False Advertising: the attractiveness of religion as a moral brand

Chapter · January 2015

CITATIONS
7

READS
473

2 authors, including:

Gabriel Levy
Norwegian University of Science and Technology
29 PUBLICATIONS **155** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

False Advertising: the attractiveness of religion as a moral brand

Panagiotis Mitkidis[1,2,3] and Gabriel Levy[4]

[1]Center for Advanced Hindsight, Social Science Research Institute, Duke University, 2024 W. Main Street, Durham 27705, NC, USA. [2]Interacting Minds Centre, Department of Culture and Society, Aarhus University, Jens Chr. Skous Vej 4, 8000 Aarhus C, Denmark. [3]Interdisciplinary Centre for Organizational Architecture, Aarhus University, Fuglesangs Allé 20, 8210 Aarhus V, Denmark. [4]Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Loholt Allé 85, 7491 Trondheim, Norway.

Abstract:

Religions (as such) do not promote morality. They appear to do so because the concept of religion is often associated with morality. We think religion gets associated with morality through branding. In the first part of the paper we review the claim that religion leads to morality or other forms of prosociality. We argue that the experimental evidence backing up that claim is quite weak. Much of the argument, of course, centers on what one means by religion, so we make some effort to provide a working definition. The second part of the paper presents a summary of branding theory and the idea that religion becomes associated with morality through branding.

What does religion sell? What is religion good for? Adherents of the "big" world religions tend to take pride in the idea that religion, especially their own, leads to prosocial behaviors, such as generosity and altruism. However, we think religious people are no more moral than anyone else. The material culture of many religions can prime people to behave more prosocially, but material culture from other institutions can do so as well. We argue that religions are institutions that brand themselves as moral centers; in doing so, religious material and mental culture can act as associative primes for prosociality. The priming then reinforces the brand, and this in turn perpetuates the erroneous idea that religion as such promotes prosociality.

People who identify themselves as religious are convinced that their religion is the one that promotes actions of charity more than any others. Similarly, many people who consider themselves 'secular' think that religion is the motivating factor that promotes such behavior. The idea that religiosity and belief in supernatural agents makes someone more prosocial is even a common assumption among scholars of religion. This argument is often attributed to classic theorists of religion such as Durkheim (1912/1995), who is put forward as a proponent of the idea that religion

leads to cooperative behaviors. However, we think this reading of Durkheim is incorrect and is putting the cart before the horse. Durkheim was an early adopter of a systems-theory approach to religion. In his model, religion does not lead to prosociality. Prosociality, or rather the contours of social space, time, and interaction, lead to religious behaviors (such as rituals).

The theory that religion leads to morality was left at the level of assumption for years and served as the backbone for functionalist accounts of religion; meanwhile, most of the supporting evidence was either anecdotal or in the form of self-reports.

Why have religion and prosociality so often been coupled together? Rules and prescriptions that regulate social behavior are a recurrent characteristic of "big" religions: sacred texts, religious authorities, and oral and written religious traditions are replete with instructions on how people ought to treat other human beings. The connection seems obvious. Perpetuating this line of thinking, several studies have claimed to show that religious people are more prosocial. In these studies, 'religious' individuals seem to be more altruistic (Friedrichs, 1960), generous (Brooks, 2003; 2005; 2007; Su at al., 2011), cooperative (Guiso et al., 2003; Morgan, 1983), forgiving (McCullough & Worthington, 1999), more likely to volunteer (Gronbjerg & Never, 2004; Lam, 2002; Putnam & Campbell, 2010), and to have prosocial concerns (Furrow et al., 2004).

However, these findings are plagued by a number of serious limitations and biases, some of which we present below. We think the experimental evidence accumulated over the past few decades points to a different, more intricate, and more interesting pattern of association between religion and prosociality.

First, these studies focus on the positive and prosocial effects of religiosity. By contrast, other studies have reported that religious people score higher in various aspects of negative and *anti*-social attitudes. A variety of studies have reported an association between religiosity and intolerance (Stokes & Regnerus, 2009), racism (Park, 2012), homophobia (Batson et al., 1999) and aggression (Victoroff et al., 2010); in addition, religious people appear less likely to donate their organs (Cornwall et al., 2012), show compassion to strangers (Saslow et al., 2012), or support social benefits for the needy (Stegmueller et al., 2012).

Second, it is not clear whether some of the observed prosocial effects reportedly caused by religion are rather in fact an expression or a product of parochial

in-group favoritism (Hunter, 2001; Ottoni & Wilhelm, 2010), often accompanied by hostility towards the out-group (Burris & Jackson, 1999; Heiphetz et al., 2012; Hunsberger & Jackson, 2005).

