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Introduction

What We Do and Don't Know about Religious-Based Generosity

On July 7, 2009, Pope Benedict XVI issued an Encyclical Letter, "Charity in Truth," exhorting Christians to understand charity as an expression of God's gift of love and as the foundation of human development. That same year, in late September, Muslims around the world celebrated the religious holiday of Eid al-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan and highlights giving money or food to the poor and needy.[1] Even though religions have charity and giving as virtues and obligations, how religions affect the generosity and public goods provision of their adherents and organizations has not been well understood. There are many questions of theoretical and practical importance. What specific religious beliefs and institutions promote generosity? Do these vary across religious traditions? Do religions promote generosity toward their own members as well as others, or do religions tend to favor their own? How, if at all, do taxation, social welfare arrangements, and religion–state regulations affect the public goods provision of adherents of different religions?

From Indonesian tsunami relief efforts to health clinics in the Gaza Strip to promoting civic culture in America, organized religions have been credited with providing social services. How they do so is not yet well understood. What motivates their adherents to expend time and other resources helping others? Why do religious adherents help in their own organization, when they could simply coast on the labor of others? The intuitive answer may be "their faith," but faith has many dimensions. What aspects of their faith motivate such behavior? Do these individuals help because of a sense of duty to God? Divine inspiration? Love of others? Do they help due to religious commandments, membership requirements, or

[1] Ramadan is the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. During the month, Muslims fast from sunrise to sunset and put more emphasis on charity.

group expectations? Is this generosity an effect of socializing with other adherents? With a wide range of practices and beliefs among religions, do the reasons for prosocial behavior vary across religious traditions?

Additionally, it is not altogether clear why religious adherents make the effort to help others where the state already provides social welfare resources. Conversely, if the state reduces its welfare provision, do organized religions, among other organizations, have the capacity to fill the gap? Furthermore, are the motivations of adherents of minority religions within a particular country different from those of religious majorities? Finally, religious traditions with strict membership requirements and expulsion threats often have extensive social services for their members precisely because of their strictness (Berman 2009; Cammett and Issar 2010; Iannaccone 1992; McBride 2007). How, then, do we explain the large charitable operations of mainstream religious institutions?

This book seeks to answer these questions through a study of Muslims and Catholics in Western Europe and Turkey. It investigates the forces within Catholicism and Islam that lead Catholics and Muslims to provide public goods such as social services and to provide the resources that help sustain their own religious organizations.[2] We have too easily assumed that "the Golden Rule" explains the helping behavior of the religious without pausing to consider whether various religious traditions interpret that rule differently, practice it differently, or even share it at all. Given the prevalence of religion in human society, and given that Islam and Catholicism claim over 2.5 billion followers combined, the subject has broad implications. Worldwide charitable giving is heavily dependent upon the generosity of the major world religions. Even though religions commonly focus on charity and giving as virtues and obligations, the causal mechanisms of the generosity of their adherents and organizations are not well understood. Why are the religious generous?

We think the answer lies in the impact of *religious beliefs* and *religious institutions* on prompting and channeling the generous and helping behavior of religious adherents. We call this behavior "prosocial." First, *beliefs* have a role in generating prosocial behavior and in overcoming collective action barriers. Contributions of time, effort, and other resources to the collective good need not rely on secular or temporal punitive monitoring and sanctioning arrangements but may be instead prompted by faith. Yet these effects could vary across Catholics and Muslims.

[2] "Islam" throughout refers to Sunni Islam, the major branch to which about 80 percent of the world's Muslims adhere. The Shia branch of Islam is more centralized and is far less present in Europe and Turkey (Navaro-Yashin 2002, 46–51; Roy 2005).

Catholics may respond to love of others; Muslims may respond to duty to God. But it is not even as simple as that. The very meaning of these religious concepts varies across religions; we show how it does and what impact that variation has on the generosity of Catholics and Muslims. Second, *religious institutions* create communities (parishes and associations, for example) that in turn engender a sense of solidarity. These communities inspire generosity not through fear but through the positive emotions and sense of solidarity that are produced by social interaction. We see differences between Catholic and Muslim communities as well, and we explore the sources and consequences of those variations.

