

'FINDING GOD' OR 'MORAL DISENGAGEMENT' IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES? EVIDENCE FROM INDIA AND NIGERIA¹

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ABSTRACT

There are growing calls for religion to be used in the fight against corruption on the basis of the assumption that religious people are more concerned with ethics than with the non-religious, despite the fact that many of the most corrupt countries in the world also rank highly in terms of religiosity. This article looks at the evidence in the current literature for a causal relationship between religion and corruption and questions the relevance of the methodologies being used to build up this evidence base. This section shows that the new 'myth' about the relationship between religion and corruption is based on assumptions not borne out of the evidence. The article presents findings from field research in India and Nigeria that explores how individual attitudes towards corruption may (or may not) be shaped by religion. The research shows that religion may have some impact on attitudes towards corruption, but it has very little likely impact on actual corrupt behaviour. This is because—despite universal condemnation of corruption—it is seen by respondents as being so systemic that being uncorrupt often makes little sense. Respondents, by using a process that Bandura (2002) calls 'selective moral disengagement', were able to justify their own attitudes and behaviour vis-a-vis corruption, pointing towards corruption being a classic collective action problem, rather than a problem of personal values or ethics. Copyright © 2012 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

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In 2006, in a speech given at the London School of Economics, Transparency International's (TI) former Chief Executive, David Nussbaum argued for a new approach to combating corruption that takes into account the role that personal values play in moral decision-making related to corrupt practice. He explained,

In the case of values-based decisions like whether or not to bribe or accept a bribe, values and ethics can form a sort of threshold, established under what emotional and external circumstances—if any—you may say yes. Your social environment, the level of trust you have in those around you, how you see this affecting people you care about, will also come into play; but your values will be a fundamental guide in making these decisions (2006: 13).

He highlighted a research by the Federal Reserve Bank of St Louis that drew a direct link between values, religion and corruption. The study concluded that 'A belief in hell tends to mean less corruption. and less corruption tends to mean a higher per capita income. . .Combining these two stories. . .suggests that, all else being equal, the more religious a country is, the less corruption it will have and the higher its per capita income will be' (cited in Nussbaum, 2006: 14).

Although Nussbaum was quick to say, 'Now I have to tell you that TI did not react to this study by launching a campaign to promote belief in hell as a way to fight corruption', there is a growing recognition that current approaches to anti-corruption are not providing the level of success desired, and that there is a clear need to look

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more closely as well at why individuals choose to be corrupt, in terms of finding more effective ‘entry points’ for anti-corruption work.

Within some developing countries, there are growing calls for religion to be used in the fight against corruption. In Zamfara State, Nigeria, for instance, there have been several attempts to integrate local *Imams* (Islamic religious leaders) into the civil service, with the ultimate aim of reducing corruption and promoting higher ethical standards within the sector. In Zambia, Vice-President Nevers Mumba is reported to have ‘challenged the Church to assist Government fight corruption. . . the Church [has] a mandatory obligation to assist Government in resolving such pressing issues’ (Times of Zambia, 2003). Similarly, the Ugandan Government is reported to have asked the Church to help in the fight against corruption. President Museveni, in a message delivered on his behalf by the Second Deputy Premier and Minister for Public Service Henry Kajura to pilgrims who turned up to celebrate the Uganda Martyrs’ Day, called on the Church to help end corruption: ‘the Government alone cannot fight corruption to its end, but the Church has a better platform to do that’ (Allafrica.com, 2006).

There is also increasing evidence of religious leaders calling out to adherents to avoid corrupt activity. In 2002, Pope John Paul II spoke out against corruption, calling on all Catholics to refrain from engaging in corrupt practices (CNN 2002; CWNews 2003). Douglas Beets reported that ‘the World Assembly of the World Council of Churches meeting in Harare, Zimbabwe in December, 1998 made clear statements condemning corruption. The organisation called on all of its member churches to urge governments to take legislative action against all forms of corruption’ (Beets, 2007). Indeed, in many countries, religious organisations and faith-based organisations (FBOs) have been active in denouncing corruption.

Marshall and Van Saanen (2007) wrote that, ‘Because they have special “expertise” in values and integrity, and because of their extensive presence and reach, faith institutions, leaders and networks offer a powerful potential force in raising governance standards in the work of development’ (p. 231). In many ways, this seems like common sense; but Polzer warned that corruption policies are often based on what Schaffer called the ‘common sense policy fallacy’ (Polzer, 2001: 22). Schaffer wrote,

There is a common, and apparently common sense, way of presenting and talking about public policy. It is certainly convenient, partly because it is apparently innocent and non-problematic. Public policy is seen as something going on in a series of independently given realities. . . [This] misconception is employed by many people, including politicians and officials and social science protagonists in public policy. There is evidence to show that they at least know the common-sense model is faulty in that it does not describe what happens. The fault is admitted, but only in certain circumstances. Otherwise actors talk as though the model were true. . . This fault, however, does matter. It has ‘grave’ consequences (Schaffer, 1984: 143–44).

Just as there are indeed several hard working and often courageous religious leaders speaking out against corruption, there are also scandals involving corruption within religious organisations. In Andhra Pradesh, a priest at the world’s largest Hindu temple at Tirupati, has been arrested for selling temple jewels, just one of many corruption scandals to emerge recently (msn.com 22/08/09). In Ghana, a group of religious leaders came out to speak out against corruption within churches in that country (The Spectator, 2009). In Brazil, the footballer Kaka, was linked to a church, where the leaders were convicted of money laundering (Azzoni, 2008: 7). In Nigeria, a pastor was suspended from a church near Abuja for embezzling millions of naira in church funds (Friday, 2006). This list could go on. Calls for religious leaders to strengthen the fight against corruption can easily be weakened by cases such as these. Indeed, in a popular anti-corruption advertisement in India, sponsored by Tata Tea, a priest is just one of many corrupt actors portrayed. This suggests that the relationship between religious leaders and corruption is more problematic than ‘common sense’ might suggest.

The article is divided into three main sections. In the first, the article argues that the evidence so far for a causal relationship between religion (or types of religion) and either higher or lower levels of corruption is in no way convincing. The methodologies being employed thus far are insufficient for proving—one way or another—a causal relationship. The results are often contradictory, depending upon whichever dataset has been used, which raises important methodological issues. The literature is tentative at best, offering comparisons between various *n*-level datasets and pointing towards possible explanations, sometimes rooted in theory, sometimes not. The data

used is often flawed, making the explanations that do exist problematic. It is aggregated at the country level and cannot tell us anything about how individuals' attitudes towards corruption are formed, the impact of religious (and other socio-cultural influences) on attitude formation, or the way that individuals condemn or justify corrupt behaviour using the language of religion. The second section then goes on to show how this is as much a problem of lack of conceptual clarity and under-contextualisation—particularly regarding 'morality'—as a problem of methodology.

