

A CUCUMBER FOR A COW: A THEORETICAL EXPLORATION OF THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF RELIGIOUS HYPOCRISY

Jason Wollschleger

Lindsey Beach

ABSTRACT

This paper offers a first step in a theory of religious hypocrisy. Religious hypocrisy is shown to be a rational strategy at the individual level through which the individual maximizes his/her religious gain by accessing religious rewards and minimizing the costs through selective non-compliance to the religion's objective commitments. The pervasiveness of religious hypocrisy is argued to be a result of group level characteristics, namely the extensiveness of the religious group's objective commitments. The level of objective hypocrisy can be moderated through variation in the members' dependence on the group and the group's capacity to control its members. Religious hypocrisy is a maximizing behavior, however it is not costless and it can lead to the experience of moral dissonance. This dissonance can have group level outcomes including decline due to exit and secularization.

INTRODUCTION

In the 1986 H. Paul Douglass Lecture, David O. 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. 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: 3). This paper offers the beginnings of a theory of hypocrisy, its causes and consequences, rooted in the religious economies approach to the social scientific study of religion.

RATIONALITY OF HYPOCRISY

Underlying many of the micro foundations of the religious economies approach to religion is a weak version of rational choice theory (Goldthorpe 1998). This approach assumes that people make religious decisions by utilizing the same process they employ when making other decisions - a weighing of the costs and benefits of particular choices and outcomes. Thus religious people are rational people who attempt to maximize their outcomes “within the limits of their information and understanding, restricted by available options, guided by their preferences and tastes” (Stark 1999: 266). People seek to gain certain otherwise unavailable religious 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: 270)¹. Simply, the terms of exchange determine the costs of the otherworldly rewards, ranging from simple belief to extreme personal and financial sacrifice.

Assuming that religious people are rational it then follows that they will seek to maximize their payoffs by minimizing their religious costs, in addition to delaying their payments (Stark 1999). Anthropologists have observed this behavior and have often noted an endless haggling process in these exchange relationships that clearly demonstrate human self-interest. A classic example is provided by Evans-Pritchard (1956, referenced in Stark 1999: 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: 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: 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 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 people are seeking otherworldly rewards through their religious involvement they may be selectively committed to subjective beliefs and may attempt to cheat on their objective commitments.

Objective Hypocrisy

It makes sense that if people are involved in an exchange relationship with their god(s) to receive otherworldly rewards then they believe in the explanations offered in the terms of exchange i.e. the religion. At times they may not be willing to pay the behavioral costs. They may try to minimize their amount of participation, level of material sacrifice, or 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 in and

belonging to a religious group but acting morally in a manner inconsistent with the religion's ethical/moral guidelines². It is an individual's effort to cheat on their objective commitments. Objective hypocrisy is one way to reduce the costs of the exchange relationship, since most religions make behavioral demands on believers. Often these demands are very costly in terms of time, forgone opportunities, and sacrifice of immediate rewards. A rational individual will try to minimize these costs while also trying to ensure their 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 behavior required because of their belief. Acts of omission occur when an individual chooses to abstain from behaving in the ways that are dictated by their beliefs. For the purposes of this paper we will be focusing specifically on acts of commission and its effects on believers and religious groups.

RELIGIOUS GROUP CHARACTERISTICS

Religious hypocrisy is a rational strategy for individuals to maximize their benefits and minimize their costs. 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 hypocrisy because it is through belonging to a particular religious group that an individual can gain access to these rewards. More specifically, objective hypocrisy depends upon the nature of the religious group, namely its strictness, which 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 and Finke 2000). These stricter groups demand more in terms of cost from the

individual members. These requirements are more pervasive, encompassing a greater degree of the religious individual's behavior and time. 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 consuming of the person's resources. Thus we expect strict religious groups to have a greater amount of objective hypocrisy through acts of commission.

Proposition 1: All things being equal, stricter religious groups will have higher levels of objective hypocrisy through acts of commission.

Dependence

However, when it comes to religious groups, not all things are equal. The character and organization of the religious group may lead to different levels of individual conformity to the objective commitments. Religious adherents are dependent on the group because it is through the group that they gain access to religious goods. If they could access these goods without the group they would (Hechter 1987) but the religious group is the mediator of the religious exchange relationship. The more the members are dependent on the group the more likely they are to conform to the objective commitments of the religion. Dependence can vary across groups due to varying exit costs. The higher the cost of exit the more the dependent the members are on that group. Thus, the higher the exit costs of the religious group then the lower the level of religious hypocrisy.