Clearly, these questions are situated within the ongoing debates about why people help other people, and if, when they are helping others, they really are just helping themselves. Sociobiologists, evolutionary anthropologists, and psychologists tend to argue that we help each other in order to help ourselves (Wilson 2015). It comes down to evolutionary fitness and perpetuating one's genes. In other words, generosity and altruism, as commonly understood, do not exist; instead, those are labels we give to behavior that is promoting individual and group fitness. As Richard Dawkins theorized, helping, at any cost to oneself, is a matter of perpetuating the genes one is carrying by creating an environment that will help them survive (Dawkins 1976/2006). This argument, amid much debate, has been extended to explain multilevel selection: that groups that foster altruism "beat selfish groups," even though within a group, "Selfishness beats altruism" (Wilson and Wilson 2007, 345). When there is "fitness interdependence," with individuals' survival mutually dependent on each other, there may be need-based transfers between members of a group (Aktipis 2016, 22–26). Economists such as Gary Becker of the Chicago School have argued that helping others, or altruism, is merely selfishness in disguise, as helping others creates conditions from which the helper profits (1976).

The philosopher Ayn Rand argued that selfishness is just "concern with one's own interests" and that the concept is not in itself moral or amoral. Rather, for Rand, the immoral is altruism, which she held promoted the idea that anything done to benefit others is good; anything done to benefit the self is "evil" (1961/1964, xii; Den Uyl and Rasmussen 1984). While not carrying this view quite as far as Rand did, evolutionary biologists, social psychologists, and observers of international aid efforts have noted, to put it bluntly, that "[t]here is no reason to assume that altruistic motivation will always be accompanied by wisdom" (Batson, Lishner, and Stocks 2015, 17; Dawkins 1976/2006; Hancock 1989). The question remains, though: why do people help others, if, as Rand asserts, doing so is usually deleterious to the self and potentially to others?

These perspectives may be challenged by some examples of altruism, such as rescuing Holocaust victims (Monroe 1996) or donating time and money to help complete strangers in other countries belonging to very different ethnic or racial groups. Humans' capacity for making sacrifices for those not closely genetically related (outside the "kin" group) is perhaps greater than sociobiologists and economists would expect. This leaves the question of how such sacrifices are prompted. There is some research that indicates that feeling empathy for another individual can do so (Batson, Lishner, and Stocks 2015); other research places helping behavior, as a subcategory of cooperative behavior, as due to effective quid pro quo strategies and enforcement mechanisms (Aktipis 2016). To explain altruism, or at least prosocial helping behavior in larger group contexts, some scholars turn to religion, conceptualizing it as a phenomenon with some functional features that are useful for creating ingroup cooperation, which helps the group survive.

Within this functionalist paradigm, religion enters as something that prompts helping behavior. Humans have evolved an adaptation, religion, that enhances group fitness (Wilson 2002). Evolutionary anthropologists and psychologists have speculated and found evidence that religion promotes individual helping behavior on behalf of the group by creating norms of reciprocity and helping that are enforced by a third-party observer (a deity or deities) and by signaling commitment to the group. In other words, religion is a means of improving group fitness, of making large-scale cooperation possible (Atran and Heinrich 2010). We note, however, that helping others is a characteristic of most nonsociopaths, not just the religious, and that the functionalist approach based on evolution still does not explain outgroup helping. That said, our work is not meant to weigh in on the merits of an evolutionary approach to religion. Our question is not whether religion, by prompting helping behavior, serves some evolutionary function; it is what specific aspects of religion elicit that behavior.

We also are not asking whether people who are "religious" help others more than those who are not. Setting aside the charged nature of the question (Hitchens 2007), the evidence on this question is mixed, with a number of findings showing that the religious are less altruistic, and others that the religious are more helpful or compassionate (Blouin, Robinson, and Starks 2013; Decety et al. 2015; Putnam and Campbell 2010). We are not aware of studies that make comparisons specifically between the areligious, or "less" religious, and Catholics or Muslims.[3] In Chapter 3,

[3] One problem with much of the research is that studies often include religious institutions, such as churches, synagogues, and mosques, in their definition of a charity. Because many

we analyze our demographic data to assess the impact of religiosity based on a commonly used scale, and in Chapter 8 we analyze demographic data from the European Values Survey to assess the relative imperviousness of religiosity to expansive welfare states. We cannot say, however, that there are not secular mechanisms and beliefs that prompt giving as well, with empathy, responsibility, and a "feel good" factor often said to play a role (Andreoni 1990; Singer 2015b). As a number of our interviewees, including religious officials, noted, one does not have to be religious to be generous. They saw helping others as integral to their experience and expression of their faith, but did not view it as something on which religion had a monopoly (MC6, PC7, DC15, PC16, PC26).[4] The questions we focus on primarily in this book are: in what ways do various religions prompt helping behavior, and which aspects of those religions do so? What are the meanings and interpretations adherents give to their generosity? Even if altruism were harmful, or even if religion had evolved as a behavioral and cognitive adaptation that leads people to help each other, significant questions remain about how religions actually foster helping behavior. How do specific religious beliefs and institutions prompt generosity?