The third section presents findings from a three-year collaborative research project on religion and attitudes towards corruption in India and Nigeria.² The research utilised a methodological approach developed by Pavarala (1996) in his study on elite attitudes towards corruption in India because of its sensitivity not only to the phenomenon of corruption but also to the investigation of other people's cultural practices and religious beliefs. This sees both corruption and religion as lived experiences, where morality is constructed and constantly evolving and changing (Marquette, 2010). Because the objective utility (and subjective reality) of traditions and religious beliefs in anti-corruption initiatives is judged by actors who are themselves believers (or not), the research sought to understand their interpretations of the concepts and their own and others' social attitudes by employing qualitative methods.

The research consisted of semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, involving 240 participants in total, as well as textual analysis. This enabled the researchers to gain access to people's views on religion and attitudes towards corruption through personal interaction and dialogue between the researcher and the researched. In India, the research focused on two religions—Sikhism and Hinduism—with fieldwork carried out in Amritsar, a major city in northern Punjab, well known for being home to the Golden Temple, Sikhism's holiest shrine; Chandigarh, the capital of the region; and finally, Hyderabad, the capital city of Andhra Pradesh in Southern India. In Nigeria, the research focused on Islam, Christianity and African Traditional Religion (ATR).³ In order to capture adherents of the three main religions in the country, four locations where they are predominant and/or active in tandem with other religions that are in the minority, were selected for the research: Kano in the North West (for Islam); Abuja, the Federal Capital, in the North central (for all religions); Owerri in the South East (for African Traditional Religion and Christianity) and Ibadan in the South West (for Christianity and Islam).

Our sample included leaders and ordinary members of selected religious organisations, policy makers and staff in selected public and corporate sectors, members of NGOs, youth, media persons, academics and those engaged in anti-corruption policy design and implementation. One limitation of the research is that our respondents were urban, mostly English-speaking, and relatively well-educated. Future research could explore whether there are any significant differences between research participants drawn from different cross sections of society. In sampling, effort was made to include roughly the same number of people in each country, and then in each religious group and each category of respondent, as well as ensuring gender balance (Pavarala & Malik, 2010: 10–11). However, although we can claim to have reached a point of data saturation with our sample, we cannot claim that our findings are generalisable across either of these two very large and complex countries, let alone beyond them. We can say, nonetheless, that our research flags up some important findings and points to an interesting area for further research on corruption.

The research shows that religion may have some impact on attitudes towards corruption, but it is likely to have very little impact on actual corrupt behaviour. This is because corruption is seen as being so widespread, so built into the system, that being uncorrupt often makes little sense. Respondents—who often described themselves as both religious and ethical—were able to engage in a process of what Bandura calls 'selective moral disengagement' through 'diffusion of responsibility': 'Where everyone is responsible, no one really feels responsible. Collective action, which provides anonymity, is still another expedient for weakening moral control. Any harm done by a group can always be attributed largely to the behaviour of others' (Bandura, 2002: 107). This was true regardless of religion across both countries and may have significant implications for both corruption research and policy.

²The research team consisted of Dr Heather Marquette and Dr Insa Nolte, University of Birmingham; Professor Vinod Pavarala and Dr Kanchan K. Malik, both University of Hyderabad; and Dr Antonia Simbine, Nigerian Institute of Social & Economic Research; and Dr Emmanuel Aiyede, University of Ibadan.

³Whether African Traditional Religion can be seen as religion (rather than cultural beliefs) or a single religion (rather than many locally specific religions) is contested. In practice, most Nigerians consider themselves to be Muslim or Christian, although traditional beliefs continue to be held by many and have a strong influence on values and practices.

This article adds to a growing body of literature questioning the relevance of instrumentalist arguments seeking causal relationships between complex social phenomena and corruption.⁴ This literature looks, for example, at politics (Polzer, 2001; Marquette, 2003; Harrison, 2010); gender (Alolo Al-hassan, 2007; Goetz, 2007); social capital (Warren, 2001; Warren, 2004; Callahan, 2005; Graeff, 2009); and so on. What this literature has in common is exploration of the ways in which instrumentalist approaches tend to lack both empirical evidence (and usually a sound theoretical basis) and run the risk of distorting, intentionally or otherwise, other important aspects of the social phenomena under question. I argue in a previous article, for example, that the focus on democratic politics as a means of fighting corruption risks ‘devalu[ing] democracy in its own right’ (Marquette, 2004: 425). Goetz explained that ‘[l]ike any instrumentalist argument, the “women are less corrupt than men” justification for bringing women into politics and public institutions is not just vulnerable to exposure as a myth; it puts women’s engagement in the public arena on the wrong foot’ (2007: 88). The current focus on religion has the same risks and could lead to similar (unintended) consequences. Rothstein called this the ‘magic key’: ‘...if only we could find the magic key (the “entry point”) and change this institutional device, we would be able to advise policy makers on [anti-corruption]’ (Rothstein, 2011: 107–8, emphasis in original). In this ground-breaking book, which deserves considerably more elaboration than I have the space for here, he argues that there is no ‘magic key’ to anti-corruption; evidence from our field research suggests that religion as well is unlikely to prove an effective entry point for engagement.

LOOKING FOR EVIDENCE OF A CAUSAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND CORRUPTION

It has been argued that in countries where religion plays a vital role in the lives of most people, many people, including public servants, are likely to derive their ethical framework in part from their religion. Religion provides many with the language of ethics and often an actual ‘list’ of rules to live by, some of which can be interpreted as being of particular importance to fighting corruption. The basis for the increasing attention given to the religion–corruption nexus generally stems from the argument that fairness and honesty form the basis of many religions, and as such, religious leaders can be utilized in the fight against corruption (Luxmoore, 1999). According to Beets, two apparent assumptions underlie the call on religious leaders and groups in the fight against corruption. The first is that ‘faithful adherents to religion will refrain from corruption because of the inherent theft, dishonesty, illegality, and mistreatment of others. The second related assumption is that those who are not faithful adherents of religions are more likely to engage in corruption because of an absence of religious guidance’ (2007: 72).

However, contrary to these assumptions, many of the most corrupt countries in the world (according to Transparency International’s Corruption Perception Index [TI-CPI]⁵) also rank highly in terms of religiosity (using indicators such as the Pew Global Attitudes Projects).⁶ On this basis, there would appear to be little evidence to support these assumptions, but there is a small, if growing body of literature that looks direction at the possible relationship between religion and corruption. Some of these also attempt to see if it is the *type* of religion that makes a difference as to whether or not a country is corrupt.

