

2002 Presidential Address

FROM RELIGIOUS MARKETS TO RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES: CONTRASTING IMPLICATIONS FOR APPLIED RESEARCH

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The major argument of this paper is that the market model of religion (part of the sociology of religion's "new paradigm") should be balanced by an equally strong focus on the concept of community. In contrast to the individualistic utilitarian assumptions of the market model, in which individuals' religious beliefs and behavior reflect their rational choice efforts to obtain the most personal benefits at the lowest cost, the concept of community emphasizes that individuals' interests may be expanded through emotional bonds with fellow-members and identification with the community's welfare and values. Although members benefit personally from belonging, their motivations are seen as different from those involved in market transactions, and the nature of emotional exchanges within communities makes the cost/reward distinction difficult to establish on an objective basis. Variations in the relative priority different people give to personal interests versus community obligations may be related to gender as well as to generational cohort and other historical, cultural, and subcultural variations in different social settings. The differences in the underlying implications of the concepts of market versus community are important because of their potential to influence the nature of the social world that scholars seek to understand.

From the widespread use of the terms "market" and "community," I'm sure you might anticipate the general direction I'd like to invite us to go as we consider just one aspect of the general theme of religion and applied research. But before I get into this I'd like to say that it has indeed been an honor to serve as your president these last two years. The ideals and goals of RRA are very close to my own heart. Frankly, when I finished my third term as editor of our journal in 1999 I thought I'd have a little reprieve from RRA work. But it was indeed very flattering and a real honor to be elected RRA president after serving so many years as editor. When I was elected I recall thinking that I must have been very fortunate in somehow managing not to make too many people unhappy during the years when I was editor. And—I've discovered that the job of being president has been much less time-consuming than being editor, thanks in large part to the good work Bill Swatos does as Executive Officer in handling RRA's administrative affairs.

I can remember several years ago when RRA was reorganized to have an executive officer to handle the administrative details of the RRA office. But the president needed to have something to do other than call our annual meetings to order and otherwise try to act presidential. So, the decision was made for the president to give a presidential address during the second year of his or her presidency.

Many of you will remember that previous presidential addresses were given by Clark Roof (the first one), Peggy Shriver, Benton Johnson, Carl Dudley, and Ed Lehman. To reminisce just a bit, all of these lectures were indeed remarkable milestones in doing exactly what I feel is appropriate on such occasions. I know; I re-read all of them. Now, as I stand here, I feel that there are any number of you who could probably provide some reflections on the current state of our field, and maybe make some predictions about its future, that are as comprehensive and insightful as anything I could say—probably more so. But with all due respect I would be skeptical about any predictions that anyone might make about our future. Anyone who dares to make such predictions should certainly have the wisdom to be very vague, so as to allow for multiple interpretations when the time comes, and also to peer far enough into the future that no one will remember when the predictions fail to come true.

In the early years of my career, the sociology of religion was still stuck firmly in its old paradigm. Secularization was seen as advancing and competition among religious groups was expected to have long-term negative effects on religion, despite the contrary evidence in the U.S. As far as I knew then no one envisioned the kind of transformation of the field that Stephen Warner (1993) described so thoroughly in his *AJS* “new paradigm” article almost a decade ago. I’m not sure what “old paradigm” sociologists of religion envisioned themselves doing once the secularization process was complete and religion either lost its social relevance or disappeared completely.

I seriously doubt that anyone in the late ‘60s and early ‘70s would have predicted such a strong surge of interest in the social scientific study of religion in the last few decades, or that the proportion of younger scholars in the field would have been as high as it is today. As you no doubt know it’s been less than a decade since a specialized sociology of religion section was formed within the American Sociological Association, and I know part of the rationale was to provide space within ASA for young scholars working in this area. And, of course, both of the organizations meeting jointly here today, SSSR and RRA, plus the Association for the Sociology of Religion (ASR), continue to thrive.

Truly, events of the last two decades provide ample grounds for us to acknowledge the continuing importance of religion in all its various changing forms in our late modern or postmodern world. This means scholars and researchers will have plenty of work to do for the foreseeable future, especially as the process of globalization brings to the forefront the conflicting worldviews that are inspired or legitimated by different religious traditions.

MARKETS VERSUS COMMUNITIES

The concepts of religious markets and religious communities are both widely used today, as we all know. Not only is the market model an important part of the new paradigm Steve Warner described (Warner, 1993), but Clark Roof also used the idea of a “marketplace” to analyze the individualistic spiritual quests that are transforming the contemporary religious scene (Roof, 1999). But the major boost in the elaboration and application of the market model to religion is largely a result of the impressive work done by that well-known and highly influential trinity of market-oriented rational choice theorists: Rodney Stark, Roger Finke, and Larry Iannaccone (see Young, 1997: Chapters 1-3).