Third, there is evidence that religious individuals are particularly prone to social desirability effects (Burris & Jackson, 2000; Gervais & Norenzayan, 2012; Leak & Fish, 1989; McCullough & Willoughby, 2009; Sedikides & Gebauer, 2010).

Fourth, as said earlier, an additional problem arises from the popular belief that religious people are more moral, prosocial and trustworthy. This widely held stereotype is a consistent finding (de Dreu et al., 1995; Ellison, 1992; Gervais et al., 2011; Miller & Bornstein, 2006; Morgan, 1983; Orbell et al., 1992; Saroglou et al., 2005; Tan & Vogel, 2008) and can act like a self-fulfilling prophecy by biasing respondents' views of themselves and others (Galen, 2012).

Fifth, the methods used in these studies, which typically involve data from surveys and correlational designs, are often inadequate for establishing causal relations or isolating confounding factors like socialization or contextual information. Part of the reason for the methodological limitations is that most of the studies have not examined real behavior but rather relied on self-reports (see Batson et al., 1993; Koenig et al., 2007), third party reports (Ellison, 1992; Morgan, 1983), or hypothetical scenarios (Morgan, 1983; Saroglou et al., 2005). Such self-reports are unreliable for a variety of reasons, including social desirability, acquiescence bias, and leniency effects (Baumeister et al., 2007; Podsakoff et al., 2003). People commonly over-report socially desirable attributes, including religiosity itself (Brenner, 2011; Hadaway et al., 1998).

Thus, on the one hand, we find that the most important problem with the literature claiming prosocial effects of religion is that the self-reported prosociality simply does not manifest in real-life situations. In other words, behavior does not fulfill the promise: religious people might describe themselves as being more prosocial, but do not actually behave in more prosocial ways. Despite the occasional study that has shown a weak or ambiguous correlation between aspects of religiosity and (actual) prosocial behaviour (Fehr et al., 2003; Paciotti et al., 2011; Perrin, 2000; Sosis & Ruffle, 2003), the bulk of the evidence suggests that such a correlation is absent (Anderson et al., 2010; Batson et al., 1993; Batson et al., 1989; Darley & Batson, 1973; Eckel & Grossman, 2004; Grossman & Parrett, 2011; Johansson-Stenman et al., 2009; Malhotra, 2010; Orbell et al., 1992; Spilka et al., 2003; Tan,

2006), or even negative (Batson et al., 1999; Burris & Jackson, 1999; Goldfried & Miner, 2002; Jackson & Esses, 1997; Pruckner & Sausgruber, 2009).

On the other hand, where there is smoke, there is fire. The popular stereotype of interconnection between religion and prosociality must have a connection to reality somewhere; we think it has to do with the way big religions are marketed and sold at the institutional level. In what follows, we outline the idea that religions are institutions that market a moral brand.

In his opus, *Religion Explained*, Boyer was perhaps the first to discuss religious guilds and their origins (273). He notes that the services that religions provide are usually monetarily compensated and questions the assumption that religious doctrine comes first, and then its implementation "leads to particular economic" behavior. In other words, economic considerations are part and parcel of religious systems. He goes further, arguing that, "indeed, some crucial aspects of religious institutions make sense only if we understand what the market for religious services is like, what kind of commodity religious knowledge and ritual constitute" (274). To get at the origins of religious organization of this kind, he points to the emergence of literate, large, state societies (Levy 2012, 49).

Boyer sees the origins of religious guilds to coincide with the emergence of complex states and literacy. This makes sense from an economic perspective because one would not think there was anything for religion to sell before the emergence of these guilds, before these firms have branded themselves as selling those particular services. In other words, it is unclear what religions sold, if anything, before they incorporated at some point during the long agricultural revolution in the Holocene (275).

Boyer defines a religious guild as, "a group that derives its livelihood, influence, and power from the fact that it provides particular *services*, in particular the performance of rituals." He goes on to say that such groups go to great effort to *control the market* for such services, often attempting to create a monopoly on the service through various means. As a solution to the fact that the services they supply can easily be competed against, one important strategy Boyer notes is creation of a brand, which he defines as a service that is distinct from other guilds, consistent within the guild, recognizable, and exclusive (277).

We take Boyer's point that religion creates brands quite literally and think some insights from the fields of global marketing and international management, in which branding is often discussed, are useful, although there is not very much literature yet on the relation between branding and culture. These fields argue that the branding of a product or service, across the entire value chain, is critical to the long-term survival of a firm. Firms in a global marketplace are looking to create value, especially in ways that require the least investment of initial resources. Branding is a rather cheap solution in this regard because it recycles existing assets.