Proposition 2A: Higher the costs of exit from the religious group will result in lower levels of objective hypocrisy.

Religious groups can partially control exit by increasing the costs of moving to a different religious group. Moving is costly to religious adherents if they paid a high sacrifice cost to enter the group (Iannaccone 1992, 1994). The greater the sunk costs of entry the costlier it is

for individuals to leave the group, thus the more dependent they are on the group and the less likely they are to cheat on their objective commitments.

Proposition 2B: Religious groups that have high entry costs (sacrifice) will have lower levels of objective hypocrisy.

Another way religious groups can make moving costly is through their theology. Groups whose theology emphasizes that they have the only way to access the divine and that all other religions, even similar versions of their own religion, are not only wrong but eternally doomed make moving very costly for their adherents.

Proposition 2C: Religious groups that claim exclusive access to the divine and insist that all other groups are doomed will have lower levels of objective hypocrisy.

Exit may also be restricted as a result of interpersonal ties among religious group members. Sociability is one of the most important immanent goods that groups provide (Hechter 1987). The greater the density of close personal ties within a religious group, the more dependent the members are on that group for sociability. A high density of personal ties within a religious group makes exit more costly since these ties are irreplaceable. This is especially true if outside ties have been intentionally cut as a form of sacrifice (Iannaccone 1992, 1994) to gain entry to the group.

Proposition 2D: Religious groups that have a high density of interpersonal ties within the group and a low density of interpersonal ties outside of the group will have lower levels of objective hypocrisy.

Control

Religious groups can increase the compliance of their members with their objective commitments through increased control. There are two key elements to a group's ability to control its members. The first is sanctioning capacity and the second is monitoring capacity

(Hechter 1987). A religious group's monitoring capacity is the extent to which it is able to detect whether or not the members comply with their objective commitments. Its sanctioning ability is the degree to which it has the resources to provide selective incentives to rewards or punish its members based upon on their level of participation (Hechter 1987).

Proposition 3A: Religious groups that intentionally monitor and selectively sanction their members based on their levels of contribution to the group will have lower levels of objective hypocrisy.

However both of these activities, monitoring and sanctioning, require extensive resources and can be quite costly for groups to do formally. One low cost way for religious groups to monitor their members is through small groups. By making small group participation a crucial function of religious involvement, the religious group can extend its ability to monitor through a network of lay leaders. This approach decreases objective hypocrisy by expanding the group's monitoring capacity but also by offering selective incentives to high performing laity through a 'promotion' to small group leader. This promotion serves to increase the leader's status which has been shown to increase solidarity and conformity to group expectations (Willer 2009).

Proposition 3B: Religious groups that emphasize small group involvement will have lower levels of objective hypocrisy.

While the small group solution is an inexpensive, formal way that religious groups can monitor their members, there are two other common and informal ways that this can be done. The first is through stigma (Iannaccone 1992, 1994). Religious groups that stigmatize their members' appearance and/or public behavior increase the costs of engaging in activities that run counter to the group's expectations and the member's objective commitment (Iannaccone 1992, 1994). The stigmatized behavior may work to increase the distinction of the group member from

non-member outsiders limiting their opportunities outside the group. Thus stigma can lead to a reduction in objective hypocrisy by reducing the members' extra-group activities.

Proposition 3C: Religious groups that stigmatize the deviant behavior of members will have lower levels of objective hypocrisy.

Also, smaller religious groups are able to regulate their member's behavior more effectively since both monitoring and sanctioning costs are lower in small groups (Hechter 1987). Thus we would expect that smaller religious groups would have lower levels of objective hypocrisy since it is more difficult to get away with cheating on obligations in smaller groups in which everyone is in everyone else's business.

Proposition 3D: Smaller religious groups will have lower levels of objective hypocrisy.

While we expect hypocrisy to be greater in stricter religious groups because their objective commitments are more extensive than less strict groups, the extent of objective hypocrisy will vary according to the nature of the group. Religious groups that are able to increase the dependence of members on the group through increased exit costs and dense interpersonal networks will have decreased objective hypocrisy. Additionally, religious groups that increase their control over members through monitoring and sanctioning will decrease the level of objective hypocrisy among their members.