Beets (2007: 72) argued that the influence of religion on corruption is not as well established as purported to be. In fact, Arruda (1997) contended that despite increasing adherence, passion and dedication to the Roman Catholic faith, especially in Latin America, corruption continues to thrive, unchallenged by faith. He highlighted a saying in Latin America, which ‘shows the unethical culture prevailing in business within Spanish speaking countries: *el que no tranza no avanza* (one that does not act unethically does not succeed’ (Arruda, 1997: 1598). This implies that if one desires to succeed in business, one must be prepared to act unethically regardless of their religious beliefs.

⁴I take a similar approach to instrumentalism here to that by Thatcher, who explained the ‘instrumentalist view’ to public policy as: ‘...the main way to improve public policy is to find better means of pursuing the goals that already occupy prominent places in policymaking’ (Thatcher, 2004: 4; see also, Thatcher & Rein, 2004).

⁵The TI-CPI is a ‘survey of surveys’ that looks at perceptions of corruption and then ranks countries according to their score. It can be found at www.transparency.org, along with an explanation of its methodology.

⁶Religiosity, although not formally defined in the Pew Global Attitudes Project, is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as ‘religiousness, religious feeling or sentiment’ or ‘affected or excessive religiousness’. Measuring religiosity seems to be about self-definition as a member of a religious community, regular attendance at a religious service and regular prayer.

Mitchell (2001) raised a similar argument in the Philippines where despite high levels of religiosity, the country is engulfed in entrenched corruption:

From presidents to prostitutes, religion flows like a river through Philippine lives, offering a bizarre mix of old style faith and sometimes bloody violence. . . In the Philippines, it seems, religion is never far away. At Easter, it bludgeons the imagination. Catholic worshippers in several towns re-enact the death of Christ by allowing themselves to be nailed to wooden crosses with stainless steel pikes. Other Filipinos descend in their millions on the nation's cathedrals and city squares to partake in a great upheaval of holy activity- preaching, praying, singing, dancing, kneeling and bowing (Mitchell, 2001: 58).

Despite such high levels of religiosity, corruption is still rife (Mitchell, 2001: 59).

Conversely, Beets (2007: 72) argued that although the Scandinavian countries are largely secular, with a declining influence of religion, corruption appears to be minimal, and these countries are among the least corrupt according to the TI-CPI. However, there is little sense in this literature of the need to break down what 'religion' means in this regard in developing countries: is it the teachings that are important? Is it the moral framework? Is it the importance of leadership or the nature of the community? There are few studies, if any, that engage in this sort of analysis.

Perhaps surprisingly, there is a meagre literature explicitly on the relationship between religion and corruption, although certainly there is a vast literature that explores it more indirectly or as part of a bigger study looking at 'culture' (see, for example, Della Porta and Vannucci, 1999; La Porta *et al.*, 1997; North and Gwin, 2004; Putnam, 1993; Treisman, 2000; Warren, 2001, among others). Partly, this may be due to the continuing impact of secularism on political science and economics, two of the leading disciplinary approaches to the study of corruption.⁷ As with much of the general corruption literature of the past two decades, in particular, it tends to be quantitative and economics-led, and there seems to be an intentional shying-away from more qualitative approaches, as evidenced by an opening caveat in an article by Paldam: 'The relations between economic development, culture, religion and corruption are surely complex, involving "grand historical dynamics" far exceeding the possibilities of "normal" empirical research. It might be fool-hearted even to try such a pedestrian approach'. Instead, he argued that in his work, 'a piece of the grand pattern can be isolated and submitted to the standard "hard" tools of analysis' (2001: 384).

Paldam (2001) used religion in his work as a proxy for 'culture' in order to analyse the impact of culture on corruption (p. 383), and he is also in what he called the 'Weber link'. His study uses 11 variables on religion from a cross-country data set to demonstrate whether cultural factors, as formed by religious differences, can explain corruption in these countries. The study starts with an initial economic model of corruption that says that poor countries have higher levels of corruption, and as they go through economic transition to become rich, the levels of corruption drop dramatically. Using longitudinal measures of corruption vis-à-vis a the proportion of a country's population adhering to a particular religion, Paldam revealed that several religions have significant effects on the level of corruption and that religion could, incrementally, explain corruption, although some religions tend to decrease levels of corruption, whereas others tend to increase corruption levels. Paldam's results also reveal that extensive religious diversity within a country could reduce corruption levels.

His data set includes religions that are 'statistically useable', in that they are both large enough and broadly distributed. This means, for example, that 'tribal' religions and atheists are amalgamated together, to become 'useable' data regardless of whether or not they share worldviews or moral codes (Paldam, 2001: 393). Because Christianity is so widespread and so divided, in terms of denominations and sects, he then makes the distinction between pre-Reform Christians (further separating out 'Old Christians' [Eastern and Orthodox] and Catholics) and Reform Christians (again, further separating out Protestants and Anglicans) (Paldam, 2001: 394).

His results showed that countries that are predominantly Christian are somewhat less corrupt than those that are predominantly non-Christian, and that countries that are reform Christian are less corrupt than countries that are pre-reform Christian, taking into account level of development, measured by real GDP, the growth rate, Gini

⁷As Singh, Marquette & Alolo Al-hassan (2006) pointed out: 'The starting point for any meaningful understanding of the political science literature on the role of religion in public life is secularism. Of all the disciplines, political science (with perhaps the exception of economics) is the one that is most secular in its outlook' (p. 7).

coefficient, and inflation rate, among others. Countries that are predominantly Muslim are found to be similarly corrupt to countries that are pre-reform Christian, although the exclusion of Muslim oil countries from the Gulf region makes any conclusions here difficult to support. Countries that have predominantly tribal religions (and atheists) are less corrupt than others and, indeed, there seems to be a sharp increase in corruption following the change from tribal religion to another religion (generally speaking, Islam or Catholicism) (pp. 402–408).⁸

Paldam suggested that his evidence demonstrates the validity of the ‘Weber link’. As he explained,

One of the key purposes of the Reformation (almost 500 years ago) was precisely to fight the corruption (broadly defined) of the Catholic church. Historians have pointed to other—more complex—reasons as well, but the moral stand against corruption was surely important. It is thus arguable that reverse causality entered into the Reformation process. It was the more ‘moralist’ countries, which chose the various ‘Reformist’ denominations, while those more ‘tolerant’ remained with their old denominations. . . it is amazing that such a large gap in ‘ethics’ still remains (p. 404).

