religious affiliation, beliefs, and some self-reported behavioral measures, and is publicly available from multiple locations including The Association of Religion Data Archive (www.thearda.com).

For both components of objective hypocrisy, acts of commission and acts of omission, we use the FUND variable in the 1998 GSS as the independent variable. The FUND variable is a classification created by T. Smith (1990) to separate denominations into a three part ordinal scale – Fundamentalist, Moderate, and Liberal – for easier statistical analysis. This classification is included in the 1998 GSS dataset. Recently the FUND variable has been found to be an inadequate measure of evangelicalism (Hackett & Lindsay 2008), however we are using FUND here as a measure of degree of strictness and some of our baseline findings demonstrate the validity of this measure.

To locate hypocrisy we focused on variables for which there was both a measure of opinion or belief as well as a measure of behavior. For each of these measures we ran an ANOVA using FUND as the factor in effort to locate whether there was a significant difference

between beliefs and actions across the categories of strictness. We ran two baseline tests on measures of religiosity in order to test the validity of the FUND variable. These two measures were PRAY (how often the respondent prayed) and ATTEND (frequency of regular religious service attendance). The results of both of these tests indicated a significant difference between the means of each category in the direction expected based on existing research. Fundamentalists had significantly higher levels of prayer [$F(2, 1188) = 80.435, p < .001$] and attendance [$F(2, 2450) = 142.57, p < .001$] than Moderates, who had significantly higher levels of both than Liberals¹. This fits with the existing research on levels of participation and strictness (Kelley 1972; Iannaccone 1992, 1994; Perl & Olson 2000; Stark 2000; Olson & Perl 2005), and provides validation for FUND as a good measure of degree of strictness.

Acts of Commission

To test our hypothesis, *that stricter religious groups will have higher rates of acts of commission than other groups*, we identified two measures of moral belief and two measures of corresponding behavior. The first measure was belief in the morality of extramarital sex followed by whether or not the respondent had ever strayed, and the second measure was opinion on laws regulating pornography followed by whether or not they had viewed an X-rated movie in the past year. For both measures we selected only the cases that had a measure on the FUND variables as well as responses for both the belief and the behavior variables.

Extramarital Sex

There were two questions in the 1998 GSS on the morality of extramarital sex. Both questions were not asked in all versions of the questionnaire. Some respondents had only scores

for one of the questions and some had scores for neither or both. The two questions were worded slightly different but had the same response scores:

- 1) Always Wrong
- 2) Almost Always Wrong
- 3) Sometimes Wrong
- 4) Not At All Wrong

Responses for both variables were combined into one score. The bulk of the cases that had responses to both questions had the same answer for both. However some cases had two different answers, in all there were 26 cases in which we chose to keep the more conservative of two different answers. The 1998 GSS asked the respondents if they “Have you ever had sex with someone other than your husband or wife while you were married?” We used the responses to this question as a measure of behavior of extramarital sex.

For both variables we used a one-way ANOVA to test for a difference in means. The F for the ANOVA using the ever-stray behavior variable was not significant [$F(2, 1389) = .759, p = .468$]. However the Levene statistic for the belief variable indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variance had been violated. So we reran the one-way ANOVA using both the Brown-Forsythe [$F(2, 1131.4) = 13.765, p < .001$] and Welch [$F(2, 849.5) = 13.487, p < .001$] tests. These tests both indicated that the asymptotic F for the ANOVA using the belief variable was significant so we followed up with a Games-Howell post hoc test to identify where the significant differences are between the categories of fundamentalism. We used the Games-Howell test because it does not require homogeneity of variance or size. The results of this test can be seen in Table 1.

To further get a sense of the variation of response we ran a Chi-Square test between Fundamentalism and beliefs about the morality of extramarital sex. The cross-tab results can be seen in Table 2. The Chi-Square (df=6) was 30.129 significant at $p < .001$, with a Spearman Correlation of .144, also significant at $p < .001$.

Table 1: ANOVA Post Hoc Test Results for Beliefs About the Morality of Extramarital Sex

Fundamentalism/Liberalism Of Respondent's Religion	Other Categories of Fundamentalism/Liberalism	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Fundamentalist	Moderate	-.09051*	.03563	.030
	Liberal	-.22553***	.04389	.000
Moderate	Fundamentalist	.09051*	.03563	.030
	Liberal	-.13502**	.04568	.009
Liberal	Fundamentalist	.22553***	.04389	.000
	Moderate	.13502**	.04568	.009

* Mean difference is significant at the .05 level **Mean difference is significant at the .01 level ***Mean difference significant at the .001 level

Table 2: Chi-Square Cross Tabulation Results for Beliefs About the Morality of Extramarital Sex

Fundamentalism/Liberalism Of Respondent's Religion		Always Wrong	Almost Always	Sometimes Wrong	Not At All Wrong	Total
Fundamentalist	Count	394	39	15	3	451
	Expected	364.8	55.5	24.8	5.9	451
Moderate	Count	422	66	25	7	520
	Expected	420.6	64	28.6	6.9	520
Liberal	Count	288	63	35	8	394
	Expected	318.7	48.5	21.6	5.2	394
Total	Count	1104	168	75	18	1365
	Expected	1104	168	75	18	1365

Pornography

To get a measure of the beliefs of morality concerning pornography we used the responses to the question concerning laws regulating the distribution of pornography. The responses to this question were as follow.