What We Already Know and What We Need to Know

We know surprisingly little about the role of religion in prosocial behavior. One noted study on "why people cooperate" didn't mention religion at all (Tyler 2011), while another, on the "social and evolutionary roots of cooperation," devoted only 2 of 246 pages to the impact of religion (Cronk and Leech 2012). The conventional wisdom in political science, economics, and to some extent psychology sees prosocial behavior as a quid pro quo in disguise, or as a public good beset with collective action problems that can only be solved with monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms (Boix and

"religious" people donate to their religious institutions, it appears that the religious give more to charity, which in turn is interpreted as the religious helping others more than do the nonreligiously observant. The latter may belong to secular organizations to which they pay membership fees rather than make donations, while the former's donations mostly are going to the institutions' operating costs (in essence, both are helping to provide club goods). In our study, we do consider adherents' donating to and helping their own religious institution as a form of generosity, or at least helping behavior, but we are also not trying to establish whether religious adherents are more generous than those who are not religious.

[4] We assign each interviewee a code to preserve the anonymity of our interviewees. In coding the interviews, we use the initial of the city, religious affiliation of the interviewee, and a number. For example, the first Catholic interviewee in Milan is coded as MC1; the third Muslim interviewee in Dublin is coded as DM3.

Posner 1998; Edlin, Gelman, and Kaplan 2007; Leeson 2014; Luttmer 2001; Ostrom 1990; Shayo 2009; Smith 2006). These disciplines also, by and large, view religious beliefs per se as epiphenomenal and inconsequential – what matters is some underlying desire to attain power, resources, and better life chances. Others suggest that prosociality is largely the result of circumstance and context, with beliefs too inconsistent and ephemeral to have a role in behavior (Chaves 2010). Yet it would be odd, given all the intellectual, emotional, and cognitive energy that human beings put into formulating, promulgating, and adhering to religious beliefs, if those beliefs had no impact on people's prosocial behavior (Boyer 1994; Prothero 2010; Wuthnow 2011).

The disregard for the impact of beliefs has been accompanied by an emphasis on the capacity of formal and informal institutions to prompt prosocial behavior. Economists and political scientists argue that strict religious sects, terrorist groups, and ethnoreligious groups provide public goods because such groups rigorously monitor and punish (sanction) their members. Evolutionary anthropologists and some economists view religion as a means by which individuals signal to others that they are members of the same group and willing to cooperate with each other (Berman 2009; Bulbulia 2004; Cohen et al. 2015; Hall et al. 2015; Iannaccone 1988; Power 2017; Roes and Raymond 2003; Sosis 2003; 2005; 2006). Extreme sacrificial rites such as "distinctive diet, dress, or speech" demonstrate the willingness of individuals to help others in the group (Iannaccone 1994, 1182). Yet this raises a question: how do mainstream religions, often lacking in effective monitoring and sanctioning structures or extreme sacrifice requirements, create collective goods? Why are the adherents of mainstream religions prosocial despite the absence of demonstrated self-sacrifice and punishment mechanisms?

One answer might be that people internalize the monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms through belief in a punitive deity (Norenzayan 2013) or by internalizing group norms of generosity and reciprocity (Ostrom 2007, 196–197). Another perspective holds that believing in a benevolent God is just as effective (Johnson, Cohen, and Okun 2016). While college students, mostly in North America, have exhibited such behavior in experiments, we do not know if these effects obtain specifically with Muslims or Catholics, and outside the United States and Canada.