For well over a decade now the work of these and many other scholars extends and elaborates in various important ways the systematic theory that Stark and Bainbridge put forth in 1987 in *A Theory of Religion*. As Stark and Finke put it more recently in the subtitle of their book, *Acts of Faith* (2000), this focus on the religious choices people make

to try to maximize the bottom-line pay-offs in their religious portfolio is the *human* side of religion. I like the way this newer version downplays the notion of religion as providing mere “compensators” (as opposed to real rewards) that was a major feature of Stark and Bainbridge’s earlier work. I also liked the way Stark and Finke used the basic “rational choice” model in *Acts of Faith* to criticize the older view that religion was fundamentally irrational (Stark and Finke, 2000: Chapter 2)—a view that clearly reflected social scientists’ biases.

But—the general concept of community seems equally appropriate to apply to religious groups, particularly at the congregational level. Indeed, justifying the use of the concept of community in trying to understand local congregations hardly seems necessary. Without doing any kind of comprehensive listing of studies that incorporate the dynamics of community in looking at local congregations, perhaps I could mention as examples Nancy Ammerman’s (1997) book (with her collaborators) that shows how congregations as communities adapt to changes in their local neighborhoods, and Penny Edgell Becker’s (1999) book that shows how congregational conflict is handled in churches with different collective images about themselves. Of course, both of these books had broader purposes than simply demonstrating that congregations *are* communities. But it was clear that all of the congregations in both books exhibited various forms of community ties. The book on new immigrant congregations put together by Steve Warner and Judith Wittner (1998) plus the one by Helen Rose Ebaugh and Janet Chafetz (2000) might also be mentioned for their focus on community bonds that are based in these books on both ethnicity and religion — bonds not yet eroded by the high level of individualism of American culture. The concept of community is certainly closer to the hearts of those in the pew in describing their particular religious group than the concepts of corporate group or bureaucratic organization or competitive market supplier.

My basic goal this afternoon is, first and foremost, to contrast these two concepts—market and community—in terms of their underlying images of what religion is all about—or at least differences in what our primary focus is when we seek to understand it. I want to argue that the concept of community helps us to focus on the way individual interests may be transformed and expanded, even while community members share in the personal rewards of belonging.

Second, I would like us to consider the implications of the difficulty of establishing sharp distinctions between religious rewards and religious costs on an objective basis (which rational choice theorists themselves recognize). This difficulty is due partly to the subjective nature of the social definitions involved in establishing costs and rewards. More importantly, it is due to the *emotional* dynamics of the paradoxical way in which rewards like emotional reinforcement may be experienced in the very process in which costs are being incurred.

These first two points are the major ones. But as a third point, I want to suggest briefly the importance of distinguishing different people’s religious orientations (and perhaps their very identity) in terms of the priority they give to satisfying their own personal interests, as implied by the market model, as opposed to seeking to transcend their narrow self-interests for the sake of commitments to the social bonds and the moral values shared by fellow-members of their communities. This will involve looking at individualism and communal identification as opposite ends of a continuum—while recognizing, of course, that different people in different situations will fall at different points along such a hypothetical continuum.

Finally, I want to use Anthony Giddens' (1984) concept of the "double hermeneutic" in my concluding fourth point to come back to my contention that the language we use to engage in scholarly analysis does indeed have the potential to make a practical difference in terms of helping to define and thus actually shaping the social world that we seek to understand.

In contrasting market and community I am not suggesting that community ties or ideals can ever override individuals' utilitarian concerns with their own personal needs and interests. In fact, the ideas on community I'd like us to consider could readily be incorporated into a rational choice perspective. I'm sure proponents of the rational choice perspective would claim that they already have been, and perhaps they are right. But my argument is that a stronger focus on the concept of community could lead to a change in emphasis, or perhaps an expansion, of the rational choice perspective. Specifically, it would balance its individualistic assumptions with a more explicit analysis of community bonds and moral commitments that transcend the utilitarian individualistic emphasis of rational choice theory. Moreover, I believe these differences in the fundamental images suggested by the concepts of market versus community are potentially relevant to the concerns of applied researchers—that these differences matter in the kinds of issues and questions that applied researchers find interesting and worth investigating.

By emphasizing the contrast between the motivations and social relations of market versus community, I certainly do not intend to ignore the religious experience itself. Actually, I will not deal with religious experience in this presentation, but I do want at least to recognize its importance. Those who have a propensity for deep religious experiences (those who are "religiously musical" to use Weber's term) would probably see their subjective experiences as more foundational in their mentality than either rational calculation or their social relations in the religious community (Berger, 1980; Eliade, 1959; Otto, 1976; Young, 1997). I would agree with those who argue that such experiences belong more to the category of the nonrational, the intuitive or the imaginative, and especially the emotional, as opposed to categories of thought that can be evaluated as rational or irrational. This would include religious experiences that are generated or reinforced through collective religious rituals, as described in Durkheim's classic analysis (Durkheim, 1965 [1915]).