- 1) There should be laws against the distribution of pornography whatever the age
- 2) There should be laws against the distribution of pornography to persons under 18
- 3) There should be no laws forbidding the distribution of pornography

We argue that the first choice, favoring laws against the distribution of all pornography, indicate the presence of a belief about the morality or immorality of pornography. This then is our belief measure. For the behavior measure we look at the responses to the question of “Have you seen an x-rated movie in the last year?”

To test this we ran the same tests as we did for the extramarital sex variables, with very similar results. For both variables we used a one-way ANOVA to test for a difference in means. However, as before, the Levene statistic for the belief variable indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variance had been violated. So we reran the one-way ANOVA using both the Brown-Forsythe [$F(2, 1689.8) = 25.311, p < .001$] and Welch [$F(2, 1125.7) = 25.156, p < .001$] tests. These tests both indicated that the asymptotic F for the ANOVA using the belief variable was significant so we followed up with a Games-Howell post hoc test to identify where the significant were between the categories of fundamentalism. We used the Games-Howell test because it does not require homogeneity of variance or size. The results of this test can be seen in Table 3.

Again, to get a further sense of the variation of response a Chi-Square test was employed between Fundamentalism and beliefs about the regulation of pornography. The Chi-Square

(df=4) was 51.765 significant at $p < .001$, with a Spearman Correlation of .164, also significant at $p < .001$. The cross-tab results can be seen in Table 4.

Table 3: ANOVA Post Hoc Test Results for Beliefs About Pornography Regulation

Fundamentalism/Liberalism Of Respondent's Religion	Other Categories of Fundamentalism/Liberalism	Mean Difference	Std. Error	Sig.
Fundamentalist	Moderate	-.171***	.032	.000
	Liberal	-.225***	.033	.000
Moderate	Fundamentalist	.171***	.032	.000
	Liberal	-.054	.032	.203
Liberal	Fundamentalist	.225***	.033	.000
	Moderate	.13502***	.032	.203

***The mean difference is significant at the .001 level

Table 4: Chi-Square Cross Tabulation Results for Beliefs About Pornography Regulation

Fundamentalism/Liberalism Of Respondent's Religion		YES: ALL	YES:<18	NO LAWS	Total
Fundamentalist	Count	275	257	14	546
	Expected	209.7	314.9	21.4	546
Moderate	Count	233	406	28	667
	Expected	256.2	384.7	26.2	667
Liberal	Count	158	337	26	521
	Expected	200.1	300.5	20.4	521
Total	Count	666	1000	68	1734
	Expected	666	1000	68	1734

For the behavior measure, XMOVIE, the resulting F statistic was insignificant [$F(2, 1731) = 2.225, p = .108$]. However the assumption of homogeneity of variances was also violated so the Welch and Brown-Forsythe tests were run for this variable as well. Both tests confirmed that the F was not significant.

Analysis

The ANOVA results for the looking at whether or not the respondent had ever had extramarital sex suggest that there is no significant variation in behavior across the categories of religious fundamentalism/liberalism. There is however a significant difference between the mean differences for belief in the morality/permissibility of extramarital sex. Fundamentalists are significantly more likely than both Moderates and Liberals to believe that extramarital sex is wrong, and Moderates are more likely to believe this than Liberals. Looking at the Chi-Square Cross-Tabulation results it becomes apparent that respondents in the Fundamentalist category viewed extramarital sex as always wrong more often than expected, and correspondingly the respondents in the Liberal category more often than expected viewed extramarital sex as only sometimes wrong or not at all wrong.

These findings provide evidence for our hypothesis that stricter religions have a greater amount of objective hypocrisy, specifically sins of commission. In the case of extramarital sex, individuals belonging to stricter religious groups are significantly more likely to believe that extramarital sex is always wrong. This is an example of the extensive moral and behavioral obligations that are inherent in strict religious groups. However, being rational, the individuals in these stricter groups attempt to cheat on their commitments in an effort to maximize their religious/otherworldly rewards while minimizing their behavioral costs in the here and now. This

is evidenced by the fact that there is no significant difference between the respondents in strict religious groups in terms of actual behavior – they are just as likely to have had extramarital sex as respondents in more permissive religious groups.

The findings from the pornography variables also lend support for the hypothesis that there will be a greater level of sins of commission among stricter churches. Again the analysis of whether or not the respondent had seen an x-rated movie in the past year reveal no significant differences in behavior across the levels of fundamentalism/liberalism. However the ANOVA results for belief about pornography regulation indicate significant differences between the Fundamentalist category and the Moderate and Liberal categories. The mean difference between the Moderate and Liberal categories moves in the hypothesized direction but is not significant. The Chi-Square Cross Tabulation again reveal where these differences are located. Fundamentalist respondents said that pornography should be banned more frequently than expected and were less likely to support no laws than expected. The opposite is true of Liberal respondents – they were more likely than expected to support no laws and less likely than expected to favor regulations against pornography for all. Thus Fundamentalists have more extensive moral commitments i.e. they are more likely to view pornography as always morally objectionable, but they are just as likely to actually view pornography.