Another answer might be that people gain "warm glow" rewards from helping others; generous activity is intrinsically rewarding (Andreoni 1990; Hungerman 2009). There is an accumulating amount of evidence that sanctions and incentives are not the only or even necessary factors to bring

about generous, helping behavior in individuals (Jaeggi, Burkart, and Van Schaik 2010, 2725; Tyler 2011; Warneken 2013). As many have noted, religious teachings typically instruct the faithful to help others. Religions are also organized around communities of the faithful. Both these theological and community mechanisms could have a big role in turning "on" and channeling the prosocial nature of individuals. What we need is an account of the types and content of religious beliefs and religious communities that activate prosocial tendencies and how they do so. Social psychology tells us that the faithful should be generous partly because religious communities have behavioral norms about helping others and because (many) religions create perceptions of someone watching each individual's behavior. Social psychologists have found that individuals tend to be more generous to their ingroup rather than to the general public (outgroup), and have some evidence that this is the case for religious individuals as well (Preston, Ritter, and Hernandez 2010; Tajfel and Turner 1979). However, the field, with a few exceptions (Ritter and Preston 2013), treats "religion" as a unitary concept, thus associating the multiple meanings and aspects of religion with one outcome. The field also has not paid sufficient attention to the impact of different contexts or different religions (but see Cohen et al. 2005; Cohen and Hill 2007). Largely for these reasons, findings have been contradictory and variable (Galen 2012). Social psychologists are only beginning to study the "psychology of Islam" and, prior to our study, had not directly assessed the role of Islam in prompting prosocial behavior (El Azayem and Hedayat-Diba 1994; Ji and Ibrahaim 2007; Raiya et al. 2008; Saroglou and Galand 2004). Mainstream Catholicism, also, has not received the sustained attention with regard to prosociality that other Christian denominations have.

We need to find out if Catholics and Muslims perceive expectations from their religious communities, if the communities are structured to monitor compliance with those expectations and punish deviance from them, and, of course, what those expectations are about helping the group (or others not necessarily in the group). In addition, we then need to see if those expectations create or lead to generous behavior.

We need to examine the kinds of organizations Catholics and Muslims volunteer in and contribute to, assess whether Catholics and Muslims are cognizant of ingroup/outgroup distinctions, and assess whether these group distinctions make any difference to generous behavior. This inquiry is complementary to research on the historical and sociopolitical origins of Catholic and Muslim charitable foundations and activities (Bonner, Ener, and Singer 2003; Brown and McKeown 2009; Clark 2004; Kozlowski

1998; Kuran 2001; 2003; Mollat 1986, 39–53). Catholic and Muslim charitable institutions have developed as vehicles for the expression of religiously inspired or, at least, religiously organized generosity and as religious-based responses to perceived social needs (Flynn 1989; Singer 2002). That development has sometimes been prompted or inhibited by political figures. At the risk of oversimplifying, we know from earlier research that Christian and Islamic benevolent activities developed quickly after the birth of each religion, and, with considerable geographic variation, Christians and Muslims created institutions, some more permanent than others, such as the Islamic *waqf* systems, to produce activities intended to benefit the community (Arjomand 1998; Diefendorf 2004; Misner 1991). How do the contemporary structures of Catholic parishes and Islamic associations affect the generosity of their members, and how are charitable religious institutions sustained in secularizing societies? Religious-based charities are sometimes analyzed as tools for members' sociopolitical advancement (Cammett and Issar 2010; Clark 2004; Davis and Robinson 2012). How do the members themselves understand the organizations' activities and why they contribute time and other resources to them? It is clear from research on religions in the United States that, as one study put it, people of faith give "spiritual meanings" to their social volunteerism and work in charitable organizations (Cherry 2014; Cnaan 2002; Kniss and Numrich 2007; Unruh and Sider 2005, 67). We ask, in a non-US context, what are the meanings and motivations of Catholics and Muslims, and do they vary by religion?

Finally, we have some evidence that as the welfare state expands, religiosity, typically measured as attendance at religious services, declines because the marginally faithful can get social services from the state instead of a religious organization (Gill and Lundsgaarde 2004). For Christian denominations, the findings on the relationship between religious generosity, defined as adherents' donations of time and material resources to their own religion, and the extent of the welfare state, are contradictory (Franck and Iannaccone 2014; Traunmüller and Freitag 2011; Van Oorschot and Arts 2005). We know that *zakat* and *waqf* giving systems of Islam were not capable, for various reasons, of providing comprehensive, long-term public welfare in the states that tried to rely on them (Kuran 2001; 2003; Rubin 2017).[5] Whatever the impact of the welfare state on generosity, we nevertheless do not know why the faithful in welfare states give generously of their time and other resources.