Humans tend not to base their cultural preferences on profit and loss. Outdated models of human action (such as rational actor models) tend to see religion as selling a product (Stark and Bainbridge. 1987; Stark and Roger, 2000; Iannaccone, 1997); instead, we see adopting religion as buying into a brand. Pertinent to this argument, a growing body of research is beginning to explore how consumers view brands, moving away from the idea that they work in a passive way, seeing them instead as cultural technologies. Thus, for example, Hayes et al. (2006) describe a brand as an "active relationship partner." In their model of branding, "attractive brands, like attractive people, may be perceived as possessing certain relationship advantages compared to those perceived as less attractive" (Hayes, Alford, Silver and York, 2006, p. 306). Similarly, Chevron (1998) asserts that "the concept of a 'brand' and that of a 'product' are diametrically opposed in many ways." In this line of thinking, a brand is created with the aim of transcending the tangible boundaries faced by a product. In other words, the consumption of brand need not be restricted to specific product categories. For example, Apple's brand works in this fashion, since the brand image is not attached to one particular product; when you buy Apple, you are buying into an idea.

Thus brands can develop transcendent images that outlive their associated products. When brands are created that are strongly embraced by consumers, they effectively possess a life of their own. Brands and consumers engage in a continuous symbiotic relationship, founded upon an evaluation of the brand's looks, personality, credibility, equity, and desirability. Consumers do not expect a brand to take into account their value system; instead, some brands like Coca Cola actively try to create their own culture and hence distinct value systems within the brand (Wilson and Liu 2009).

We think there is insight to be gained about religion in the research on branding. First, the core reason for a brand's existence is to provide a platform to create a cultural value system into which people can buy. Second, brands take on personalities. Third, consumers form symbiotic relations with brands. Similarly, we think religion brands by associating itself with the idea of morality. Religion is the brand platform, the idea of morality is the product; religion markets the idea of morality. People are interested in consuming the idea that they are moral; religion provides that service.

To repeat, religious systems *seem* to promote prosocial behavior in a variety of ways; in particular, religion acts as a firm branded around notions of morality and prosociality. Although it has been shown that the format of religious technologies, specifically "non-functional" ones such as ritual, do not promote cooperation (Mitkidis, 2013; 2014), religion has managed to organize a matrix of other actions and exposures that do promote prosociality.

In other words, rituals themselves do not promote prosocial behavior, but they are surrounded by actions that bring people together (such as eating together), and situations that expose them to effective primes. A number of controlled studies have shown that priming with 'religious concepts' can increase cooperation (Ahmed & Salas, 2008; 2011; Ahmed & Hammarstedt, 2011), generosity (Bulbulia & Mahoney, 2008; Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007), reciprocity (Tsang et al., 2012), trust and altruism (Ruffle & Sosis, 2010), promote honesty and reduce cheating (Ariely, 2008; 2012; Bering et al., 2005; Mazar et al., 2008; Randolph-Seng & Nielsen, 2007).

It is important to note in this context that these so-called 'religious concepts' are rarely spelled out theoretically and in a scientific way (Levy 2014). Recent research has documented effects of environmental settings on decision-making, using economic games. For example, two naturalistic studies (Ahmed and Salas 2013; Xygalatas 2012) showed that people behave more prosocially in 'religious' settings than in 'secular' ones. Importantly, these effects hold *irrespective* of the subjects' degree of religiosity (Xygalatas et al., in prep.). Furthermore, it is important to note that these mental representations are not all a function of conscious processes, i.e. trust or lack of it isn't always produced through rational thinking (Mitkidis et al., in prep.).

One particularly common and salient aspect of our environment that religion utilizes, though not exclusive to religion, involves cues related to intentional agents.

Such cues are of particular importance, as they may reveal strategic information about other intentional beings -- sentiments, intentions and attitudes -- thus revealing potential threats and opportunities (Gervais 2013; Piazza et al 2003; Purzycki 2013). As such, these external cues can influence behavior automatically and implicitly (Schloss & Muray 2011; Shariff & Norenzayan 2007; Gervais & Norenzayan 2012).

Among the first to document this effect were Haley and Fessler (2005), who found that participants primed with auditory and visual cues of agency were more cooperative in a dictator game. Stimuli displaying structural similarities with a human face and more specifically with eyes serve as a proxy for human surveillance. This was demonstrated by studies that manipulated the degree of perceived and actual anonymity among players of economic games (Burnham & Hare 2007; Lamba & Mace 2010). Cues of being watched have also been shown to influence other types of prosocial behaviors and attitudes, such as contributing to charitable donations (Ekström 2011; Powell et al. 2012) or expressing greater disapproval of moral transgressions (Bourrat et al 2011). These findings have been extended to more naturalistic settings, where priming with agency cues has been shown to minimize littering at a university cafeteria (Ernest-Jones et al. 2011) and at a bus stop (Francey & Bergmuller 2012). Recently, it was shown that cues of being watched stimulate prosocial behavior regardless of local behavioral tendencies and context dependent social norms (Bateson et al. 2013, Kratky et al., under review).