Such experiences probably involve different areas of the brain than those involved in rational calculation. I am certainly no brain expert, but I do understand that it is the neo-cortex that is involved in rational calculation and decision making while the limbic system is implicated in emotional experiences (Turner, 2000), and that neurological processes within the temporal lobes are associated with the experience of feeling at one with some transcendent or cosmic reality (Persinger, 1987).

To illustrate the wide scope of the rational choice perspective, I should point out that Stark and Finke acknowledge explicitly the reinforcing and rewarding effects of mystical experiences (Stark and Finke, 2000: 110-111; see also Stark, 1991) as well as collective rituals (Stark and Finke, 2000: 107-108). (Stark later made the additional argument that the effects of rituals in sustaining the moral order depend on whether God is seen as knowing, powerful, and caring with regard to responding to human beings' actions [Stark, 2001: 634].)

Moreover, rational choice-type decision making processes may certainly be involved in people's conscious efforts to seek such experiences—and if successful, these efforts are thereby reinforced. When a positive experience occurs without being sought—an experience of grace—it sometimes leads to reflection on what kinds of actions or settings trig-

gered such an experience and perhaps a conscious effort to repeat such actions or revisit such settings.

One other important preliminary point I need to make is that markets and communities should be seen as applying to different levels of analysis, and also to different stages of individual religious involvement. The religious market would include the total array of religious suppliers and consumers in a society while religious communities develop within particular niches, particularly within congregational and perhaps parachurch settings. (This is the same distinction that Stark and Finke (2000) made between the religious group and the religious economy.) So, for example, Protestants in a new community who set out to find a new church home may be said to be in the market, hoping to find a religious group with which they are comfortable, that will meet their needs, etc., and these preferences will be based on their past experiences, or (as economists might say) their acquired religious capital. They may consider or visit several before they make their choice, with their shopping patterns reflecting *both* their past experiences *and* their current social network ties. But once they join a congregation, they are no longer in the market (just like job seekers are no longer in the market once they land a job).

Then, as the new member forms emotional bonds with fellow-members and gradually identifies with the congregation, a sense of belonging develops. Consistent with the rational choice perspective the eventual strength or intensity of this sense of belonging will indeed depend heavily on how much the individual feels she or he is getting out of this involvement, whether in terms of spiritual needs, social needs, or whatever, in relation to what is required to remain in good standing. Eventually the new member's preferences will be modified as he or she learns and identifies with the congregation's particular culture. However, this isn't necessarily a permanent commitment, as we know from the literature on switchers and dropouts.

MARKETS AND INDIVIDUAL INTERESTS

As we all know the market model emphasizes that people in general seek to maximize their bottom line net gains in terms of personal religious preferences that vary for different individuals. We don't need to go over this ground in great detail but, as our rational choice colleagues have emphasized, with numerous options in an open and competitive market situation, the opportunities are greater for more people to satisfy their particular preferences than if the choices are narrower, or if established monopolistic suppliers can be assured of adequate resources by the state and so don't have to worry about attracting customers.

This market-oriented rational choice perspective has been both criticized and elaborated by numerous scholars for various reasons. Overall reactions range from Steve Bruce's (1999) outright repudiation of it as simplistic and inconsistent with the evidence, for example, to Jim Spickard's (1998) selective criticism and reformulation, to the efforts by Chris Ellison and Darren Sherkat and their colleagues to explain people's preferences and choices in terms of sociocultural background, embeddedness in social networks, and the opportunities and constraints in their social environment (Ellison, 1995; Sherkat and Wilson, 1995; Ellison and Sherkat, 1995; Sherkat, 1997; Sherkat and Cunningham, 1998).

It's not our goal now to review or evaluate the extensive literature in this debate; a brief sampling can be found in the special "Symposium" published in the March 1995 issue of the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (with its opening article by Laurence Iannaccone and critiques by Chris Ellison, Mark Chaves, and N. J. Demerath, with the last

word by Iannaccone [economists often seem to have the last word]). The little 1997 book edited by Lawrence Young (1997) also provides both summary statements and assessments of the rational choice theory applied to religion.

Rational choice theorists certainly recognize that individuals do not live in a social and cultural vacuum, and Iannaccone's "last word" (now five years old and so no longer his last word) is quite explicit in incorporating the effects of past experience and social relationships into his model. The limitations of an overly individualistic image of humans are particularly evident with religious beliefs and behavior, where costs and rewards include intangibles based largely on cultural definitions which are learned through the process of participating in the religious group (see Bankston III, 2002).