Paldam’s work, in many ways, demonstrates the worst excesses of large-*n* datasets used on their own to try to explain complex socio-cultural phenomena. His arbitrary classification system owes more to his worry about ‘useable data’ than to any understanding of the nature of various religions. Paldam does not in any way explain why he has put tribalists and atheists in the same category, other than, we assume, the fact that they are both ‘residual’. There seems to be no other logical reason and this does not lend the findings credibility. The separation of Anglicans from other ‘Reform Christians’ is also not convincing. Paldam explains that the ‘[d]ata allows Anglicans to be separately analysed’, presumably because the Anglican church is wide-spread across many countries, particularly in the Commonwealth, but this seems, once again, to be rather poor logic. The same logic could of course easily apply to Islam, but there is no attempt by Paldam to disaggregate different Islamic sects.

Paldam’s study, although it may be rigorous in its analysis of cross-country data, can also be critiqued on the basis of its reliance on dated data. The study utilized data from Barrett’s 1982 study (Paldam, 2001: 392). Paldam himself alluded to the fact that many countries used in his analysis have broken up since 1982. Also, the fact that Paldam used sixteen main groups of religion out of the more than 1000 religions worldwide points to an exercise of caution when interpreting his findings. His statistical findings are often insignificant and, without any context or theoretical explanation, even those findings that are significant are weak.

Beets (2007) provided another large-*n* based examination of the link between religion and corruption that builds on Paldam’s work, using the following datasets: the TI-CPI (2003), *Britannica Book of the Year* (2003), *Religious Freedom in the World* (2000) and the *Pew Global Attitudes Project* (2002). ‘Dominant’ religions are compared, which he defined as those with an affiliation that exceeds 50 per cent of a nation’s citizens. These are broken down into: Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, other dominant, non-religious and non-dominant. However, as noted with Paldam’s work, using such a simplistic classification system is very problematic in the developing country context. Using this method, Beets classifies Ghana and Nigeria, for example, as Muslim countries, although there may only be a slight majority in both cases, according to his data (and this certainly could be contested by using other data sources). However, anyone familiar with Ghana and Nigeria will quickly tell you that there are strong regional differences, with both countries having a largely Muslim north and a largely Christian south. The TI-CPI is a national level perceptions survey and does not differentiate between north and south in these countries, so there is no way to tell, using this data, if the predominantly Muslim part of Ghana, for example, is more or less corrupt than the predominantly Christian part of Ghana. The data also does not come to terms with the continuing impact of African Traditional Religions (ATRs) and other cultural factors on Muslims and Christians in both countries, which makes it particularly difficult to draw cross-national comparisons using data such as these.

Beets compared countries across a range of factors, such as the dominant religion within each country, perceived corruption, importance of religion to the citizens, religious freedom, among others, and concluded that when countries are grouped in accordance with their dominant religions, the religious groups differ significantly with regards to perceived corruption. When Beets compared countries against the TI-CPI, going from most to least

⁸Paldam claims that this supports Rousseau’s claim about the ‘original state’, as opposed to that of Hobbes.

corrupt, he found that the most corrupt countries were those with no dominant religion, followed by Muslim and Hindu majority countries, then Buddhist and Christian majority countries and, finally, Jewish majority countries.⁹

The study then goes on to look at levels of economic development, religious freedom and religiosity (i.e. the degree to which religion is important). After compiling the data on all of these, and comparing them with the findings on corruption, he concluded:

...when countries are grouped according to the religion that is dominant in each country, those religion groups differ significantly with regard to perceived corruption, the importance of religion to citizens, religious freedom, and GDP per capita. Predominantly Christian countries, for example, which comprise 48% of all countries included in the CPI, have a moderate level of perceived corruption, are moderate in their assessed importance of religion, have a relatively high degree of religious freedom, and have a relatively large GDP per capita. Predominantly Muslim countries, conversely, which comprise 26% of the countries included in the CPI, have a high level of perceived corruption, assess religion as very important, have relatively little religious freedom, and have a relatively small GDP per capita (Beets, 2007: 80).

He was quick to argue that 'care should be exercised' in interpreting these findings, acknowledging that it may have more to do with levels of wealth—which meant that there are fewer incentives to be corrupt and more money with which to fund anti-corruption strategies in richer countries—than the actual religion, and also that there are exceptions to the rule.

However, a more interesting finding seems to be that relating corruption to religiosity. As he explained, 'since world religions consistently condemn theft and dishonesty, one might expect that, if citizens consider religion important, they would be less likely to engage in corruption. The results of this study, however, provided evidence to the contrary' (Beets, 2007: 81). He provided one possible explanation: in poorer countries, the few are the perpetrators whereas the many are the victims, and these 'victims may seek solace through their religion' (Beets, 2007: 81).

There are, of course, other possible explanations. Some research suggests, for example, that religion in these countries may encourage qualities such as loyalty and a tendency towards acceptance of authority, both of which might undermine attempts to fight corruption. This, in turn, reflects wider cultural norms placing a high degree of value on hierarchy and structures, such as found in the family, schools, the work place and so on. Indeed, this has been reported to be the case in Italy, where loyalty and trustworthiness have been called 'the virtues... of the corrupt' (Warren, 2004: 10; Della Porta & Vannucci, 1999). La Porta *et al.* (1997: 337) reported that the loyalty (and subsequent lack of trust in 'outsiders') that is characteristic of hierarchical, organised religions, defined in their work as Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Muslim, strongly correlates to 'less efficient judiciaries, greater corruption, lower-quality bureaucracies, higher rates of tax evasion, lower rates of participation in civic activities and professional associations, a lower level of importance of large firms of the economy, inferior infrastructures, and higher inflation'.

Norris and Inglehart (2004) used the World Values Survey (WVS) to see if the Weberian thesis on Protestant values still applies. They explained, 'The WVS contains four ten-point scale items that are designed to test the public's ethical attitudes, including how far people believe that certain actions are either always justified, never justified, or somewhere in-between. For the comparison, we take the strictest standard, which is the proportion that regarded certain actions as never justified' (2004).

Their findings actually contradicted those by Paldam (2001) and Beets (2007), who used the TI-CPI. Using the WVS data instead, Norris and Inglehart concluded:

Comparison across religious cultures shows that Protestant societies proved only moderately ethical on all four scales; usually slightly more ethical than Catholic societies but not displaying the highest ethical standards across all groups; indeed by contrast the Eastern religious cultures showed the highest disapproval of moral infringements. Any argument that present Protestant societies display higher ethical standards that may be conducive to business confidence and good governance is not supported by this analysis (2004).

⁹It should be noted, although Beets did not do this, that with only one country (Israel), the finding that countries that are predominantly Jewish are the least corrupt is hardly statistically significant and should be disregarded.