HYPOCRISY AND DISSONANCE

Although hypocrisy is a rational, benefit-maximizing behavior, there are individual and group affects that arise when it is employed. Just because a choice is rational does not mean that it is costless, a rational choice may lead to discomfort or psychological distress (Kuran

1998). A cost inherent to hypocrisy is cognitive dissonance, or the tension that arises when an actor's beliefs and behavior are incongruent. Kuran refers to this as moral dissonance when an individual feels obligated to abide by a standard yet his/her preferences steer one away from these objectives (1998: 154). While cognitive dissonance on a micro-level may lead to individuals restructuring their values or internalizing previously disregarded beliefs (Kuran 1998), there may also be broader affects of dissonance on the macro-level. Higher degrees of religious hypocrisy create a demand for discomfort prevention; morally dissonant people are unsettled and in need of assistance, and this need can often best be met at the social level rather than the individual level (Kuran 1998). If a sufficiently large or powerful portion of a religious group experiences cognitive dissonance, broader strategies of dissonance reduction may be applied. We hypothesize that this broader reduction strategy will lead to three outcomes within religious groups. These outcomes are member exit, secularization via congregational decline, and alterations in a group's redemption mechanisms.

Exit

Individual hypocrisy, if left untreated at the group level, may result in group defection among two different sets of adherents for differing reasons. The first set of adherents that will exit are those who are conforming to the group norms but who feel that their experience has been devalued as a result of the hypocrisy of others. This is in part due to the social nature of religion. Religion has been referred to as the ultimate 'credence' good since "no amount of experience suffices fully to evaluate most religious claims" (Iannaccone 1995:286). 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 since it undermines other people's confidence in their own exchange relationships with the same god(s). When hypocrisy is noticed or 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 indicates to 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 ultimately result in individuals exiting the religious group, denomination, religion, or even the religious economy in general. Recent research supports this claim. Kinnaman and Lyons (2007) found that 85% of youth outside of the Christian faith have had enough contact with Christians to conclude that Christianity is hypocritical. Wright et al (*forthcoming*) in their analysis of religious exit narratives found that the hypocrisy of others was one major factor predisposing Christians to deconversion (see also Mauss 1969; Barbour 1994); in 84% of the deconversion narratives the writers expressed frustration with the actions and beliefs of other Christians as motivation for exit (Wright et al, manuscript). For these narrative writers the hypocrisy of others devalued the religious goods leading to their exit from the group as well as the religion.

Proposition 4: Conforming individuals will exit religious groups that have higher levels of religious hypocrisy because their religious consumption has been devalued by other's hypocrisy.

The second set of adherents that may exit the group are the hypocrites themselves. Those individuals who are experiencing moral dissonance as a result of the tension between their beliefs and behavior may seek to reduce this tension through individual level efforts i.e. they may seek to change their beliefs to match their behavior. This is a classic well-documented individual response to dissonance (Festinger 1957). However since this may be difficult to do in the local religious context an individual may accomplish this seeking out another group that offers similar religious rewards without the same level of behavioral demands.

Proposition 5: Hypocritical individuals will exit religious groups with higher levels of religious hypocrisy in an effort to reduce their moral dissonance.

Redemption Mechanisms

Group level dissonance reduction strategies are not only in the group's best interest to prevent exit but they are often a better way to reduce the individual dissonance of members (Kuran 1998). One strategy available to groups is to provide redemption mechanisms. A redemption mechanism is some sort of theologically legitimized means through which the individual experiencing moral dissonance due to religious hypocrisy can make amends or redeem themselves (Kuran 1998). Ekelund et al (1996) demonstrated that the Medieval Catholic church was able to benefit financially through the sales of indulgences by building on the pre-existing practice of penance and convincing their adherents, through the theological innovation of purgatory, that indulgences were legitimate compensators for their specific transgressions. It was not uncommon for clergy to have books of sins and their corresponding 'cost'. The key is that the designers of the redemption mechanism must convince the potential beneficiaries that the activity can legitimately compensate for the failure.

Proposition 6A: Religious groups that employ redemption mechanisms to alleviate moral dissonance from objective hypocrisy will have lower rates of exit.

Thus religious groups that are able to create, theologically convincing mechanisms may be able to reduce the moral dissonance of its members in ways that further benefit the group through increased financial contribution or voluntarism on the part of the hypocritical members. This can have the positive feedback effect of increasing the value of the religious goods for other members.

Proposition 6B: Religious groups that employ redemption mechanisms to alleviate moral dissonance from objective hypocrisy will have higher rates of participation.

