

“SOCIAL COCOONS” REVISITED: EXAMINING THE CORRELATES OF STRICT RELIGIOSITY VIA ENCAPSULATION THEORY

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Encapsulation theory is a social-psychological theory which explains the strength of adherence to an organization’s principles (ideological encapsulation) in terms of a social network of believers who reinforce the plausibility of those principles (social encapsulation). In the present article, we test a specific prediction of encapsulation theory as applied to how stricter religious groups more successfully retain membership. Using data regarding social networks and religious beliefs from the General Social Survey (N = 515), social and ideological encapsulation indices were created. A strong correlation was found between the resulting social and ideological encapsulation indices. Multivariate OLS regression analyses indicated that the correlation remained robust and statistically significant after controlling for demographic and geographic factors, although age, gender, income, education, and political ideology also played a role. An interaction effect between education and social encapsulation was then further examined, indicating that education among the highly socially-encapsulated is positively associated with ideological encapsulation.