



*The Evolution, Cognition, and Culture*

*Bagel Hour*

Presents

**JOHN H. SHAVER**

**Victoria University of Wellington**

**December 2, 2014**

**4:00-5:30 pm**

**Beach Hall, Rm 404**

# **“Neither Fast nor Slow: Religion as a Life History Strategy in New Zealand”**

Life history theory assumes that natural selection designs phenotypes to optimize the tradeoffs of differential time and energy allocation over the life course in order to maximize reproductive success. A fundamental life history tradeoff all organisms face is the number and quality of offspring. Research to date has demonstrated that religious people in many countries have higher fertility levels relative to their secular counterparts, which in theory should mean that religious children receive less investment than secular children. Instead, we propose that because religious children receive more alloparental investment than secular children, religious people can achieve higher fertility without the same loss in offspring quality that secular people face. Using data from over 10,000 participants enrolled in the New Zealand Attitudes and Values Study (directed by Chris Sibley: <http://www.psych.auckland.ac.nz/en/about/our-research/research-groups/new-zealand-attitudes-and-values-study.html>), we show that 1) religious New Zealanders have higher fertility, 2) these fertility effects are in addition to standard ecological life history determinants, and that 3) non-reproductive religious people invest more in children than their non-reproductive secular counterparts. These findings suggest that religion in New Zealand may be part of a cooperative breeding strategy designed to achieve a high number of high quality offspring.

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For more information please contact Richard Sosis ([richard.sosis@uconn.edu](mailto:richard.sosis@uconn.edu)).