These results indicate that there is a greater amount of hypocrisy, specifically sins of commission, among stricter religious groups. Respondents in these groups evidence more extensive moral commitments as a result of their participation in stricter religious groups i.e. they are significantly more likely to hold beliefs that extramarital sex and pornography are morally objectionable. However their behavior is not significantly different than respondents in less strict religious groups suggesting a greater level of cheating on religious commitments.

Discussion

The findings in this paper offer initial support for our theory of hypocrisy and allow us to begin to give a response to Moberg's call to understand the causes and consequences of religious hypocrisy. We find the support of the hypothesis concerning strictness and sins of commission encouraging and think that this opens the door for future research into religious hypocrisy, especially for research into acts of omissions, subjective hypocrisy, the relationship between strictness levels and hypocrisy and the consequence of hypocrisy for congregations.

Additionally, the non-obvious conclusion that strictness may be detrimental to the long-term vitality of a congregation offer an interesting counterpoint to the understanding and discussion of strictness in the social scientific study of religion literature. It is probable that strictness is impregnated with a hidden cost for the congregation, having implications for what is considered a healthy congregation. Although the levels of deviant behavior remaining consistent over the range of strictness, the levels of hypocrisy do not, exposing the strict cohort as a more likely perpetrator. This hypocrisy in the Christian church is recognized by young, non-religious outsiders but has become normalized in the cultural context of maximizing and image preservation (Barna). Although the hypocrisy has been reclassified by many youth as a tool for self-advancement by churches, it can still be cancerous to a religion's claims at being a counter-cultural movement, degrading a religious group's distinctives to empty, meaningless mandates.

Furthermore, hypocrisy among religious leaders may be extremely detrimental to congregational health for the same reasons - a clergy's act of hypocrisy may lead to a rapid devaluation of the religious goods among those who belong to that religious group. Part of a participant's level of confidence in a religious group is measured socially, dependent upon the involvement of others to reassure that the religious good being offered is worthy of their

investment. If a leader displays blatant disregard for the institution there may be greater consequences to the religious group, since the leader's stake in the group is higher than any of the participants to whom they are catering. Regardless of what level hypocrisy occurs at in a religious group, its presence is detrimental and corrosive to the legitimacy of the institution, and perhaps ultimately to the religion itself. This offers what is possibly a supply-side explanation for what some have labeled as secularization and therefore does not indicate deep changes in demand but a shift in the supply of quality, trustworthy religious goods.

This destructive seed of hypocrisy may play a part in explaining the shift of church participation, changes in the spiritual demands of consumers, and a trend of increasing disaffiliation among believers (The Pew Report). With hypocrisy undermining the religious goods being offered, the possibility arises that the cause of disaffiliation and speculations of secularization are due, in part, to a disbelief in the quality of the goods. If the supply of goods has been altered there may be disconnect between the commodities being offered and the desires of the religious consumers. Although the reasoning behind hypocritical behavior is rooted in rationality, the consequences of its presence in religious institutions are costly to the group's reputation of being a morally guided institution in our society.

Through our research we have found indications of a silent gap between religious belief and behavior. This has important implications for the broader social scientific study of religion, especially studies that seek to link religion and belief to behavior – be it political, social, economic, or altruistic. At the very least, our findings suggest a cautious hand in assigning or assuming a one-to-one relationship between religious belief and their corresponding behavioral outcomes. Let us not depend upon an over-socialized view of religious individuals who presumably act solely as a result of belief motivation or religious mandates. While these are

important for understanding the impact of religion on behavior, they must be tempered with an understanding of agency and interests.

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¹ ANOVA Post Hoc Test Results for Frequency of Prayer

Fundamentalism/Liberalism Of Respondent's Religion	Other Categories of Fundamentalism/Liberalism	Mean Difference	Std. Error
Fundamentalist	Moderate	-.515***	.091
	Liberal	-1.36***	.111
Moderate	Fundamentalist	.515***	.091
	Liberal	-.845***	.110
Liberal	Fundamentalist	1.36***	.111
	Moderate	.845***	.110

***The mean difference is significant at the .001 level

ANOVA Post Hoc Test Results for Attendance

Fundamentalism/Liberalism Of Respondent's Religion	Other Categories of Fundamentalism/Liberalism	Mean Difference	Std. Error
Fundamentalist	Moderate	.731***	.127
	Liberal	2.197***	.134
Moderate	Fundamentalist	-.731***	.127
	Liberal	1.466***	.122
Liberal	Fundamentalist	-2.197***	.134
	Moderate	-1.466***	.122

***The mean difference is significant at the .001 level