The fact is that thoughts of a watchful anything, not just a god, promote prosociality. So religions don't directly promote prosociality, but they do tend to be surrounded by technologies that do. In addition, since religion has been stereotypically linked to prosociality, elements of it (such as the idea of the Ten Commandments) can also act directly as primes. So the main idea is that religion does not essentially promote prosociality. It is for this reason that prosociality fails as an ultimate explanation of religion.

Religions have been able to convince followers, and outsiders, that they had an exclusive grasp on morality. It is unclear whether religions branded themselves in this way before the advent of complex states and religious institutions. To answer this question, and indeed to provide any ultimate explanation of religion, we first need to define more concretely what it is we think we are explaining. This is the drawback of Norenzayan's book *Big Gods*; like us, Norenzayan thinks "religion is more in the

situation than in the person." Despite the book's usefulness, it fails as an ultimate explanation because of an intentional refusal to define religion in a precise way.

Norenzayan thinks religion was *the* form of social policing, in particular the policing of free-riders, which he considers necessary for human cooperation to evolve. He thinks 'secular mechanisms' in modern societies do the same thing as watcher gods who are concerned with our mental states (a.k.a. big gods, Norenzayan 2013: 37). We do not consider this an explanation of religion, rather an explanation of trusted institutions. As Levy writes, "what remains unclear is whether these effects are a product of religion or rather a product of the stereotype and semantic associations people have with religion (as something moral and prosocial)" (Levy 2014).

In other words, in our understanding religion is not a powerful social force so much because of what it does but because of what people think it does. Religion is a set of institutionalized attitudes (such as beliefs) and practices organized around one or more superhuman agents and branded as a guarantee of moral norms. Religious institutions surround themselves with priming technologies that often produce prosociality -- they attempt to monopolize these technologies -- but religions are in no way the only institutions that do so. In this sense, any particular prosociality due to religion is more of an accident than a product of design.

We think Searle's definition of an institution is useful and has potential to be operationalized. He has provided a concise statement of his argument in an article entitled "What is an institution?" published in the *Journal of Institutional Economics*. Searle argues that there are three primitive underlying principles that are necessary to explain institutions. The first is collective intentionality. Collective intentionality occurs when "I am engaged in collective action, *I* am doing what I am doing as part of *our* doing what we are doing" (6). As such "an agent is acting, and doing what he or she does, only as part of a collective action."

The second primitive is what Searle calls "the assignment of function." Tools are the most obvious cases of things that are assigned a function. Searle thinks something that is assigned a function does not have it intrinsically, but "only in virtue of the assignment of function" (7). Combining the first two primitives for Searle gives us the "collective assignment of function."

The third and the last primitive Searle suggests, is what he calls "status functions." These are a special class of functions that cannot perform their function by

virtue of their physical structure "but rather can perform the function only in virtue of the fact that there is a collective assignment of a certain *status*, and the object or person performs its function only in virtue of collective acceptance by the community that the object or person has the requisite status." Searle gives us his famous formula for deriving these functions: *X counts as Y in context C*. For example, moving ones leg in a certain way that causes a ball to go into a net, in certain contexts, counts as scoring a goal in Champions League football. Such functions, according to Searle can be layered iteratively and thus build more complex social facts.

Since a function can be assigned to anything based on collective status ascription and not necessarily based on the intrinsic or physical characteristics of the thing in question, we see a clear link between Searle's notion of status functions and the non-functionality of ritual as discussed by Boyer and Liénard (2006). Searle's favorite example is paper money, which is after all just a piece of paper with colors, symbols, and words printed on it, without any intrinsic value.

In our view, Searle's theory gives us a good model for understanding religious institutions more generally. Part of the way religions build institutions is to monopolize status functions. Religious monopolists can convince people that it is only in the context provided by religion that a certain act can count as moral. In Boyer's terms, religions attempt to monopolize status functions related to morality. The religious brand, in effect, tries to create a context in which it is only in that context that *X can count as Y*. In other words, religious branding amounts to religion being assigned the (status) function of morality. Combining Boyer and Liénard with Searle we can see that when scholars of religion accept the idea that religion has a function, it thus amounts to a form of ritualized thinking (Penner 1999; 2002, Levy 2013: 452).