Given the great variety in people's religious preferences and tastes, the key to success for religious entrepreneurs or leaders in a pluralistic and unregulated open market is to learn the preferences of those in their particular market niche, *or* try to generate new preferences, *or* find a niche where potential demand is high but the existing supply is low and then provide the best deal to these potential customers in terms of the most personal benefits at the lowest cost. This picture fits in well with the basic structure of a free enterprise or capitalistic economic system with a high level of individualism and a culture that encourages maximum satisfaction of personal wants.

TRANSCENDING PERSONAL INTERESTS THROUGH COMMUNITY IDENTIFICATION

In contrast to markets, the concept of community is consistent with what religious people themselves typically regard as what religion is all about (Ward, 2000). "Community" implies cohesive social bonds, shared beliefs and memories, and mutual responsibilities that inspire individuals to move beyond their narrow self-interests. This is not to say that members do not also receive personal benefits by belonging. But their orientations and motivations are modified and expanded by the socioemotional bonds they develop with fellow-members. Through this process of identification they develop a commitment to values that are shared within the community, including the value of maintaining and strengthening the community itself.

This is not quite the same as saying people's own individual preferences are shaped by the community—though this certainly happens. But in addition, when they identify with the community, they eventually view their own interests as somehow linked to its welfare. They may even manage to submerge their individual interests for the sake of the community. They may also, of course, distinguish among their own personal interests, the individual interests of other members, and the overall welfare of the community. But in contrast to the market model emphasis on the human side of religion (which obviously we cannot escape), the concept of community helps us instead to focus on the way people think things should be—to emphasize religion's ideal side. What happens in community is the process Charles Horton Cooley described for primary groups: the "I" is merged with the "we" of the group or community (Cooley, 1929).

Contemporary discussions of community sometimes lament its current absence in our individualistic society as compared to the way people imagined it to exist in the past. This concern for community is reflected in the work of many scholars with whom you are familiar. These include, for example, Robert Bellah, especially his widely read book with sev-

eral co-authors entitled *Habits of the Heart* (1985); Amatai Etzioni and his promotion of a voluntary communitarian form of morality and social order that will preserve individual autonomy (Etzioni, 1996; 2001), and Putnam's diagnosis of the decline in our civic participation as dramatized by the increase in the number of people "bowling alone" (Putnam, 2000). It is also a major theme in the numerous books by our current SSSR president, Robert Wuthnow (1991; 1995; 1998), whose insightful analyses help us identify the various social and cultural resources that can be mobilized to stimulate compassion and kindness in our individualistic and fragmented society. This high level of individualism in our society today even characterizes many contemporary religious groups, as you know from contemporary research and scholarly analysis that shows how people's religious beliefs and practices reflect their own personal decisions regarding what to accept and what to reject from the offerings provided by various religious organizations (see, for example, Hammond, 1992 and Roof, 1999).

As I see it, community bonds go beyond the kind of rational choice calculation that Michael Hechter described for members of obligatory groups (Hechter, 1987). But I do agree 100 percent with his emphasis on the importance of the personal benefits of group membership, and the desire of members to avoid costs like social disapproval or other negative sanctions. But I think it stretches the point to refuse to acknowledge the sincerity of the efforts of some (not all) to move beyond the individualistic and utilitarian mentality of the market to demonstrate their concern for others and their commitment to the values espoused by their community.

The willingness of some people to engage in self-sacrificing behavior is consistent with the emphasis on the appeal of high cost or strict religious groups in the market model, but the underlying motivation is different. It is not to maintain a favorable reward/cost balance in one's personal portfolio but instead to move beyond or transcend a narrow concern with one's own personal self-interests. Self-sacrificing altruists with high moral commitments may indeed experience a great deal of intrinsic satisfaction in the process, but this is not their primary motivation, at least not consciously (though skeptics or rational choice theorists may disagree, seeing it instead as a manifestation of unconscious motives—or insincerity.) But in terms of their own subjective consciousness, such persons, few though they be, may be quite deliberate and intentional in seeking to move toward a level of personal integrity and moral commitment that goes beyond simply looking out for #1.

These saintly souls may even develop a critical orientation to their own ambivalent motives. They might, for example, worry that their desire to help others or their community is really fueled by their own self-righteousness or their desire for gratitude or social approval, or perhaps by guilt feelings that develop when they reflect on how their abundant blessings compare with the hardships endured by others.