Secularization

Another group level strategy for moral dissonance reduction is moral reconstruction (Kuran 1998). Moral reconstruction is the intentional alteration of the group's moral values and beliefs. This is not something that a single individual may do alone, it requires collective action. Moral reconstruction is the changing of the group's values that are in conflict with the behavior of individuals, and rather than seeking to eliminate their moral dissonance through rationalization they may under the right condition seek to redefine the collectively held values. This may be a previously unidentified mechanism driving congregational and denominational secularization in the secularization-revival cycle described in the sect-to-church theory (Stark and Bainbridge 1985; Stark and Finke 2000; Finke and Stark 2005).

In their description of the secularization process, Finke and Stark (1993, 2005), focus on a settled, educated and salaried clergy as the driving force behind the secularization of the Methodists. However, another element that they mention but do not discuss at length is the improved social status of the Methodist congregants themselves. By 1880 many of the old camp-meeting grounds had been turned into middle-class summer resorts (Finke and Stark 2005: 168), and “by the turn of the century many members could *safely* ignore the rules against such activities as playing cards, dancing, or attending the theater, horse races, and circuses” (p. 174, emphasis added). While undoubtedly the clergy played an active role in the secularization process, they were probably also responding to a build up of congregational demand for moral dissonance reduction. As the membership base of the Methodists moved up the social ladder, the opportunity costs for certain regulated behaviors such as dancing or attending the theater became larger and larger. Most likely middle class Methodist congregations had high levels of hypocrisy, with many members believing in the message of their religion but behaving in a

ways did not line up with their group values. More explicitly their expressed preferences were not aligned with the group's meta-preferences. The educated and salaried clergy had their own incentives to secularize, however they more than likely could not have forced secularization from the top down if there had not been a large enough demand for the secularization already established among the membership. A similar secularization already established happened to the Northern Baptists and one of the key differences between the Northern and Southern Baptists was the affluence of the memberships (Finke and Stark 2005). In both historical cases, the educated clergy offered the morally burdened congregants a way out by changing the tension of the faith. This is one group level moral dissonance reduction process: to ease the meta-preferences of the group.

Proposition 7: Over time religious groups with high rates of objective hypocrisy will secularize in an effort to decrease the level of moral dissonance among individuals in the group.

While secularization can be an effective way of reducing widespread moral dissonance, it may also be detrimental to the groups' vitality since the emergence of multiple competing pressure groups is likely. The result of dissonance inspired collective action may be a long drawn out political battle between pressure groups ending ultimately with congregational or denominational fractures, leading to the rise of sectarian movements (Stark and Bainbridge 1985; Finke and Stark 1993; Stark and Finke 2000). This is similar to the secularization of higher education as described by Smith (2003): "Secularization was the outcome of a power struggle between contending groups with conflicting interests and ideologies that mobilized to win control over institutions governing the production of socially legitimate knowledge" (p 153). The key point is that religious hypocrisy and the moral dissonance it creates can be seen to be a mechanism that drives congregational and denominational secularization.

Thus, objective religious hypocrisy is an individually rational act that varies depending on the extensiveness of the objective commitments of the religious group i.e. the strictness of the group. This variation in extent of hypocrisy can be mediated by other group characteristics that increase group solidarity by increasing the dependence of members on the group and by increasing the control of the group over members' behavior. The primary mechanisms discussed here are restricting exit through high entry costs, interpersonal networks, and theology and increasing control through small groups, stigma, and informally through small congregational size. While the amount of objective hypocrisy can vary due to differing group characteristics it is important to note that the levels of religious hypocrisy can also have an effect on the group. High levels of group hypocrisy can lead to exit by both the hypocritical members in an effort to reduce their moral dissonance and the compliant members as a result of the devaluation of their religious goods. Religious groups, however, can ameliorate the effects of hypocrisy through two primary strategies: redemption mechanisms or secularization. Thus in this theory hypocrisy is shown to be an individual choice that varies according to group characteristics and has group level effects, including the secularization of the group.

INITIAL TEST

This paper is primarily a theoretical exploration of the causes and consequences of religious hypocrisy; however we decided to provide an initial test of Proposition 1A (all things being equal stricter religious groups will have higher levels of objective hypocrisy through acts of commission) in order to provide some beginning empirical basis for the theory. To do this we used 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 offers a good 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).

To operationalize the level of religious tension of an individual's group we used 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 Liberals³. This fits with the existing research on levels of participation and strictness (Kelley 1972; Iannaccone 1992, 1994; Perl & Olson 2000; Stark and Finke 2000; Olson & Perl 2005), and provides validation for FUND as a good measure of degree of strictness.