Another study utilizing the WVS is by Gatti *et al.* (2003). They looked at the data collected on attitudes towards bribery to conclude that ‘...family values and reported church attendance are associated with higher aversion to corruption. Interestingly, different religious beliefs do not seem to have a significant impact on BRIBE¹⁰ (with the exception of individuals of Jewish religion who consistently report a higher aversion to corruption)’ (2003: 12). Interestingly, the authors made very little of the fact that 75.4 per cent of all respondents ranked one (*bribery is never justifiable*), while only 8.8 per cent ranked five or above (*bribery is sometimes to always justifiable*), regardless of religion, nationality, age and so on.

The WVS data does seem, on some levels, more convincing than the CPI because it tries to measure individuals’ attitudes towards corruption, including ‘morality’. Corruption may be endemic across systems and institutions, but it is still the act of individuals who experience corruption (and religion, for that matter) in an individualistic way. The individual observance of religious belief, for example, may not reflect the dogma of organised religion. The notion that an official designation of a country as representing a particular religion, and then reading off from that particular types of behaviour, is naïve in the extreme. Individuals also make the choice of whether or not to corrupt or be corrupted, to behave ethically or unethically. They may operate within institutions, but the emphasis in this literature—acknowledged or not—is on the attitudes, beliefs and choices of individuals. The WVS attempts to explore this; however, it is still aggregated at the country level so it does not differentiate between the variations within countries and, as such, actually tells us little that is significant. This is interesting because the overwhelming majority—three out of four respondents in the BRIBE sample - say that bribery is never justifiable, and yet in many countries, corruption is both common, and even systemic. This then seems to be a starting point for research, rather than a result; I will return to this point in the conclusion.

Disaggregating religion from other cultural factors is very difficult, from a methodological perspective. Some conservative independent Protestants in the USA may have more in common in this regard with Catholics in Nigeria, for example, than they do with Anglicans in England. Likewise, liberal Catholics in France may have more in common with American Episcopalians than they do with conservative Irish Catholics. Researchers cannot easily separate religion—in other words, both theology and association—from other social, political, economic, cultural and historical factors. It is of course possible, but research needs to be designed in such a way that it is.

The studies, no matter which data set they are based on, also do not take into account the massive variations between adherents of various faiths across the world. Religious people may or may not be aware of what their sacred texts say about ethics and corruption, engaging with them simply on a ritualistic level, and even if they are aware, they may still choose to behave differently. The studies reviewed here do, however, provide a fertile starting ground for exploring some questions regarding the relationship between religion and corruption.

‘WHITHER MORALITY’? (RE)INJECTING MORALITY INTO DEFINITIONS OF CORRUPTION

Although religion and morality are not the same things, there are obviously links. Religion includes, ‘particularly belief in a transcendental reality and/or (a) spiritual being(s), religiosity (which is signified by the beliefs held and practices in which adherents engage), and affiliation with a religious organisation. In this sense, religion has to do with supernatural realities, with the sacred and with ultimacy’ (Rakodi, 2007: 18). On the other hand, Gert defines morality as, ‘The term “morality” can be used either (1) descriptively to refer to a code of conduct put forward by a society or...some other group, such as a religion, or...accepted by an individual for her own behaviour; or (2) normatively to refer to a code of conduct that, given specified conditions, would be put forward by all rational persons’ (Gert 2011). In this sense, religion certainly can be, and most often is, concerned with morality, but morality does not have to be concerned with religion.

The way in which corruption has been defined in recent years moved the discursive arena away from corruption as a problem of personal or social morality to one where the problem is instead a question of inadequate institutions. The most commonly used definition of corruption in use at present, certainly in policy circles, is ‘the abuse of public office

¹⁰The authors’ coding for the WVS question: ‘Someone accepting a bribe in the course of their duties’, and whether it can always be justified (rank = 10), never be justified (rank = 1) or something in between.

for private gain' (World Bank, 1997: 8). Morality is loosely implied in this definition of corruption, but is certainly not made explicit. Discourse analysis of the World Bank's literature on corruption has shown a process that established a particular definition that limits the study of corruption to that of public office and economics (Polzer, 2001; Marquette, 2003). This was done to meet the needs of a particular organisation, but it has impacted the study of corruption as a whole. As Bukovansky points out, 'Despite its moral overtones, the bulk of contemporary anti-corruption discourse deploys the language and methodologies of economics and rational choice to render diagnostic assessments of the plight of the corrupt and less developed' (Bukovansky, 2006: 183). Indeed, in the donor-led discourse on corruption, there is no sense of the moral complexity surrounding decisions to act corruptly or not; certainly, morality has been stripped away from much of the contemporary debate about corruption, as it has been from this definition.

This has not always been the case. According to Wraith and Simpkins, 'Corruption is above all a moral problem, immeasurable and imponderable' (Wraith & Simpkins 1963: 17). Banfield introduced the concept of the 'amoral familist', someone who works to 'maximise the material short-run advantage of the nuclear family' (Banfield 1958: 85), in the context of Sicily, in his famous text, *The Moral Basis of a Backwards Society*. Moral definitions of corruption have been accused of being Eurocentric, racist even, and critics have explained that, although morality may be relative according to context, ideas of 'public duty' are not (or should not be). However, as Philp so succinctly put it, 'The relativism that we risk is not simply moral relativism; that might seem like a price worth paying to avoid western stipulation. But the danger of this move is that the damage to one's analysis spreads beyond moral relativism to conceptual relativism' (Philp, 1997: 442). This is why we continue to be faced with dilemmas of definition decades into the modern study of corruption. In an effort to strip the debate of any of its moral complexity, it has been rendered problematical at best and nonsensical at worst (see, also, Marquette, 2007).

As far back as 1965, Colin Leys argued that overly moralistic approaches to corruption—almost unique in social science—were hampering attempts at research, as well as the development of inadequate approaches to policy-making (Leys, 1965; see also Leff, 1964:9). Leys noted that, 'Similar phenomena, such as suicide, crime, or religious fanaticism, have intrigued sociologists greatly. However, the question of corruption in the contemporary world has so far been taken up almost solely by moralists' (Leys, 1965: 216). Leys used 'moralist' here to mean those whose starting point for corruption research was as a moral problem to be fought, rather than a social problem to be understood; what is interesting is that Leys was looking back at research in the years before 1965 when there was an explicit emphasis on morality in terms of corruption. In subsequent years, through to the present, corruption research—particularly that with an instrumentalist, policy-focused bent—has been implicitly moralistic, but framed instead in terms of an ostensibly 'value-neutral' neoliberal discourse, what Harrison calls 'the nebulous discursive constructions of neoliberal propriety' (2010: 104).