On the other hand, it is also true that some members of the community may certainly be tempted to get by with free-riding, just as Stark and Finke described the way people often seek to minimize or delay their payments to the deity for the benefits they hope to receive (Stark and Finke, 2000: 100-102). The temptation to free-ride is probably greater if the community is not organized to impose a high level of strictness effectively or punish free-riders. Also, despite the positive implications associated with the idea of community, we should also recognize that some communities may be so demanding that they actually repress and stifle our individual freedom to a degree that we would find highly unacceptable.

The difference between market transactions and community bonds is well captured, I think, in David Bromley and Bruce Busching's (1988) contrast between "contract" relations and "covenant" relations. Contract relations are established to serve each party's personal interests, and the only obligations each party has to the other are those spelled out in the contract. In contrast, people in covenant relations agree to be committed to one another and the solidarity of their relationship. They are expected, and in fact may solemnly promise, to give high priority to one another's needs even when these mutual responsibilities cannot be spelled out in precise detail in advance. The contrast is reminiscent of the "pattern variables" that Talcott Parsons labeled as specificity (the contract relation) versus diffuseness (the covenant relation), and also "self-orientation" versus "collectivity orientation" (Parsons and Shils, 1951). It also may be related to the distinction Habermas (1984: 84-87) made between purposive or teleological action (or instrumental rationality) on the one hand versus normative action on the other. With regard to this latter dichotomy, I certainly would concur with rational choice theory that community members may well be influenced by the knowledge that normative action leads to many personal benefits, while failure to conform can be costly, and this consideration may blur the distinction between utilitarian and normative action. Of course, dichotomies like these are limited as descriptions of the way the world is.

Nevertheless, I believe the distinction between markets and communities is still important, even in our differentiated and fragmented world. But I don't see it as an "either/or" distinction; instead, all social relations may include varying mixtures of the motivations and dynamics of both markets and communities. At the same time I agree 100 percent with Steve Bruce's point that the type of "closed feudal village" community that Tönnies described in contrasting *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* does not fit within modern society (Bruce, 1999: 169). Instead, communities today are voluntary in nature and involve limited and negotiable levels of commitment, consistent with the high level of individualism in our society.

A sense of community is as much an ideal in people's minds as it is a description of the actual social relationships in which they are involved. Such an ideal would of course have an appropriate and satisfying balance between freedom and responsibility. It could include imagined images of close-knit neighborliness and mutual helpfulness on a local level, or a vision of a universal community that transcends all of the differences among people throughout society, or indeed the whole world, and inspires us to treat one another as brothers and sisters in the human family.

Of course, individuals and groups of all types, religious and otherwise, vary greatly in terms of whether their primary focus is limited to their local community and personal relations, or whether they seek to identify with a larger, more inclusive or universal community. In general, we might expect that members of a religious group will have a stronger sense of a universal community if this cultural ideal is explicitly promoted in some fashion and if people are given opportunities to demonstrate their abstract love for the world in specific actions and then reinforced for doing so.

We should certainly expect that people's community identification is likely to be stronger if they actually do have actual social bonds with one another. But latent community solidarity can be activated even among strangers in times of crisis or threat, as was illustrated here in Salt Lake City when the kidnapping of Elizabeth Smart from her bedroom occurred back in June (of 2002), as well as in the aftermath of September 11 throughout our society.

THE PARADOX OF COSTS AND BENEFITS IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY

And now for my second major point: In emphasizing this concept of community, I certainly am not intending to suggest that people will ever reach a point where they are totally indifferent to their own well-being or their own interests—at least not most people, not most of the time—even in societies that are less individualistic than ours. To look briefly at just one small example from a very different context with which you may be familiar: tucked away in the first book of Chronicles in the Old Testament of the Christian Bible is the little story of Jabez and his prayer that God would bless him individually and enlarge his own territory (I Chronicles 4:10)—even though the divine covenant with the Israelites in which blessings were promised in exchange for loyalty applied primarily to the people collectively. It is interesting that the prayer of Jabez is promoted today in some circles as a model for Christians to emulate in their own prayer lives. (At the Crystal Cathedral gift shop, for example, tourists can purchase from a large selection of Jabez mementoes to help them remember and celebrate the prayer of Jabez as the secret to an abundant life filled with personal blessings from the Almighty.)

But even without being quite this self-centered, there is an interesting paradox in the dynamics of giving and receiving among fellow-members of a community. Despite the teachings in the Judeo-Christian heritage challenging us to self-giving love and sacrifice, there is also a lot of explicit emphasis on the blessings we'll receive for our faithfulness in fulfilling our religious obligations. We are told that God loves a cheerful giver, but we are encouraged to be cheerful by the assurance that our gift will be reciprocated with blessings—including not only blessings from God but also the gratitude and respect of fellow members of the community. We all can recall the text advising us to “give and it shall be given unto you”—abundantly. It is almost a parallel to eating our cake and having it too—or, in this case, giving our cake away and getting an even bigger one as a gift.