Even if we don't want to get into the debate about functionalism, the main point is that once this brand is established and the connection between religion and morality becomes stereotypified, then religious objects or technologies can act as primes for moral and prosocial behavior.

So, what is attractive about religion? Religion is an institution that creates a priming context in which people interact with superhuman agents. From our perspective it is clear that the recent big religions (those emerging in the axial age) created a strong brand around morality. This is what makes them attractive. You don't need religion, because religion is not the only institution that primes people into

prosocial tendencies; however, the big religions have convinced us that they are the only ones who can provide such a service.

References:

Ahmed, M. Ali and Osvaldo Salas. 2008. In the back of your mind: Subliminal influences of religious concepts on prosocial behavior, *Working Papers in Economics*, 331: 1–25.

Ahmed, M. Ali and Osvaldo Salas (2011), Implicit influences of Christian religious representations on dictator and prisoner's dilemma game decisions, *Journal of Socio-Economics*, 40(3): 242–246.

Ahmed, M. Ali and Osvaldo Salas (2013). Religious Context and Prosociality: An Experimental Study from Valparaíso, Chile. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,* 52(3): 627–637.

Ahmed, M. Ali and Mats Hammarstedt (2011), The effect of subtle religious representations on cooperation, *International Journal of Social Economics*, 38(11): 900–910.

Anderson, L., Mellor, J., & Milyo, J. (2010). Did the Devil make them do it? The effects of religion in public goods and trust games. *Kyklos, 63*(2), 163–175.

Ariely, Dan (2008), *Predictably irrational. The hidden forces that shape our decisions*, New York: HarperCollins.

Bateson M, Callow L, Holmes JR, Redmond Roche ML, Nettle D. (2013). Do Images of 'Watching Eyes' Induce Behaviour That Is More Pro-Social or More Normative? A Field Experiment on Littering. PLoS ONE 8(12): e82055.

Batson, C. Daniel, Kathryn Oleson, Joy Weeks, Sean P. Healy, Penny J. Reeves, Patrick Jennings, and Thomas Brown. 1989. Religious prosocial motivation: Is it altruistic or egoistic? *Journal of Personality,* 57(5): 873–884.

Batson, C. Daniel, Patricia Schoenrade, and W. Larry Ventis. 1993. *Religion and the individual: A social-psychological perspective*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Batson, C. Daniel, Randy B. Floyd, Julie M. Meyer, and Alana L. Winner. 1999. And Who Is My Neighbor?: Intrinsic Religion as a Source of Universal Compassion, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 38(4): 445–457.

Baumeister, Roy F., Kathleen D. Vohs, and David C. Funder. 2007. Psychology as the science of self-reports and finger movements: Whatever happened to actual behavior? *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 2(4): 396–403.

Bering, Jesse, Katrina McLeod, Todd K. Shackelford. 2005. Reasoning about dead agents reveals possible adaptive trends, *Human Nature*, 16(4): 360–381.

Bourrat, Pierrick, Nicolas Baumard, and Ryan Mckay. 2011. Surveillance cues enhance moral condemnation, *Evolutionary Psychology*, 9(2): 193-199.

Boyer, Pascal and Pierre Liénard. 2006. "Precaution systems and ritualized behavior." *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 29, pp 635-641.

Boyer, Pascal. 2001. *Religion Explained: The Evolutionary Origins of Religious Thought*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Brenner, Phillip S. (2011. Exceptional Behavior or Exceptional Identity?: Overreporting of Church Attendance in the U.S., *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 75(1): 19–41.

Brooks, Arthur C. 2003. Religious Faith and Charitable Giving, *Policy Review,* No. 121.

Brooks, Arthur C (2005). Does Social Capital Make You Generous?, *Social Science Quarterly*, 86(1): 1–15.

Brooks, Arthur C (2007). *Who really cares: America's charity divide–Who gives, who doesn't, and why it matters*, Basic Books, New York.

Burris, T. Christopher and Lynne Jackson. 1999. Hate the sin/love the sinner, or love the hater? Intrinsic religion and responses to partner abuse, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 38(1): 160–174.

Chevron, J. R. 1998. "The Delphi Process: a strategic branding methodology", *Journal of Consumer Marketing,* Vol. 15, No. 3, pp. 254-264

Cornwall, Jon, Gary F. Perry, Graham Louw, and Mark D. Stringer. 2012. Who donates their body to science? An international, multicenter, prospective study, *Anatomical Sciences Education*, *5*(4): 208–216.