It is argued here that corruption can only be understood in terms of its multidimensionality. Legal or public sector definitions, such as the one provided by the World Bank, may not capture what society, generally speaking, believes to be corrupt, which itself may depend upon an individual's position vis-à-vis opportunities to engage in corruption. Indeed, 'Before it became subject to the rigours of modern social science, corruption was used primarily as a term of moral condemnation. In moral terms, to corrupt means to pervert, degrade, ruin and debase'; however, '[w]ith isolated exceptions, modern social science has largely eschewed the moral perspective on corruption' (Williams, 1999: 504). Outside donor discourses, discourses on corruption are often framed in moralistic terms, where private and public morality overlap, but it does so in ways that are not always compatible with other donor objectives. As Migdal (2001) points out, 'What may be easily labelled as corruption or criminality, such as nepotism or smuggling, can also be looked at, for instance, as a morality favouring kinship ties over meritocracy or one expressing the right of movement of people and goods across the boundaries arbitrarily imposed by state law' (Migdal, 2001, pp. 19–20). Whether I personally agree or not with this characterisation of the nature of corruption, what is lacking from much of the current research on religion and corruption is a sense that there may be alternative ways that people view corruption, which in their minds may be moral.¹¹ This is different to the 'moralism' that Leys spoke of; ignoring the possibility of 'multiple moralities' is itself a moral stance, and not a very helpful one in terms of understanding individuals' attitudes towards corruption.

Another difficulty with linking religion, morality and corruption is that, as we have seen, religion and morality is not the same thing. There is an important distinction to be made between public morality and private morality, as

some evidence suggests that religion has considerably more impact upon the latter than it does on the former. Middleton and Putney, for example, differentiated between different types of moral standards in order to explain differences between various theoretical and empirical studies exploring the relationship between religion and delinquent behaviour. Previous studies, they explained, 'have failed to find relationships between measures of religiosity and ethical behaviour, nondelinquency, humanitarianism, and altruism. In contrast, several studies have found the religious less likely to violate certain moral standards' (1962: 142). The difference seems to be between *private* moral standards, such as sexual morals, and *public* moral standards such as cheating. Citing them in some detail here, they said,

We believe that this particular confusion, and much of the confusion surrounding the relation between religion and morality, derives from failure to distinguish two different types of ethical standards – the ascetic and the social. Social standards proscribe actions, which in general are harmful to the social group, and, we hypothesize, tend to be shared by the religious and nonreligious alike as part of a general social ideology. The fact that religious ideology may also proscribe these actions is incidental; we would hold with Durkheim that religion is more a reflection of social morality than a source of it. Cheating, then, is a violation of a social standard, and it is not surprising that the nonreligious engage in it no more often than the religious. In contrast, ascetic standards – abstinence from sensual indulgences, gambling, and the like—derive primarily from an ascetic religious tradition. Within the context of religion, violations of ascetic standards may be held spiritually harmful to the perpetrator. But since such violations are usually not directly or obviously harmful to the social group – at least in moderation—ascetic standards have less persuasiveness to the secularly oriented individual. He is therefore more likely to violate them. In short, we hypothesize that differences in behaviour between the religious and nonreligious are confined to specific areas and are a product of differences in standards rather than a differential upholding of standards (Middleton & Putney, 1962: 142–143; see, also, Marquette, 2010).

Their own survey, which asked about both attitudes and actual actions regarding delinquent behaviour, corroborates this. The religious are more likely to believe that anti-ascetic actions are wrong and are less likely to engage in them. However, when it comes to anti-social actions, there was no difference between the religious and the nonreligious, both in terms of attitudes and in terms of violating their own standards by engaging in anti-social actions (Middleton & Putney, 1962: 151).

This study such as many others that followed it, was conducted in the USA, and there have not been similar studies of which I am aware of in developing countries. Yet, this public/private split is widely contested by many in the developing countries context (see Ekeh, 1975; Hellsten and Larbi, 2006). As Gupta reminds us, 'the discourse of corruption varies a great deal from one country to another, dependent as it is on particular historical trajectories and the specific grammars of public culture' (Gupta, 1995: 393). In Nigeria, Smith (2007: 5) argued that,

when Nigerians talk about corruption, they refer not only to the abuse of state offices for some kind of private gain but also to a whole range of social behaviour in which various forms of morally questionable deception enable the achievement of wealth, power, or prestige as well as more mundane ambitions. Nigerian notions of corruption encompass everything from government bribery and graft, rigged elections, and fraudulent business deals, to the diabolical abuse of occult powers, medical quackery, cheating in school, and even deceiving a lover.

Public and private morality often overlap and prove a false dichotomy in many developing countries. From anthropology, writers such as Bloch (1977), Sperber (1975), and Boyer (1994), for example, emphasise the cognitive process and how ultimately 'moral systems' in many developing countries are often worked out in terms of an 'applied ethics', which may or may not incorporate 'religious' or transcendent elements. This points to the need for real caution in interpreting any of the findings of the studies discussed earlier, or in claiming underlying assumptions that reflect a particular cultural context. Corruption may be thought of in terms of things such as

¹¹There are also, of course, different kinds of corruption, and it is likely that religion—if it has any impact on corrupt attitudes or behaviour—will have differential impact on different forms of corruption. However, this article does not disaggregate different kinds of corruption, as this would not affect the arguments made here.

adultery and homosexuality; the stoning of women in Northern Nigeria following the introduction of Sharia—itsself introduced in large part in response to widespread public sector corruption—is part and parcel of the same discourse, particularly when coming from religious sources (Smith, 2007: 185–186; Harnischfeger, 2008). Indeed, in the *Times of Zambia*, Vice-President Mumba ‘encouraged the church to stand out against “unbiblical practices”’; the title of the story is “Zambia becomes tough on corruption and gays” (2003).

EVIDENCE FROM FIELDWORK IN INDIA AND NIGERIA

In light of this and other literature, our own research did not begin with pre-existing definitions of corruption or religion, as we wanted to see how these emerged from the respondents themselves. Analysis of the transcripts following the field research led to the emergence of eight broad sub-categories through open coding (also segregated on basis of region-social group-religion):

- On being ‘religious’
- Religion and value systems: ethical codes of conduct
- Definitions and perceptions of corruption
- (Knowledge of) discourses on corruption in religious texts
- Religion and people’s attitudes towards corruption
- Tradition, modernity and corruption
- The role of religious organisations in promoting ethical conduct
- The accountability of religious organisations

One of the most interesting findings from our research is that there were few significant differences between the countries or between the different religions. The differences that exist are interesting, of course, but so are the areas where there is convergence. There is not the space here to cover the entire research, with transcripts running into several hundreds of pages, but I want to highlight three key areas related to the assumptions in the literature that Beets (2007) highlighted earlier: definitions and perceptions of corruption; religion and people’s attitudes towards corruption, and the role of religious organisations in promoting ethical conduct.

