

## *Symposium S-111*

### **The Dark Side of Religion: Intolerance, Prejudice and Antisocial Behavior**

**Saturday, February 15, 2014, 5:00 PM - 6:15 PM, Room 6**

**Chair:** Patty Van Cappellen, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

**Co-Chair:**

Religion may bring out the best and the worst in people. This symposium presents novel experimental data on religion's role in promoting prejudice, submission, and antisocial behaviors and how these outcomes can lead to doubt regarding religion. Different explanatory accounts for the seemingly divergent outcomes of religion will be discussed.

#### **Religion, Prosociality, and Prejudice**

Wade C. Rowatt, Megan Johnson. Shen, Jordan LaBouff, Megan Haggard, Linda Kang  
*Baylor University; Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center; University of Maine*

Forms of religiosity/religion increase prosociality but also prejudice, which may seem somewhat paradoxical. Our theory is that religious participation strengthens in-group social bonds which fosters conditions for both acts of carefully targeted charity, but also generally negative social evaluations of out-group members. For example, in two studies of representative samples of Americans, religiosity correlated positively with racial and sexual prejudices, community volunteerism performed through one's religious group, but not community volunteerism not through one's religious group. In three well-controlled lab experiments people primed with religion reported more racial and sexual prejudice than persons primed with control words. Taken together these findings support the idea that religiosity/religion fosters discriminant acts of charity and non-proscribed prejudices.

#### **Religion as Parochial Altruism**

Ara Norenzayan

*University of British Columbia*

Gordon Allport famously said that religion makes prejudice and it unmakes prejudice. How can religion both encourage prosocial tendencies and boundary-setting, intolerant ones? Allport's paradox can be resolved if religion turns out to be a powerful shaper of parochial altruism in humans. Parochial altruism -- the fusion of ingroup prosociality and outgroup hostility -- evolves when intergroup competition intensifies. Prosocial religions with passionate commitment to watchful Big Gods outcompete rival groups because they encourage social solidarity. This solidarity deepens bonds within the ingroup, but turns toxic for outgroups when perceptions of actual or imagined threat from competing religious groups and from nonbelievers feed into hostility and prejudice. I argue that as a result of a cultural evolutionary process over time and variable across societies, some religions cobble together both prosocial and intolerant tendencies that favour the cultural stability of the ingroup. Recent empirical findings are discussed in light of these considerations.

#### **Religion, Submission, and Conformity: A Single Process with Diverging Outcomes**

Vassilis Saroglou, Patty Van Cappellen, Olivier Corneille, Joanna Blogowska

*Universite catholique de Louvain; University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

Religion increases prosocial or antisocial behavior depending on the target, the specific religious concepts primed, and the underlying forms of religiosity. However, the paradox of pro-

and anti-social effects can also be understood as resulting from religion's capacity to enhance submission to authority and social conformity, be it for good or bad. The present work extends our previous research showing that subliminal religious priming increases accessibility of submission-related words, behavioral submission to an experimenter's non-moral request, and informational conformity to peers. In four new experiments we found that exposure to religious authoritative texts affected fundamentalists' willingness to help outgroup targets depending on whether the text contained prosocial or aggressive content. Additionally, we found that subliminal religious priming increased mere social closeness: participants who were primed with religious content sat closer to an ostensibly occupied chair that was next to other, unoccupied ones. Before prosociality or prejudice, religion may simply fuel a desire for social closeness, and thus conformity.

### **Interpersonal Conflicts around Religion: A Major Source of Religious Struggle**

Julie J. Exline, Kenneth I. Pargament, Joshua B. Grubbs, Ann M. Yali

*Case Western Reserve University; Bowling Green State University; City College of New York*

It can be easy to assume that religion is a source of comfort for individuals. Although this is often true, a growing body of research suggests that many people also experience struggles around religion. This talk will provide a brief overview of research on religious struggle with an emphasis on the interpersonal themes highlighted in this symposium. The talk will introduce a new measure, the Religious and Spiritual Struggles Scale, which assesses 6 domains of struggle (divine, demonic, interpersonal, moral, ultimate meaning, doubt). Data will be presented showing that many struggles that people experience around religion are interpersonal in nature, including conflicts about religious issues, offenses by religious people, and anger focused on organized religion. The talk will review data suggesting that concerns about religious intolerance and associated interpersonal problems (e.g., proselytizing; teachings about the role of women) are a substantial predictor of interpersonal struggle and doubt regarding religion.