Darley, J. M., & Batson, C. D. (1973). From Jerusalem to Jericho: A study of situational and dispositional variables in helping behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 27*, 100–108.

de Dreu, Carsten K. W., Vincent V. Yzerbyt, and Jacques-Philippe Leyens. 1995. Dilution of stereotype-based cooperation in mixed-motive interdependence, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* 31: 575–593.

Durkheim, Emile. Karen Fields (trans.) 1995. *Elementary Forms of The Religious Life*. New York: Free Press.

Eckel, C. C., & Grossman, P. J. (2004). Giving to Secular Causes by the Religious and Nonreligious: An Experimental Test of the Responsiveness of Giving to Subsidies. *Ethnography, 33*(2), 271–289.

Ekström, Mathias. 2011. "Do Watching Eyes Affect Charitable Giving? Evidence from a Field Experiment." *Research Papers in Economics* 28.

Ellison, Christopher G. 1992. Are religious people nice people? Evidence from the National Survey of Black Americans, *Social Forces*, 71: 411–430.

Ernest-Jones, M., Nettle, D., & Bateson, M. (in press). Effects of eye images on everyday cooperative behavior: A field experiment. Evolution and Human Behavior.

Fehr, Ernst, Urs Fischbacher, Bernhard von Rosenbladt, Jürgen Schupp, and Gert G. Wagner. 2003. A Nation-wide Laboratory. Examining Trust and Trustworthiness by Integrating Behavioral Experiments Into Representative Survey, *Schmollers Jahrbuch*, 122: 519-542.

Francey D, Bergmüller R. 2012. Images of Eyes Enhance Investments in a Real-Life Public Good. PLoS ONE 7(5): e37397.

Friedrichs, Robert W. 1960. Alter Versus Ego: An Exploratory Assessment of Altruism, *American Sociological Review* 25(4): 496-508.

Furrow, James L., Pamela Ebstyne King & Krystal White. 2004. "Religion and Positive Youth Development: Identity, Meaning, and Prosocial Concerns." *Applied Developmental Science* 8,1: 17-26.

Galen, Luke W. 2012. Does religious belief promote prosociality? A critical examination, *Psychological Bulletin*, 138(5): 876–906.

Gervais, Will M. and Ara Norenzayan. 2012. Like a camera in the sky? Thinking about God increases public self-awareness and socially desirable responding, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48: 298–302.

Gervais, Will M., Azim Shariff, and Ara Norenzayan. 2011. Do you believe in atheists? Distrust is central to anti-atheist prejudice, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101: 1189–1206.

Goldfried, J. & Miner, M. 2002. Quest religion and the problem of limited compassion. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 41*, 685–95.

Grossman, P. J., & Parrett, M. B. 2011. Religion and prosocial behaviour: a field test. *Applied Economics Letters, 18*(6), 523–526.

Grønbjerg, Kirsten A., Never, Brent. 2004. "The role of religious networks and other factors in types of volunteer work." *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 14, 3.

Hadaway, C. Kirk, Penny L. Marler, and Mark Chaves. 1998. Overreporting church attendance in America: Evidence that demands the same verdict, *American Sociological Review* 63(1): 122–130.

Hayes, B., Alford, B. L., Silver, L. and York, R. P. 2006. "Looks matter in developing consumer-brand Relationships", *Journal of Product & Brand Management* , Vol.15, No.5, 15/5, pp. 306-315.

Haley, Kevin J. and Daniel M. T. Fessler. 2005. Nobody's watching? Subtle cues affect generosity in an anonymous economic game, *Evolution and Human Behavior* 26: 245–256.

Hunter, John A. 2001. Self-esteem and in-group bias among members of a religious social category, *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 141(3): 401–411.

Iannaccone, L. 1997. "Rational Choice: Framework for the Scientific Study of Religion." Pp. 25-44 in *Rational Choice Theory and Religion: Summary and Assessment*, edited by Lawrence A. Young. New York: Routledge.

Jackson, Lynne M. And Victoria M. Esses. 1997. Of scripture and ascription: The relation between religious fundamentalism and intergroup helping, *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin,* 23: 893-906.

Johansson-Stenman, O., Mahmud M, & Martinsson P. (2009). Trust and religion: Experimental evidence from Bangladesh. *Economica*, 76(303), 462–485.

Koenig, Laura, Matt McGue, Robert F. Krueger, and Thomas J. Bouchard. 2007. Religiousness, Antisocial Behavior, and Altruism: Genetic and Environmental Mediation, *Journal of Personality*, 75(2): 265–290.

Kratky J., McGraw J., Xygalatas D., Mitkidis P., Reddish P. It depends who is watching you: 3-dimensional agent representations increase generosity in a naturalistic setting, *in press*.