No respondents in either India or Nigeria expressed toleration regarding any form of corrupt behaviour in either the interviews or the focus-group discussions. Indeed, there was strong condemnation of all forms of corruption across the board. In India, this was largely voiced along secular lines (for example, impact on poverty, trust in government, and trust in society). For example, from the Director of an IT company in Hyderabad (male, Hindu): ‘Anything that is not legitimate, offering to get certain things done by taking money or taking a favour, is corruption; something that is damaging to the system, for the taxpayers and ultimately for our work culture’. A lecturer from Punjab (female, Sikh) said: ‘Government makes laws and policies, which are good, but the problem is with the implementation of these policies—because of corruption. One, you are siphoning off the money meant for welfare, and secondly, you are not performing your duty sincerely’. A senior editor of an English daily newspaper in Punjab (male, Sikh) explained: ‘The very concept of corruption is something that corrodes the core value system’. Finally, from a retired civil servant (male, Sikh): ‘It is the total destruction of the administrative system, justice ethics—it is total destruction.’

Nigerian respondents, in contrast, tended to draw clear links between religion and corruption. In Kano, for example, a respondent (male, Christian) explained: ‘Corruption is a social evil; it is an evil that is culturally embedded in the minds of people. . . I look at corruption as bad because my Bible specifies clearly that what does not belong to you does not belong to you’. A community leader in Kano (male, Muslim) proclaimed: ‘Honestly, lack of fear of God is the causative agent of corruption. We only say it [fear of God]), but we don’t act on it’. Another community leader (male, Muslim) agreed, explaining: ‘Corruption is totally unacceptable because it has been forbidden both in the Holy Qur’an and the Hadith. It brings immorality in our behaviour, in our business activities and all our day to day activities’. Finally, in Ibadan, a religious leader (male, Christian) said: ‘Corruption really is a canker worm. It is one of the things the devil has sown into the world’. In Nigeria, unlike in India,

respondents tended to group together all 'social bads' together as 'corruption'. This includes homosexuality as well as bribery, just as Smith (2007), cited earlier, found.¹²

There was also condemnation in both countries of deeply entrenched, 'systemic corruption' (see, for example, Johnston, 1998); there was little sense that individual action would make any difference. In addition, respondents often did what is called 'othering', seeing corruption as something that other immoral people do, while regarding what they might do as simply making the best of a bad situation, an example of Bandura's 'selective moral disengagement' (2002). In other words, they clearly separated public and personal morality with respect to their own behaviour, but not when it came to condemning the behaviour in others. For some respondents, there was a sense that in a corrupt system, choosing not to be corrupt put one's own family and own children, at a serious disadvantage compared with others. A businessman from Amritsar (male, Sikh), for example, exclaimed: 'Corruption is spreading like forest fire in our country, and it is difficult to survive or stand apart, like a small green plant in the forest, without it. Society has become like this. Although I am a God-fearing person conducting my business honestly, I gave five lakh rupees [approximately £6700] for admission of my daughter [to an educational institution] because they were demanded by me. I had to arrange it by hook or crook'. A typical statement made in the focus group discussions with both male and female Hindu and Sikh university students was: 'Being from a business family, I know what corruption for us is. From constable to income tax officer all take bribe. I know that giving bribe is also corruption, but we have to give. We all are part of corruption—there is no escape'. From a human rights activist (female, Sikh): 'Corruption has been institutionalised and has undeniably amplified. No scruples. A corrupt man is not ashamed. Twenty to 30 years ago, a corrupt man was marked out. Now he is proud, displays wealth and has recognition. We have given them a high status and regard'. In Abuja, an Electoral Commission Official (male, Muslim), said: 'Most people see it [corruption] as normal; that is, to them it is not corruption but they just do it. It depends on the level of activity. In essence, they know but they don't want to believe it is corruption but that they are only doing business, which they consider normal'. Another respondent in Abuja (male, Christian), explained: 'My religion influenced me not to be corrupt, but if you look at the future of yourself and your family, you just have to engage in it [corruption] to get what you want.'

In both countries, the word 'normal' was often used by informants; that is, 'Most people see corruption as normal'. This suggests corruption as a collective action problem (Persson *et al.*, 2010; Rothstein, 2011). This means that corruption is so widespread that 'even if most individuals morally disapprove of corruption and are fully aware of the negative consequences for the society at large, very few actors show a sustained willingness to fight it' (Persson *et al.*, 2010: 1). As such, individuals are left with a typical collective action problem, in which their choice not to engage in corruption is seen as illogical or even ridiculous.

In any case, trust in religious leaders and organisations as worthy anti-corruption partners is essential, but our respondents—almost without exception and in both countries—saw religious organisations as part of the problem. As the Director of an Anti-Corruption Bureau in India explained: 'We make God a stakeholder in our corrupt activities'. At a workshop held in Hyderabad, nearly all the participants agreed with a statement made by a media person (female, Hindu) interviewed as part of the research, that: 'In the present times, religion is a discredited entity—organised religion has become politicised and does not have the force of the word around it'. A development worker (female, Hindu), also from Hyderabad, argued: 'Religion has also become one of the sources of income. You become a God man or a God woman and exploit the sentiments of the public'. An engineering officer (female, Hindu) agreed with this: 'You cannot get a work executed in Tirupati, as an engineering job or a contract, without giving bribes there. So, all those religious persons we talk about sitting on top of the hill, being good human beings to everybody, they are not. For them, "I pray to God" and "I am corrupt" are two separate issues'. The director of an anti-corruption bureau in India gave the example of a particular minister in the government of the south Indian state of Karnataka, who had donated a diamond-studded gold crown worth Rs

¹²If external actors too eagerly enlist religious leaders into the fight against corruption, they could conceivably find themselves embroiled on the wrong side of debates about human rights, if they are not clear how corruption is being defined. It is simply not possible for policy makers, certainly external actors such as donors, to hold hands with religious leaders while they speak out against corruption, but then to sneak off the podium when the sermon turns to homosexuality.

420 million (approximately £5.7 million) to the Tirumala temple. He commented that: 'So, in India, we have a very interesting thing. We make God also as a stakeholder in our corruption activities. And this is how we now expurgate ourselves of our guilt associated with corruption. I know a large number of businesses who will donate five per cent to temple or maybe to some charity. This is how we try to overcome our guilty conscience, by co-opting God as one of the stakeholders.'