To test our hypothesis, 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, and (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, "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. We then followed 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.

Insert 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 $p < .001$.

Insert Table 2

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; and, (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.

Insert Table 3 about here

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.

Insert Table 4 about here

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 initial, modest 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 inherent in strict religious groups. However, 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 reveals 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 as Liberal respondents.

These results offer initial support for the hypothesis 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.

These results should not be taken as conclusive evidence but rather as preliminary findings. There are some limitations in the operationalization of the data. Namely time issues in the reporting of current beliefs and past behaviors: the belief questions ask about current beliefs whereas the behavior questions ask about past behavior. However, our findings line up with the findings of Burdette et al 2007 who found differences in infidelity within religious denominations based on variation in attendance levels. This variation is captured in our strictness measure which is positively associated with attendance.

CONCLUSION

This paper offers a beginning effort to take seriously Moberg's (1987) call to study the causes and consequences of religious hypocrisy by incorporating it into the religious economies theory. As such we have provided a theory of religious hypocrisy that involves rational actors whose behavior is shaped by the nature and organization of the religious group; we theorize that objective hypocrisy will be more pervasive in religious groups that have more extensive commitments. Additionally we have argued that hypocrisy is not costless. Individuals engaged in objective religious hypocrisy experience a moral dissonance that when aggregated can lead to group level outcomes including decline through exit and secularization.

In an effort to offer a rigorous, testable theory of objective religious hypocrisy we have developed a series of falsifiable propositions. We have provided a simple test of the first proposition in order to give a beginning empirical basis for the theory; this however is in no way a comprehensive test of the theory, much work remains to be done. We invite others to

test and challenge our propositions in an effort to work towards a better, more complete understanding of this aspect of religious behavior.

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APPENDIX I: PROPOSITIONS

Proposition 1: All things being equal stricter religious groups will have higher levels of objective hypocrisy through acts of commission.

Proposition 2A: The higher the cost of exit from the religious group, the lower the level of objective hypocrisy.

Proposition 2B: Religious groups that have high entry costs (sacrifice) will have lower levels of objective hypocrisy.

Proposition 2C: Religious groups that claim exclusive access to the divine and insist that all other groups are doomed will have lower levels of objective hypocrisy.

Proposition 2D: Religious groups that have a high density of interpersonal ties within the group and a low density of interpersonal ties outside of the group will have lower levels of objective hypocrisy.

Proposition 3A: Religious groups that intentionally monitor and selective sanction its members based on their levels of contribution will have lower levels of objective hypocrisy.

Proposition 3B: Religious groups that emphasize small group involvement will have lower levels of objective hypocrisy.

Proposition 3C: Religious groups that stigmatize their members will have lower levels of objective hypocrisy.

Proposition 3D: Smaller religious groups will have lower levels of objective hypocrisy.

Proposition 4: Conforming individuals will exit religious groups that have higher levels of religious hypocrisy because their religious consumption has been devalued by other's hypocrisy.

Proposition 5: Hypocritical individuals will exit religious groups that higher levels of religious hypocrisy in an effort to reduce their moral dissonance.

Proposition 6A: Religious groups that employ redemption mechanisms to alleviate moral dissonance from objective hypocrisy will have lower rates of exit.

Proposition 6B: Religious groups that employ redemption mechanisms to alleviate moral dissonance from objective hypocrisy will have higher rates of participation.

Proposition 7: Over time religious groups with high rates of objective hypocrisy will secularize in an effort to decrease the level of moral dissonance among individuals in the group.

NOTES

¹ The nature of religion as an exchange relationship is supported by exit accounts of Christian deconversion studied by Wright et al (manuscript). Of the exit narratives they studied 44% cited dissatisfaction with God as a driving motivation for deconversion, for these deconverts God did not deliver: “writers emphasized the inequality of their relationship to God. The writers did so much for Him – praying, attending church, following God – but God did little in return” (p. 18).

² Correspondingly cheating on subjective commitments can be distinctly defined as subjective religious hypocrisy. This concept, its causes and consequences, is being explored by the authors in another paper.

³ 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.

TABLES

Table 1: ANOVA Post Hoc Test Results for FUND & XMARITAL

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 FUND & XMARITAL

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

Table 3: ANOVA Post Hoc Test Results for FUND & PORNLAW

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 FUND & PORNLAW

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