Lamba, S. and R. Mace. 2010. "People recognise when they are really anonymous in an economic game." Evolution and Human Behavior 31: 271-278.

Leak, Gary K. And Stanley Fish. 1989. Religious orientation, impression management, and self-deception: Toward a clarification of the link between religiosity and social desirability, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 28: 355–359.

Levy, Gabriel. 2014. "'Be careful, or you'll act corruptly and make a carved image for yourselves, in the form of a figure, the likeness male or female' (Deut. 4:16): A commentary on Norenzayan's *Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict*." *Religion*, in press.

Levy, Gabriel. 2013. "The Prospects and Pitfalls of "Just-So" Storytelling in Evolutionary Accounts of Religion." *Method & Theory in the Study of Religion*, *25*(4-5), 451–459.

Levy, Gabriel. 2012. *Judaic Technologies of the Word: A Cognitive Analysis of Jewish Cultural Formation*. Sheffield: Equinox.

Luigi Guiso, Paola Sapienza, Luigi Zingales. 2003. People's opium? Religion andeconomic attitudes. *Journal of Monetary Economics* 50, 225–282.

Malhotra, D. 2010. (When) are religious people nicer religious salience and the "Sunday effect" on pro-social behavior. *Judgment and Decision Making, 5*(2) 138–143.

Mazar, Nina, On Amir, and Dan Ariely. 2008. The dishonesty of honest people: A theory of self-concept maintenance, *Journal of Marketing Research*, 45(6): 633–644.

McCullough & Worthington. 1999. Religion and the forgiving personality. *Journal of Personality*, 67: 1141–1164.

McCullough, Michael E. And Brian L. B. Willoughby. 2009. Religion, self-regulation, and self-control: Associations, explanations, and implications, *Psychological Bulletin*, 135: 69–93.

Miller, Monica K. and Brian H. Bornstein. 2006. The use of religion in death penalty sentencing trials. *Law and Human Behavior*, 30: 675–684.

Mitkidis P., Wallot S., McGraw J., Roepstorff A. Keep the Trust High: The Experience of Trust in a Joint Action Task. *in prep.*

Mitkidis P., Lienard P., Nielbo K., Sørensen J. 2014. Does Goal Demotion enhance Cooperation?. *Journal of Cognition & Culture*. *in press.*

Mitkidis P., Sørensen J., Nielbo K., Andersen M., Lienard P. 2013. Collective Goal Ascription Increases Cooperation in Humans. *PLoS ONE*. 8(5): e64776.

Morgan, S. Philip. 1983. A research note on religion and morality: Are religious people nice people? *Social Forces*, 61: 683–692.

Norenzayan, Ara. 2013. *Big Gods: How Religion Transformed Cooperation and Conflict*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Orbell, John, Marion Goldman, Matthew Mulford, and Robin Dawes. 1992. Religion, context, and constraint toward strangers, *Rationality and Society,* 4(3): 291–307.

Ottoni, Wilhelm, M. 2010. Giving to organizations that help people in need: Differences across denominational identities, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 49(3): 389–412.

Paciotti, Brian, Peter Richerson, Billy Baum, Mark Lubell, Tim Waring, Richard McElreath, Charles Efferson, and Ed Edsten. 2011. Are religious individuals more generous, trusting, and cooperative? An experimental test of the effect of religion on prosociality, *Research in Economic Anthropology,* 31: 267–305.

Park, Julie J. 2012. When race and religion collide: The effect of religion on interracial friendship during college, *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 5(1): 8–21.

Penner, Hans H. 2002. "You don't read a myth for information." In *Radical Interpretation in Religion*, edited by Nancy Frankenberry. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Penner, Hans H. 1999. "What's Wrong with Functional Explanations?" In *Language, truth, and religious belief: studies in twentieth-century theory and method in religion*, edited by Nancy Frankenberry and Hans Panner. Atlanta: Scholars Press.

Perrin, Robin D. 2000. Religiosity and honesty: Continuing the search for the consequential dimension, *Review of Religious Research*, 41(4): 534–544.

Podsakoff, Philip M., Scott B. MacKenzie, Jeong-Yeon Lee, and Nathan P. Podsakoff. 2003. Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5): 879–903.

Powell KL, Roberts G, Nettle D. 2012. Eye images increase charitable donations: Evidence from an opportunistic field experiment in a supermarket. *Ethology* 118: 1096-1101.

Pruckner, Gerald J. and Rupert Sausgruber. 2009. Honesty on the Streets-A Natural Field Experiment on Newspaper Purchasing, Working Paper No. 0924, available at http://www.labornrn.at/wp/wp0924.pdf

Pui–Yan Lam. 2002. As the Flocks Gather: How Religion Affects Voluntary Association Participation, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Volume 41, Issue 3, pages 405–422.