Similar sentiments were expressed by respondents in Nigeria. One respondent (male, Muslim), said: 'I have never heard of any church or mosque sending a corrupt person away from its premises; instead, they are given [a seat in the] front row.' A civil servant in Abuja (male, Christian) claimed: 'If you are Brother Good in the church—you know how to pray well, regularly attend church services, even clean the church—but if you don't bring money to the church, your pastor will not recognise you. But when you are able to bring in money, nobody will care to know where you obtained it from'. Finally, a respondent in Ibadan (male, Christian) complained:

I can say that Nigeria is more corrupt than religious, because our ministers are corrupt. In the church, people are made to make Abraham's bow by emptying their pockets and contributing to the church. It is a means of exploiting their members, and the ministers were not called [by God], but it is only a means of survival. The church leaders are not leading by example. It was reported in the papers that a man stole in his place of work so that he could donate to the church, so that his name could be mentioned in the church. The religious leaders are preaching prosperity in such a way that people are tempted to indulge in corrupt practices so that their names are mentioned in the church bulletin [as donors]. It is as if I am being harsh on Christianity, but it is the fact.

Interestingly, in both countries, respondents felt strongly that religion should make people less corrupt and certainly should impact upon their behaviour and attitudes, but most regarded religion as only part of an overall 'package' of moral upbringing that also comes out of the family. A bureaucrat in Chandigarh (male, Sikh) said: 'I have imbibed my core values of sacrifice and humility from the Sikh religion. Thinking and behaviour evolve because of interaction of various forces at work that may come from religion, from society, or from family. It is a mix of all of those'. A development worker from Punjab (female, Sikh) reported that her value system had been taken from the teachings of the Guru and from her parents, who were deeply religious. What she considers fundamental is the notion of *seva*, or service to others. She noted that it was religion that had inspired her work at the home for the destitute that she runs: 'When God is in the heart. . .goodness comes in a natural way'. A senior bureaucrat from Hyderabad (male, Hindu) provided details about the training he had received during his foundation course, when participants had yoga classes, meditation sessions and training on ethics, public values and public life. He emphasised the importance of values, virtues and the need for ethics in public life in providing a clean and honest administration. In his view: 'A public servant is an exemplary person in society and a role model. . .I found [the training based in part on religious teaching] to be very useful and valuable'. Two academics, one based in Amritsar and another in New Delhi (both male, Sikh), were of the opinion that *gurdwaras* (Sikh places of worship) have an important role to play, particularly in imparting the Gurus' key message of '*Kirat haro, Naam japo, Vand chako* [Work hard, Remember God, Consume after sharing]'. Their central argument was that uptake of this message regarding 'balance', which is at the heart of Sikh teaching, has the potential to eliminate a great deal of corruption.

In Nigeria, a worker at A Daidaita Sahu (Societal Reorientation Directorate) in Kano (male, Muslim), suggested: 'Well, perhaps religion is expected to guide morality, both social and economic. From the day you were born the teachings of religion and morality started'. A participant in a focus group discussion of Muslim female students in Kano said: 'Religion is shaping our behaviours, our manner of interaction, and it helps in shaping the culture and sustenance of society'. A religious leader (male, Christian) explained: 'We always contribute towards reducing it [corruption]. . .there is preaching in the church about what is "pure" or what is "holy", and how you should source for wealth and how to spend it. [We] preach and tell people about the menace of corruption through proper propagation and sensitisation of our members in the church.'

A few participants called for better values education—possibly but not necessarily—involving religions organisations, but they argued that this needs to come early, while people are still children, to have a significant

impact. This point about early impact was made particularly strongly by the Indian respondents, especially younger participants. A focus group discussion with young professionals in Hyderabad claimed: 'Training cannot make a difference—these things should be inculcated right from childhood. When you are 23 or 24, all your perceptions are made. If somebody tries to teach you morals and ethics, you are not going to get it. Teach at a young age'. Another respondent explained: 'Better to start from childhood. Ethical values, such as the value of hard work, must be inculcated in children'.

CONCLUSION

In a study of the links between religiosity and deviant behaviour, Stark explained, 'I suspect that what counts is not only whether a particular person is religious but whether this religiousness is, or is not, ratified by the social environment. The idea here is that religion is empowered to produce conformity to the norms only as it is sustained through interaction and is accepted by the majority as a valid basis for action' (Stark, 1996, p. 164). Further, 'Religious individuals will be less likely to commit delinquent acts than those who are not religious, but only in communities where the majority of people are actively religious' (Stark, 1996, p. 164, emphasis in original). In Stark's analysis, based on a number of empirical studies, widespread membership in religious communities provides a disincentive to engage in delinquent behaviour. Although these studies are all based in the USA, and generally consist of surveys of teenagers and college students, the findings may be important for corruption research more generally because, no matter what the outcome, the research seems to point towards membership in religious communities as having a significant impact on attitudes towards moral issues, although only where the existing social environment condemns delinquent behaviour. This is clearly the case in our research where condemnation of corruption was universal among our respondents.

As shown in the previous discussion of the fieldwork, respondents know what corrupt behaviour is, and they do not like it. Although the research of course has its limitations, taken alongside other studies, such as the qualitative fieldwork done in Kenya and Uganda by the Quality of Government Institute (Persson *et al.*, 2010), in many Afrobarometer survey studies (see, for example, Armah-Attoh *et al.*, 2007), and in the study by Gatti *et al.* (2003) discussed earlier, this is significant. In direct contradiction of the literature reviewed earlier in the article, regardless of methodological approach, the outcome suggested by our research is the same: regardless of religion, people who live in highly corrupt countries tend to condemn corruption. However, they also may feel that their own corrupt behaviour is justified given the systemic nature of the corruption. What highly corrupt countries are unlikely to need is values education on its own—religious or otherwise—as an 'entry point' for anti-corruption; they need to know that they can trust other people and institutions to 'play by the rules' (Rothstein, 2011). It is not just important that the existing social environment condemns corrupt behaviour; it needs not to be seen as 'normal'.

Religious organisations may have a role to play in helping to bring about the kind of widespread systemic change needed, but our research suggests that such an approach may prove very difficult. In both the countries under study, religious organisations themselves look to gain wealth and project an image of material success, and individuals often pray to God to make them richer and more successful. As one respondent in India put it: 'As long as Lakshmi [the Hindu goddess of wealth] is coming in, it is all fine'. Participants in our research did not believe that values education alone—derived from religion or otherwise—is likely to change such attitudes; as such, it cannot be seen to be a 'magic key' to unlock widespread integrity. Ultimately, almost all of our respondents—in both countries, regardless of religion—felt that the main focus for anti-corruption efforts must be on prevention and punishment: only when people know that those engaging in corrupt behaviour will be caught and punished will corruption levels decline. Until then, they believe, even God will not be able to fight corruption.

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