This paradox is partly understandable in view of the intrinsic connection between giving and receiving. As Iannaccone's (1994) analysis of strict churches suggests, when production and consumption are tightly coupled, as occurs when people participate in a religious service, the rewards to be shared are inevitably greater when the contributions of each are greater. For example, we may enjoy raising our voices in song in a religious service, even though the expenditure of time and energy to do so may be considered a cost (at least to rational choice theorists if not to the worshipers)—and it is especially enjoyable when others are simultaneously engaged with equal enthusiasm. The collective experience of lifting our voices together in song is indeed different from the experience of being a passive member of an audience listening to a professional choir—or singing by ourselves in the shower.

This collective production for our own collective consumption is perhaps comparable to Marx's notion of household production of use value as opposed to exchange value. It is also consistent with Edward Lawler's (2001) analysis of joint production in which individual contributions to a rewarding collective outcome are not easily separable and in which self-attributions for success are intrinsically linked with attributions to the group. In addition to this blurring of the distinction between production and consumption, the lack of any objective measure of the cost of some of the inputs or the value of the outputs must also be considered as we puzzle over the meaning of the distinction between costs and rewards in the area of religion (see Nietz and Neuser, 1997).

But despite the tight coupling of inputs and outputs, and the fact that both are based in part on shared cultural definitions, the obvious point to be made in this connection is that members of communities and congregations often seem unable to get the point—or they simply refuse to “get it” for some reason. That is, they typically seem very reluctant to give eagerly, as much as they can, so as to earn the highest possible return on their investments. Despite the best efforts of leaders of religious groups and other voluntary organizations to persuade their members to maximize their contributions of time, money, and talents (to “give ‘til it hurts”), and thereby maximize the abundance of the blessings they will receive in return, *not a single one* of the religious groups and other voluntary organizations with which I am familiar suffer from an overabundance of resources. Somehow, the testimonials of those who claim that more extravagant giving leads to more abundant receiving have very limited persuasive appeal. Certainly the rational choice argument that people seek to reduce costs as much as possible is a valid point as far as most of us are concerned. It is not easy to inspire us to expand our motivations beyond our own narrow self-interests, despite the eventual (and sometimes intangible) benefits that may flow from doing so.

It is also no easy task to sort out the various conflicting and inconsistent aspects of our motives and our values. Even when we fulfill our community obligations as expected, our motivation may well be the individualistic utilitarian motivation to avoid negative sanctions or increase our status—to say nothing of all the other benefits of belonging. But some people eventually learn that both their self-generated good feelings and the positive reactions they receive from others will be even stronger (more rewarding) if they go beyond the minimum requirements for membership. This increases the social approval they receive for “going beyond the call of duty.” It may also stimulate others to do likewise, thereby increasing the value of the collective goods produced for our consumption and insuring that as members of the community we do indeed receive more than we give.

But regardless of our original motives, as we participate in the community emotional bonds develop with fellow-members. As a result we ourselves actually experience the same rewards and costs that they experience. We indeed feel their pain and we feel better when we can help alleviate it. We also can feel their joy, and this may motivate us to engage in self-sacrificing actions that increase it. As a volunteer involved in fighting the Colorado forest fires in late June put it in a broadcast interview, “Whenever you can help other people, it makes you feel real good.” And this volunteer presumably didn’t even have social bonds with the people he was trying to help, though his self-generated good feelings were certainly reinforced by the positive emotional reactions he received from others. You can see how easily this focus on identification with others can be incorporated into a rational choice perspective—but a perspective that is less individualistic than is usually implied in rational choice-type theorizing.

In my mind this general perspective is highly consistent with the ideas on emotional exchanges developed by Randall Collins (1975; 1993; 1997), Thomas Scheff (1997), Jonathan Turner (2000), Edward Lawler (2001), and others. We don’t have time today to elaborate these arguments, but they boil down to treating emotions as the common denominator (as Collins put it) in exchange transactions of all types. Collins’ emphasis on emotional exchanges as the common currency of social relations helps provide a way to analyze underlying preferences in social relations without assuming that they vary so greatly as to defy general explanation. In addition to being powerfully reinforcing or punishing in their own right, these emotional dynamics also have the potential to trigger a great deal of cognitive reflection.

tion as people seek to understand their own emotions. In addition, planning for and anticipating positive emotional experiences and seeking to avoid negative experiences certainly involves rational decision-making processes in the neocortex part of the brain.