[5] Zakat, or obligatory giving based on a percentage of one's wealth, is discussed in Chapter 2, and waqf, a type of charitable foundation, in Chapters 2 and 8.

Puzzles of Catholic and Muslim Prosocial Behavior

What do we know of the faithful themselves? What aspects of their religious community and faith do Catholics and Muslims think matter in generosity? Nearly twenty years ago, Robert Wuthnow asked whether "different religious traditions encourage different kinds (or levels) of charitable involvement" (1991, 124), and our study is situated within the scholarship that has responded to his question. While social scientists debate the impact of religion on generosity, do the faithful themselves think their generous actions have their religion as the source? How do believers understand and think of their motivations for generosity? Learning the ways people describe their actions provides a window on how, if at all, their religious beliefs and institutions have affected their understanding of their generosity. As Wuthnow notes, "having a language to describe our motives for caring is one of the ways in which we make compassion possible in the individualistic society in which we live" (1991, 49–50).

We know Catholicism as a formally practiced religion in Europe has been in decline. If, as many say, the pews are empty at mass, who is contributing and why? We do not know the pathways that lead practicing Catholics to contribute to collective goods. If we examine the extensive descriptive research by sociologists on religion and charity in (mostly) Protestant denominations and (mostly) in the United States, we would speculate that it is from some combination of belief and a desire to evangelize (Davis and Robinson 2012; Smith and Emerson 2008; Tropman 2002; Wuthnow and Evans 2002). However, we do not have systematic data on which beliefs, motivations, or organizational structures foster or inhibit adherents' helping behaviors. There are hundreds of Catholic charities in France, Italy, and Ireland alone, not to mention the constrained set in Turkey; how is it that parishes sustain their charitable activities? How do they meet the expenses of their parish church? Numerous parishes in Europe, as elsewhere, have had to turn to the laity to do tasks that used to be done by priests; how do parishes meet those needs?

We also know Islam is spreading in Western Europe and has been reinvigorated in Turkey and elsewhere, but we have limited knowledge of generosity and public goods provision in the widely practiced nonextremist variants of Islam. The extant literature has focused on the *waqf* system's impact on economic development (e.g., Kuran 2001) and on zakat obligations (Utvik 2006). It has also focused on particular charitable organizations or political groups such as the Red Crescent (e.g., Benthall and Bellion-Jourdan 2003) and the Muslim Brotherhood (e.g., Davis and

Robinson 2012), on trends in Middle Eastern countries (Atia 2013; Bonner, Ener, and Singer 2003; Cammett 2014; Clark 2004), or on the broad history of philanthropy in Islam (e.g., Kozlowski 1998). What we don't (yet) have is a targeted assessment of the impact of Islamic beliefs and institutions on individual Muslims' generosity or prosocial behavior. The conventional wisdom is that the zakat obligation is what is behind any generosity by Muslims, yet there have not been empirical studies that support this understanding.

As mentioned earlier, most of our knowledge of public goods provision and Islam stems from studies of groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah. Passing under the radar screen of scholars and policymakers are mainstream groups. Given that the vast majority of Muslims adhere to mainstream versions of Islam and associate with mainstream mosques and cultural centers (Esposito and Mogahed 2008; Fish 2011), any further understanding of contemporary Islam and generosity depends on some examination of nonextremist groups.

Our Approach

The goal of this volume is to illuminate which aspects of Catholicism and Islam lead to adherents' generosity. In the remainder of this chapter, we first present key concepts and terms. We then introduce our theoretical framework and focus on two main areas that may influence the prosocial behavior of religious adherents. These are the impacts of (1) religious institutions and their communities and (2) religious beliefs. We pay attention to how these factors are affected by sociopolitical contexts such as whether a religious group is a majority or minority, the character of religion–state relations, and the extent of state-provided social welfare. Following this discussion, we review our research strategy and methodology while elaborating on our research sites. In this chapter, we explain our use of experimental and case study research.

To preview the findings of our analyses, some, but not all, religious beliefs we typically associate with generosity do motivate prosocial behavior in Catholics and Muslims, and they are not the same in both religions. Second, some aspects of religious institutions prompt prosocial behavior, but they are not the ones expected by those who focus on monitoring and sanctioning mechanisms. Instead, they are the aspects that create positive feelings about the religious communities and that enhance adherents' sense of responsibility to sustain the organization. This "responsibility" effect is, as one would expect, more pronounced in the communities of religious