Putnam, Robert D. and David E. Campbell. 2010. *American grace: How religion divides and unites us*. New York, NY: Simon Schuster.

Randolph-Seng, Brandon and Michael E. Nielsen. 2007. Honesty: One effect of primed religious representations, *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 17(4): 303–315.

Saroglou, Vassilis, Isabelle Pichon, Laurence Trompette, Marijke Verschueren, and Rebecca Dernelle. 2005. Prosocial behavior and religion: New evidence based on projective measures and peer ratings, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 44(3): 323–348.

Saslow, Laura R., Robb Willer, Matthew Feinberg, Paul K. Piff, Katharine Clark, Dacher Keltner and Sarina R. Saturn. 2012. My Brother's Keeper?: Compassion Predicts Generosity More Among Less Religious Individuals, *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 4(1): 31–38.

Schloss, Jeffrey P. and Michael J. Murray. 2011. Evolutionary accounts of belief in supernatural punishment: a critical Review. *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 46-99.

Searle, John R. 1999. What is an institution? *Journal of Institutional Economics*, *1*(1), 1–22.

Sedikides, Constantine and Jochen E. Gebauer. 2010. Religiosity as self-enhancement: A meta-analysis of the relation between socially desirable responding and religiosity, *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 14: 17–36.

Shariff, Azim and Ara Norenzayan. 2007. God is watching you, *Psychological Science*, 18(9): 803-809.

Spilka, B., Hood, R. W., Hunsberger, B., & Gorsuch, R. (2003). *The psychology of religion: An empirical approach*, New York: Guilford Press.

Sosis, R., & Ruffle, B. (2003). Religious ritual and cooperation: testing for a relationship on Israeli religious and secular kibbutzim. *Current Anthropology, 44*(5), 713–722.

Stark, Rodney, and William Sims Bainbridge. 1987. *A Theory of Religion*. New York: Peter Lang.

Stark, Rodney, and Roger Finke. 2000. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Stegmueller, Daniel, Peer Scheepers, Sigrid Rossteutscher, and Eelke de Jong. 2012. Support for Redistribution in Western Europe: Assessing the role of religion, *European Sociological Review*, *28*(4): 482–497.

Stokes, Charles E., and Mark D. Regnerus. 2009. When faith divides family: Religious discord and adolescent reports of parent–child relations, *Social Science Research*, 38(1): 155–167.

Su, Hiewu, Tungshan Chou, and Peter G. Osborne. 2011. When Financial Information Meets Religion: Charitable-giving Behavior in Taiwan, *Social Behavior and Personality: an International Journal*, 39(8): 1009–1019.

Tan, Jonathan H. W. 2006. Religion and social preferences: An experimental study, *Economics Letters*, 90(1): 60–67.

Tan, Jonathan H.W. & Vogel, Claudia. 2008. "Religion and trust: An experimental study," Journal of Economic Psychology, Elsevier, vol. 29(6), pages 832-848, December.

Terence C. Burnham & Brian Hare. 2007. Engineering Human Cooperation, Does Involuntary Neural Activation Increase Public Goods Contributions? *Hum Nat* 18: 88–108.

Tsang, Jo-Ann, Ashleigh Schulwitz, and Robert D. Carlisle. 2012. An experimental test of the relationship between religion and gratitude, *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 4(1): 40–55.

Victoroff, Jeff, Samir Quota, Janice R. Adelman, Barbara Celinska, Naftali Stern, Rand Wilcox, Robert M. Sapolsky. 2010. Support for religio-political aggression among teenaged boys in Gaza: Part I: psychological findings, *Aggressive Behavior*, 36(4): 219–231.

Wilson, Jon A. J. and Jonathan Liu, "The Pinocchio Effect, When Managing The Brand Creation Process, Across Cultures," *TMC Academic Journal*, 2009, 4(1): 45-58.

Xygalatas, D. (2012). Effects of religious setting on cooperative behavior: a case study from Mauritius. *Religion, Brain & Behavior*, 3(2): 91-102.

Xygalatas, D., Mitkidis, P., Fischer, R., Reddish, P., Skewes, J., Geertz, A. W., Roepstorff, A. & Bulbulia, J. (2013). Extreme Rituals Promote Prosociality. *Psychological Science* 24(8): 1602–1605.

Xygalatas D., Cigán J., Klocová E., Kotherová S., Kundt R., Kanovski M., Wallot S., Mitkidis P. Effects of Cross-Religious Locations on Generosity. *in prep.*