This suggests to me that underlying all the fascinating cultural and subcultural diversity in people's personal preferences and choices in religion and other areas of life, the bottom line for people everywhere is maximizing positive emotional experiences and minimizing negative ones. Dare I say that this may be a universal bottom line—one that any number of ethnographic studies of particular communities is likely to uncover, despite all their puzzling cultural variations in beliefs and practices?

Now once again—please do not misunderstand. In emphasizing the contrast between communities and markets, I am not by any means suggesting that rational choice theorists don't recognize the importance of the rewarding or costly nature of emotional exchanges. In the 2000 version of their theory Stark and Finke incorporate explicitly the emotional and expressive side of religion. The point I'm trying to make is that the dynamics of emotional experiences and exchanges differ in important ways from the process of utilitarian rational choice calculation. As suggested earlier, they even involve different parts of the brain, particularly the limbic system as opposed to the neocortex, though of course we know there are complex neurological connections among the various parts of the brain.

GENDER, GENERATIONAL, AND SOCIETAL DIFFERENCES

And now for my third point, which will be treated more briefly than the first two: Everyday experience suggests that people vary in terms of the priority they usually give to their own personal needs as opposed to the needs of others or the welfare of the community. Dealing with these differences would require another talk, but one possible difference we might note briefly is related to gender. Both our popular stereotypes and a great deal of scholarly analysis suggest that men tend to have a more individualistic orientation while women are more likely to be concerned with relationships and caring for others. I do not want to exaggerate these differences, but it is interesting to consider their implications as they may relate to the distinction between a market orientation versus a more communitarian orientation. Such gender differences could well be related to the differences in developmental processes as analyzed by Nancy Chodorow (1978) and Carol Gilligan (1982). This notion is also consistent with Paula England's (1989) critique of the relevance of rational choice theory to the experiences and orientations of women.

It is not our purpose today to get into the issue of how much the differences between men and women are due to biology and how much they are due to the pervasive effects of the process whereby gender is socially constructed. But given the difference in the social experiences of women and men, the effects of the social construction process are certainly very real.

The distinction Diane Margolis (1998) made between the "exchanger self" of market transactions and the "obligated self" manifested in social relations based on emotional bonds is relevant in this context. Her analysis implied a need for a balance which may be applied to both genders. Just as the exchanger self risks emotional isolation due to the difficulty of maintaining social bonds, so the obligated self risks being so thoroughly absorbed in close-knit social bonds that she or he is unable to establish her or his own personal autonomy. She also identified a third type of self concept, a "cosmic self" which is particularly relevant in considering people's religious identities. Of course, the salience of the exchanger

self and the obligated self—or of market versus community relations—will vary in different situations for both genders. In general, I think it is fair to say that people in a religious community consider one another as fellow-members more than as individualistic marketplace consumers. This point holds even though they also expect to share personally in the benefits of belonging as well as to contribute to the production of these benefits.

I suspect also that there may be generational differences in the tendencies for people to give priority to their own needs and interests as opposed to their obligations to others or to their community. In their provocative historical analysis of generational cycles Strauss and Howe (1991) make the argument that the eruption of a major societal crisis can stimulate a shift in priorities away from a high level of individualism to a stronger emphasis on social solidarity within the society, especially if it is sufficiently serious to become a major historical watershed.

As we all know our own age is regarded as highly individualistic, and Clark Roof (1993; 1999), Philip Hammond (1992), and many other scholars have shown how this high level of individualism extends even to people's religious lives. Members of the so-called Generation X seem in many ways to be even more individualistic than the Boomer generation (Beaudoin, 1998). And yet, Flory and Miller's (2000) analysis shows how the distinctive experiences of GenX members have led to the formation of diverse and inclusive religious communities. At the local level members of these communities provide mutual support and validation to one another and their shared generational identities and experiences. And on a more general level, at least part of the response to the events of September 11 suggests that people in our current era of fragmentation and individualism can indeed be moved to look beyond their narrow self-interests for the sake of the larger community.

In addition to possible generational and historical differences, there are also no doubt variations in different communities and different ethnic groups—and of course different religious groups in our society. Also, the high individualism of our own society, which I think is well reflected in the market model of religion, can be contrasted with the culture of other societies in which greater priority is given to maintaining social bonds, including both family and community bonds, even when this means subordinating individual interests.

CONCLUSION: PRACTICAL RELEVANCE OF THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

Now we move to our fourth and final point: Do the differences between religious markets and religious communities matter in the real world of applied research? In his 1998 presidential address, Carl Dudley spoke enthusiastically about the potential practical impact of our research and gave a number of examples to illustrate his point (Dudley, 1999). This applies especially to applied research, which is intended, after all, to have an impact. But I'm suggesting today that our theoretical concepts and perspectives also have an impact.

Anthony Giddens' concept of the "double hermeneutic" suggests that the social world out there that we are trying to understand is constituted by social definitions, including those that social scientists employ in trying to communicate their understanding of it to a broader public (Giddens, 1984: xxxv, 281-288). This point is clearly consistent with symbolic interaction theory, but it adds the point that we as scholars and academicians are ourselves involved in this process of the social construction of reality. To the extent that we as reli-

religious researchers and scholars have an impact at all, the social definitions that we ourselves are involved in creating and disseminating have the potential to contribute, at least in a small way, to the constitution of this very same social world.

This impact is manifested in the way practitioners in the real world—religious and lay leaders, administrators, program planners and evaluation consultants, etc.—may be influenced in various ways by both the explicit and implicit meanings of the concepts that we as academic researchers and scholars use in communicating the results of our efforts to try to understand this world. Now I don't want to overstate this point. While it is true that our academic and theoretical concepts may have unintended effects, perhaps even contaminating and distorting the world we are trying to understand, it is also true that people in the so-called real world are themselves reflective and are certainly capable of discerning the implications of the concepts we use and either accepting, rejecting, or deconstructing them for their own purposes. In fact, they may even manage to educate those of us who are on the academic side in this process.

Religious leaders themselves certainly engage in rational choice-type behavior as they consider issues such as membership growth and decline, program planning and evaluation, generation and allocation of financial and other resources, and the like (see Lummis, 2002). They have to make decisions, for example, about whether to rely on members' voluntary contributions to provide the music for their religious services, or religious classes for their children, even though their volunteers may be amateurs in both areas, or to hire professional musicians and educators. The entrepreneurs who led the upstart sects in the churching of America, as documented so engagingly by Finke and Stark (1992), certainly attempted to implement rational choices in their efforts to organize effective revival campaigns on the frontier that would appeal to potential converts and members. By the same token, religious practitioners today really have no choice but to think very strategically about how to maintain and expand their support base, to pay attention to the personal needs and interests of all their constituents, to evaluate the effects of changing neighborhoods in which they are located, and perhaps seek to broaden their appeal to new constituencies. And I'm sure we all know of some religious entrepreneurs or leaders who give higher priority to their own personal benefits than we would regard as acceptable. Religious practitioners cannot ignore the human side of religion; they are themselves very human.

But there is more to it than this. Even when we take the realistic human side seriously, I think it is also important to recognize that religious groups are likely to be regarded by their participants and even their leaders as more than market suppliers providing religious services to satisfy religious consumers' personal interests in a competitive environment. Without disputing the importance of the way people weigh personal benefits and costs when they make their rational religious choices, we must also acknowledge that there are aspects of the religious life that are deeper, or more transcendent, than calculative or utilitarian decision making. In particular, I think we need to move beyond the high level of individualism implied in the market model—or at least balance it with some consideration of how some people seek to move beyond their own personal interests as they participate with fellow-members of their community in pursuing goals larger than themselves.

The intrinsic rewards we experience as we join our voices together in song are qualitatively different from those we receive from being spectators at professional musical performances, in large part because of the collective nature of our musical production, whether this is seen as a cost or a reward. Through participating together in religious communities

human beings are challenged to enlarge their identities and their interests to include their neighbors, not only in their congregation and local community but beyond.

The practical human side of religion is well captured in my view in the market model with its individualistic assumptions about human beings' concerns for personal benefits and their utilitarian decision-making processes. Personally, I've learned a lot from this perspective, as I'm sure we all have. (And I have my students read Stark and Finke's *Acts of Faith*.) But there is also a more idealistic side to religion, in which we struggle to transcend our self-interests as we seek to express our concern for others and our commitment to deeply held moral values through our actions and our lifestyle. I believe that sincere religious leaders would see this as the heart and soul of religion, despite their need to pay attention to the practical bottom-line issues that require utilitarian rational choice considerations in the face of the human side of religion.

I do not claim that the concept of community fully captures this more idealistic dimension. But I would suggest that the image of religion and religious groups and organizations implied by the market model is probably not quite as close to the heart of what religion is all about than the image implied by the concept of community. It is the concept of community, not the market, that gives priority to the emotional ties that bind people together and inspires them to place a high priority on the needs of others rather than focus only on their own personal needs. It is the image of community, not the market, that challenges people to expand their vision beyond their narrow self-interests and to take their moral values seriously. It is the ideals associated with the concept of community, not the market, that enlarges their sense of identity and purpose, and enables them to experience a linkage with that which they believe to be transcendent and divine. We need to balance our emphasis on the practical utilitarian aspects of religion with this more idealistic view in our efforts to expand and deepen our understanding of the most authentic features of the religious life.

Thank you for listening.

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